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Inside Journalism

Columbia College Chicago

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Inside Journalism

A Newsletter Published by the Journalism Department of Columbia College

April 1998

Network TV reporter turns critic for j department students

By Eva Boyer

Award winning foreign correspondent Arthur Kent spoke with a group of Columbia College j-students and faculty members on February 18th in the j-department. He shared stories about his extraordinary experiences as a foreign correspondent, touched on his much publicized 18-month-long litigation with former employer NBC News, spoke about the unfortunate changes he sees in network news and answered questions from the students.

Kent has been in war-torn Afghanistan to record the devastation. He found himself running alongside Chinese students who were in fear for their lives at Tiananmen Square. When the Berlin wall came down, he was there. He witnessed the aftermath of the earthquake in Armenia. He was in Romania at the time of the fall of Ceausescu.

But the one event which brought him the most attention, was the Gulf War in the Middle East. Kent found himself on a rooftop in Dahrn, Saudi Arabia during the first hours of the war. With SCUD missiles flying and Patriot missiles being launched to intercept them, Kent was reporting the first live news coverage of this type of warfare for NBC. This event earned him the name SCUD-Stud. Kent used his newfound popularity to bring attention to the fact that the press was being kept 200 miles from the front.

Kent regularly spoke out against

censorship during the war. "It was censorship by way of denial of access," he said. "We didn't get support from the network executives. Commercial censorship played just as big of a part as military censorship."

Kent eventually found himself in another battle. After a conflict over



Arthur Kent

his contract, which ultimately ended in Kent's dismissal from NBC, he sued his former employer for \$25 million. After 18 months of litigation, they settled out of court. He won an unprecedented settlement from NBC. As part of the deal, NBC announced that his dismissal was not because of Kent's refusal to go to Bosnia as was previously reported by them.

Kent remains in the news business and runs his own production company, **Fast Forward**. "I'm still in it, even

after I had to sue the living daylights out of my previous employer," he said. He was recently approached to anchor a morning international news hour called **World Watch** set to air on PBS July 1, 1998. It is a traditional news program which will focus on how world events affect America and how the rest of the world views what's happening in America.

"I will be looking forward to seeing the niche he will carve for himself at PBS," said Norma Green, director, graduate j-program. "He has an interesting outside perspective. Because he is not an American, he has the unique ability to see us better than we see ourselves. He has a different sense of who we are and that's what I find so refreshing."

Kent shared his opinion regarding the amount of tabloid news he sees on broadcast news shows.

"Marketing judgments are being made instead of news judgments", he said.

"That's the problem with broadcast news today. Journalists have to become a lot more assertive." He also encourages viewers to speak out by calling networks and letting them know they want real news. "We need to prove to [network] executives that real news, hard news will generate money," said Kent.

J-student Lawrence Benedetto agrees, "I wish we could go back to straight news as opposed to the tabloid journalism that is dominating the airways," he said.

Senior Honors Seminar offers opportunities

Senior journalism students who want the opportunity to do a significant piece of professional-level writing, suitable for publication, are being invited to apply for the fall session of the Senior Honors Seminar

The three-credit course is open to students in all of the j-department's

concentrations and can lead to graduation with honors in the major.

Carolyn Hulse, Director of the News Reporting and Writing program, points out that one important advantage of the seminar format is it allows each student a chance to "brainstorm" his or her ideas with other equally moti-

vated journalism majors.

Participants in the seminar may write a magazine article, a feature story or an interpretive or investigative piece for a newspaper.

Hulse guides the students at every

See Senior Seminar page 3 ...

Chicago Magazine Editor joins faculty

By Rhonda Love

Jonathan Eig, a part time J-instructor and Senior Editor at *Chicago Magazine*, is currently teaching the Advanced Magazine Reporting course. "I was nervous on my first day of class. I started sweating. Then I had a chance to cool down", said Eig.

Originally born in Brooklyn, New York and raised in Monsey, New York, Eig states that he has the best job in the city. He speaks passionately about his love for journalism but says he was a terrible writer at one time.

"In college I was a terrible writer although my teacher gave me good grades," says Eig. "But if I were grad-



Jonathan Eig

ing my own papers, I would have given myself a lower grade. I love writing, I love words, I just want to do it better."

Eig came to Columbia College to learn more from students and to advise them that they must love writing. "Jobs are really hard to find and the pay is not good," Eig said.

He has goals set for his students to write stories that could be published, and to think in ways that will help them flourish as writers.

Eig not only has goals for his students, but he wishes to improve himself as a reporter.

"I want to be a better writer and learn how to tell stories better. I want to make my words more elegant," Eig said. "It's the only thing I like doing. If you don't love it, get out of it."

Fischetti Scholarship applications available

By Lillian K. Pina

Attention j-students! Don't miss the opportunity to get money for your education. The John Fischetti Scholarship application is available now.

This scholarship was established by the friends and colleagues of the late political cartoonist John Fischetti, in honor of his extraordinary talent and contributions in the media. John Fischetti was a Pulitzer Prize-winning editorial cartoonist for *The New York Herald Tribune* and *The Chicago Sun-Times*.

If you are a full-time student specializing in print or broadcast journalism, photojournalism, editorial art, or political cartooning, you're an eligible candidate. Financial need, merits, service in the student's specialty like internships, and contributions to student publications, are the measurement tools that the awards are based on.

Students interested in this scholarship must complete and submit the John Fischetti scholarship form, no later than Friday, May 1, 1998, along with three examples of their best work: scripts, tapes from television or radio, photos, cartoon and classroom work..

Students also must submit two letters of recommendation from professors, employers, or anyone familiar with their journalistic capabilities. The letters must be sealed in envelopes provided by the j-department.

This scholarship is renewable as long as the student maintains excellent academic performance. And don't forget, the j-department will request your transcripts when the Spring grades are available. So hurry, don't miss this great opportunity!

Inside Journalism

Staff Writers

Eva Boyer
Douglas Hansen
Rhonda Love
Adriana Mercado
Lillian Pina

Faculty advisor

Ed Planer

Production advisor

Omar Castillo

Administrative advisor

Lena Renteria

Inside Journalism is a student publication that is published during the Fall and Spring term.

Instructor Pam Mckuen gets honor

By Eva Boyer

Pamela McKuen, part-time Columbia instructor and free lance writer for the *Chicago Tribune* and other regional publications, was honored with a Media Award by the Community Associations Institute - Illinois Chapter at their Annual Conference and Trade Show in January.

A plaque was presented to McKuen in recognition of her coverage of community association issues. They are discussed in her bi-monthly *Community Living* column in the *Your Place* section of the *Chicago Tribune*.

"I am very pleased that they recognized my efforts," said McKuen. "It is quite an honor to have the plaque hanging in my office."

The Community Associations Institute (CAI) is a professional organization geared to people who serve the condominium industry. McKuen, who writes about real estate issues for the *Tribune*, became acquainted with CAI when she started to attend seminars and workshops they were offering. She has also covered various events for her column.

She is teaching courses in feature writing and copy editing this semester.



Pam McKuen

FasTrax still rolling along

By Douglas Hansen

In last November's issue of *Inside Journalism*, j-department chair Ed Planer spoke of Columbia's new FasTrax program, calling it "an innovative way of helping new students get a sense of community that will last throughout their years at Columbia." In all actuality, it is an innovative approach to an old, proven idea.

The premise behind FasTrax has been around for years in the form of Boys and Girls Clubs and Big Brother and Sister programs. The difference in FasTrax is that the focus isn't on assisting children through what could be some turbulent times in their lives. Rather it is on helping new students at Columbia with the seemingly arduous task of making a name for themselves during their formative years at school.

According to Diane Bell, student coordinator of FasTrax, in its beginning stages last semester, the group went on field trips such as visiting the set of *Fox Thing in the Morning* three

times. This semester, the group held its first meeting on February 24. Its theme was How to Be a Successful Student Journalist.

The meeting took the form of a panel-oriented question and answer forum, with a panel of seven j-students who have carved out a niche for themselves in their chosen majors.

The panel, led by Bell, took turns answering some questions they are frequently asked by students. These included pitfalls to be aware of while in college, opportunities that should not be passed up, and ideas on how students can exceed expectations that are placed upon them.

Amidst a flurry of advice along the lines of "get good grades, manage your time, and always network," came two poignant comments. Bell, in an attempt to encourage top notch work, said, "There's always somebody watching you...you need to make sure you're worth being watched."

Leon Tripplett, who landed a job in the MSNBC newsroom by "constantly nagging" his supervisor at the

Democratic National Convention in 1996, cautioned the audience to always have a resume in hand, or at the very least a business card.

Before ending the meeting, Bell, prompted by Rose Economou, faculty administrator of FasTrax, reminded students of a j-club meeting open to all j-students on April 30, in the 11th floor faculty lounge of 624 south.

Senior Seminar Continued from page 1 ...

stage of their projects.

Any journalism major who will be a senior (90 credits) by fall, has a GPA of 3.0 or better and has completed the j-department core requirements is eligible to apply for admission.

Applicants must be graduating no later than August, 1999.

Qualified students should apply in the j-department office or call Lena Renteria at extension 7365 in the j-department.

Enrollment is limited to 12 students and written permission is required before registration.

Columbia grad credits school for success

By Sheryl Tirol

If you've ever wondered what it is like to be a news writer or producer on television, Tim Jackson of WGN-TV Chicago is a person to see.

An alumnus of Columbia's class of 1977, Jackson has been a news writer and producer at WGN since 1984, and previously was at WLS-TV Chicago. Like many successful alumni, Jackson gives a lot of credit to the working professionals who helped him at Columbia.

"In a class such as television, I was taught by an active TV director who was working in the business," said Jackson.

Although Jackson studied television broadcast and writing, he also enjoyed other classes such as fiction writing workshop.

"I really enjoyed the fiction writing workshop. It was multi-disciplined, offering feedback and reading different works and sharing the writing with others," Jackson said.

Jackson had an internship with CBS in Chicago and said he was given many opportunities and tasks that impacted on-air product.

"I studied like never before, and I achieved goals higher than I expected. There's this incredible sense of inspiration that exists in Columbia. You experience team work like never before and you have the opportunity to succeed," Jackson said.

Jackson's advice for inspiring journalists, whether broadcast or print is to develop instincts.

"Learn what it means to trust your gut," Jackson advised.

"Sharpen street smarts, learn from others who have good instincts. Always ask yourself, am I being told the truth? How does this information I am gathering in a story help the viewer, listener or reader," he said.

"There's always more to learn to become a better reporter, writer or producer," he added.



Tim Jackson

The Chronicle reporters win awards

By Adriana Mercado

The countless hours spent meeting deadlines has paid off for Columbia Chronicle reporters who walked away with fifteen awards at the Illinois College Press Association.

According to Jim Sulecki, Faculty Advisor of the Chronicle, six of the fifteen awards were first place honors. "We won both the first and second place awards in in-depth reporting, photo, and sports," he said, "and we don't even have a sports team."

Among the first-place winners were Rui Kaneya, news story; Leon Tripplett, feature story; Sara Willingham, sports column; John Henry Biederman, in-depth reporting; and Blair Frederick, sports photo.

The 1997 Illinois College Press Association competition included over thirty colleges.

You can visit the Chronicle's web-site at: <http://www5.interaccess.com/chronicle>

Careers for seniors discussed at conference

Columbia students kicked off the Spring semester by participating in the 7th Annual Senior Alumni Career Conference Networking Breakfast.

According to Paula Brien, Career Advisor, seniors often experience anxiety and nerves in their last semester. The main goals of the Networking Breakfast, according to Brien, was to address the needs of seniors.

The "Networking Breakfast" included alumni journalists, John Bigness, **Chicago Tribune** reporter; Jennifer Keiper; anchor/reporter, WBBM Newsradio 78; Audarshia Townsend, editing assistant,

Digital City; and Hadji Williams, copywriter, BBDO Chicago.

The alumni were asked to speak about experiences and problems they faced when making the transition from school to work. Often a student has a different concept of what they will be doing after graduation, said Career Advisor, Tim Long. The Senior Alumni Career Conference gives students the chance to get "information, inspiration, and opportunities to network," said Long.

The academic office advises students to look for upcoming events in the Columbia Chronicle, CCEN, fliers around school, or to directly ask your teachers.

NEXT ISSUE:

-Steve Corman interview
-MJ non-interview
-Interning at AM radio