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Autographed by Dan Malone, Mayborn Graduate Institute of Journalism student, and Howard Swindle, UNT alum.
The Final Point
Covering the Cowboys used to be exciting. Sports journalists are waiting to see if new coach Bill Parcells can bring back the magic.

Story by Nathan Stallings
Illustration by Marjorie Owens

There’s been a lot of noise in the Dallas-Fort Worth professional sports market of late, but the fuss isn’t over the Dallas Cowboys but those “other Dallas teams,” the Mavericks and the Stars. This isn’t just because the Mavericks and Stars are better than the Cowboys, which they clearly are. It’s also because the gang at Valley Ranch has kept a low profile since the hiring of coach Bill Parcells in January.

Granted, there have been some personnel moves, such as the release of future Hall of Famer and all-time leading rusher Emmitt Smith, and the signing of free agent wide receiver Terry Glenn. But we have heard relatively little from the Cowboys. Press conferences have been few and far between. This might be because of the new coach or because the Cowboys camp may not want to make any promises they can’t keep or say something that could back to bite them, as happens all too often.

After coming off three straight 5-11 seasons, fans and those involved in the organization are wondering when the Cowboys will return to their glory days, not to mention the sports journalists who have covered the blown opportunities and humiliating losses ad nauseam. They, like everybody else, are waiting to see whether Cowboys owner Jerry Jones’ hiring of the outspoken sports anchor for WFAA-TV is the right man for the job. His comment underscores the underlying frustration many sports journalists and commentators have had with the team and its management.

Randy Galloway, sports columnist for the Fort Worth Star-Telegram and host of “Sports at Six” on WBAP 820, has been among the most critical commentators about the team’s downward spiral. The hiring of Parcells is “a huge change in direction,” he says. “Jerry had taken the team back to where it was in the late ’80s.”

Mickey Spagnola, a columnist at DallasCowboys.com and host of the “Ranch Report” on radio station KTCK, adds: “Most people, players included, are paying attention to detail more, but that is normal anytime someone new comes in to coach.” The key, he says, is “once the newness of (Parcells) wears off, how do the players react?”

That’s a real good question, Mickey. Will they perform below their expectations like they have since their last Super Bowl title in 1995, or will they live up to their full potential and return the Cowboys to Super Bowl glory?

Parcells is the right man for the job. His credentials prove that, but he may be under more pressure this time than ever in his long career. This isn’t the New England Patriots, this isn’t the New York Jets or the New York Giants. This is “America’s team.”

It’s also “an international team with an international interest,” Spagnola says. “Everyone seems to care about the Cowboys, one way or another. Love ‘em or hate ‘em, but they have some sort of attachment. No matter where in this world I have traveled, people understand Dallas Cowboys, from Japan to Italy. People are passionate about their Cowboys.”

Coach Parcells, the whole world is going to be watching. Especially the men and women behind the notepads, the mikes and the cameras. Give ‘em something worth reporting, like a Super Bowl. Or two.


By Brooke Scoggins
Photo courtesy of Simon & Schuster
PUBLISHERS’ NOTE

It is fitting for the Mayborn Graduate Institute of Journalism to publish a magazine that addresses the professional concerns and issues of media practitioners in the Southwest. In our back yard, the eighth-largest media market in the United States, the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex has served our students well since the founding of the journalism department more than 50 years ago. We take great pride in our alumni who work across the Southwest. Our students continue to benefit from these professionals. Indeed, some of the topics covered in this issue were first brought to our attention by these professionals when they have visited our classes over the years.

The magazine also gives students an opportunity to learn by researching journalism issues relevant to the current media market. The outcome—a professional magazine—provides students a tangible publication of their efforts, which, we hope, contributes significantly to the professional conversation of journalism in the Southwest. As the only nationally accredited professional master’s program in Texas, the Mayborn Institute intends to lead the way in journalism innovations.

The Frank W. Mayborn Graduate Institute of Journalism was founded in 1999 through a generous gift from the Frank W. and Sue Mayborn Foundation. Through the Advise and Consult Fund at Communities Foundation of Texas, Inc. The magazine also gives students an opportunity to learn by researching ideas and letters from prisoners are your idea of a fun and easy job, maybe you have what it takes to be a columnist. Just ask Jacquelynn Floyd, a popular and award-winning columnist for The Dallas Morning News.

Many newspaper or magazine columns seem deceptively simple and effortless. But anyone who’s been in the position of churning out one week after week or month after month, like Floyd, can tell you that’s not the case. “Journalists who don’t write a column think you just sit down, and it falls out of your head, but you have to pry it out with a crowbar,” she says. “A good column has to be topical, pointed and well-written, and it’s tough to hit all of those targets all the time.”

Floyd explains that it has put her “in an unexpectedly public position. “As a columnist, your name is much more tightly associated with your work than if you were a general assignments reporter,” she says. “You put yourself into the writing, and your personality comes through to and connects with the audience.” She certainly didn’t anticipate the fame her column brought her. She says it has put her “in an unexpectedly public position. “As a columnist, your name is much more tightly associated with your work than if you were a general assignments reporter,” she says. “You put yourself into the writing, and your personality comes through to and connects with the audience.” She certainly didn’t anticipate the fame her column brought her. She says it has put her “in an unexpectedly public position.”

Floyd puts the job in perspective. “I miss the anonymity of being just another face in a parade and bowl for charity. While I have many other faults, a craving for fame or publicity is not among them.”

The biggest challenge in writing a column for Floyd is dealing with the public. “There is no better job for a journalist,” Floyd says. “Your range of topics is broad, your use of language unlimited, your relationship with readers surprisingly intimate. I wanted the job because I have always been interested in being a writer. I don’t want to fix the world, I just want to describe it in a way people will find illuminating or entertaining.”

Cover Image: So you want to be a columnist? The Dallas Morning News’ Jacquelynn Floyd puts the job in perspective.
It’s hard for my editor to justify working on an investigative piece when he has three stories he needs covered.

Steve McGonigle, veteran metro reporter for The Dallas Morning News
Outlook, pay for journalists mixed

Despite the increase in the jobless ranks earlier this year at the state and national levels, some indicators suggest improvement is on the way for the media sector. Magazine Publishers of America reports that in year-to-year comparisons from February of last year to this year, advertising revenue rose 9.9 percent and ad pages increased by 3.1 percent.

The long-term outlook appears even brighter. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, hiring trends for print media are expected to rise faster than the average for all occupations through the year 2010. Many baby-boomers are retiring, creating job openings. Also, demand for technical writers will increase because science and technology continues to expand and grow.

In Texas, editor positions will show the fastest rate of growth in the print sector, outpacing writers and authors, according to the Texas Workforce Commission’s comparison of occupational data from 2000 to 2010. Dunn says there’s a “dearth” of copy editors for newspapers. “The job market could be good for editors,” he agrees.

However, reporters and correspondents will see their number of jobs decrease, according to the TWC. But public relations will have large gains. Jobs for PR managers and specialists will add a combined 4,100 jobs. PR is also where the highest pay is (see chart).

For photographers, average salaries are expected to be about $20,000 at small papers and the mid-$30,000 range at larger-market papers, experts on the subject estimate. Competition for jobs will be high with more job seekers than openings. However, the expected increase in online publications will create more demand for those who are specialists in digital images.

Nationally, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports broadcast positions will grow only 10 percent over the same period, lower than the 15 percent increase predicted for all industries combined.

Advice for new graduates

If the current job market is tough for experienced journalists, it can be particularly hard for new J-school graduates. Veteran journalists agree that new gradssuch as Peterson should start their journalism careers at a small-market paper before making the transition to a larger publication. Small papers may offer the most job openings, but also can give the new journalist more opportunities to hone a variety of skills.

“ Writers coming in from other papers have had greater exposure in other areas,” Dunn said. “By building their skills by doing a variety of tasks at a small paper, they will have an advantage over someone who has not. You can’t limit yourself to one area. Having layout/design skills would be good. Being multi-talented is a plus.” Crawford at The Dallas Morning News agrees that new grads most likely will have to start at small dailies and weeklies. “They’re doing a disservice to themselves to start at a large paper,” he says. “Only the really talented ones are going to start at a large paper.”

Having the ability to do many tasks may not be an option but rather a requirement, multi-media corporations such as Belo, which owns the News. “Journalists may be required not only to write and do photography, but go in front of the television camera as well,” Crawford says. “Journalists need to know how to do it all.”

Hodgson says small papers in particular need people with across-the-board skills. “Layout and photography are very helpful,” he says, adding: “I would love to have journalists with people skills and layout skills.”

To help get that first job, Nancy Eanes, career development specialist at the Mayborn Graduate Institute of Journalism, encourages students to do as many internships as possible. “When a Fort Worth Star-Telegram or a Dallas Morning News sees that you have already completed two or more internships, your resume goes to the top of their stack,” she says.

Eanes also stresses the importance of knowing as many people as possible in the industry. “Network, network, network,” she adds. “I can’t say it enough. Students should get involved with student clubs and volunteer for campus projects that would give them viable experience using their skills. They add to their resumes/portfolios with each experience. Students should get to know their professors personally. When it comes time for letters of reference, this is critical.”

Although having good contacts and excellent journalism skills are a must, new gradss also need to keep things in perspective and temper their expectations in the current market. In all likelihood, “you’re not going to be the next Woodward or Bernstein,” Hodgson says. “It’s better to just get on with reality and get on with your career.” Young journalists like Ryan Peterson plan to do exactly that.

Story by Richard Ham
Illustration by Marjorie Owens

In the early 1970s an obscure, largely unreported crime occurred in a hotel room a few yards from the Potomac River. This seemingly insignificant crime was the Watergate break-in. An inquisitive reporter for the Washington Post, Bob Woodward, was dispatched to cover the story. After almost two years of chasing leads on the particulars of the story, Woodward, teamed with Carl Bernstein, broke the Watergate scandal that forced a dizzying breadth of coverage, some media-watchers, educators and journalists themselves worry that the depth of coverage has fallen by the wayside. Investigative reporting has become secondary to the weekend guide or the travel section.

Three factors are responsible for the trend: an increase in corporate ownership, the media’s own treatment of the genre and consumer apathy. In the decades since Watergate the concentration of media ownership has evolved from a significant number of small-to-large organizations across all media to huge mega-media corporations. According to Ben Bagdikian’s The Media Monopoly, 50 corporations controlled most mass media in 1983, with the largest merger valued at $340 million. At the beginning of the 21st century the number of large corporations dwindled to nine with the largest merger (AOL Time Warner) totaling $350 billion.

This shift has affected investigative reporting in two ways. Media corporations are more driven by profit margins to look good on Wall Street and an increased fear of litigation. Many executives – and editors, for that matter – are focused on the bottom line. In an era of declining profit margins it has become more difficult to defend the expense of an investigative team that may pay off for years, months or even years. “It's...
in unexpected ways. She grew up in a small town northeast of Gainesville called Callisburg and left when she was 17 to get married. Her first marriage lasted eight years because the man she married physically abused her, she said. "When I grew up, I divorced him, and the last time I saw him, he broke down the door, and I defended myself with a 22-caliber rifle until help could arrive," she says. "That experience gives me a greater perspective on crime victims and makes me appreciate the Second Amendment."

In 1979, she graduated from the University of North Texas with a degree in journalism. That same year she was hired at the newspaper. About five years later she began her career as a crime reporter. "I love the dynamics of a crime, what makes people do what they do, what finally sends them over the edge – how people rationalize the things they do and seem surprised that they are going to jail," Fielder says. She's written, but so far hasn't published, two of her own crime novels.

Young journalists often start out on the cops beat, get a little experience and move on. Fielder stands out as someone who's not only stuck with it, but also covers the beat because she enjoys it. "It's generally rare for there to be, on American newspapers, any significant continuity on that beat," says Roy Clark, a senior scholar at the Poynter Institute. "It's one of the beats where new people are on it the following year because somebody else locked the door. It's a precious gift for that newspaper and its readers."

But Clark warns that often reporters who are on a beat for a long time can lose their objectivity when dealing with sources, only writing positive stories. Fielder, though, says she tries to cover the good and the bad on the beat. For instance, one of her stories helped get a sheriff indicted and convicted for bribery; another contributed to a Denton County judge's exit from the bench. "I really like the idea that something we write actually changes something for the better," she says.

Covering such volatile stories prompted Fielder to get a license to carry a gun, but she says she has never had the need to protect herself with it. "It does feel good to know it's there," she says. And feeling confident about her safety goes a long way when scaling bridge railings in a dress to get to the scene of an accident, fighting off a biting dog or staying calm when bizarre strangers offer up threats.

She recalls an incident in which she visited a man who had a complaint about the Denton police, but did not have a telephone and wanted a reporter to come to his apartment. "I wasn't comfortable at all," she says. "He was supposed to have a wife, and she wasn't there. I was trying to do an interview and once he said to me, 'I could just put you in my closet and no one would ever know what happened to you.' I said, 'yeah they would, because they know where I am,' and I just went on like it was a perfectly normal thing for him to say."

That tough attitude has made being a woman police reporter easier for her. "My persona is very strong and very aggressive," she says. "I've developed that real tough kind of attitude, like, 'don't mess with me' and it works real well. She's seen some young women police reporters come and go quickly because police officers tried to bully them and succeeded. "If they (officers) figure out that they're not going to be able to intimidate you, then they respect you for it, and you can build a relationship," she explains.

Sgt. Macias says. "It's not something you get overnight. You earn it, and I believe she's earned it." For instance, when Fielder and a photographer rode along with a police task force when it was serving warrants, they agreed not to publish photos of any task force member with a ski mask on because that person might be recognized later. When an editor wanted to run a picture that would violate her promise, Fielder stood her ground and made sure the photo wasn't available. "I'd given my word," she says.

Of all the challenges Fielder has faced on the job, though, the hardest is talking to loved ones of crime victims. "What gets to me is not seeing the dead person, but if one of their loved ones is there, seeing their grief and reaction to it, that's real hard on me," she says. "Many a time I've sat down and interviewed somebody, and they were crying, and I was crying."

Fielder knows firsthand what it feels like to unexpectedly lose a family member. Her son, Ricky, was 19 when he was killed by a hit-and-run driver on Interstate 35. "He had car trouble and was walking to get help," Fielder says. "We never found out who hit him. It was a terrible time in our lives. Richard had just survived surgery after one of his kidneys collapsed. He was very ill, and I had to handle all the things that go with a sudden death. I took Richard to the funeral home in an ambulance."

Dealing with the tragedy of her son's death has given her insight into what families deal with after a death. "I learned a lot about what it feels like to have something that horrible visited on you, and I think it made me more sensitive to the feelings of people I have to call for comment when something similar happens to them," Fielder explains.

Sgt. True and Servo's deaths and No one has been arrested for Servo's murder. The investigation remains an open case with few clues to the identity of the killer or the reason behind the killing.

In another well-known case of violence against a Texas journalist, Texas Monthly writer-at-large Jan Reid almost died in 1998 while in Mexico City to see a boxing match that featured a boxer he had profiled in the magazine. Reid and some colleagues were robbed, and he was shot, when thugs jumped in their taxi. He recovered and is still writing for the magazine.

While True and Servo's deaths and Reid's close call shocked journalists in Texas, the death of Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl brought the risks of reporting to a national audience. Pearl's murder was believed to have been carried out by Islamic extremists in Pakistan after...
Editors tend to tell us not to do anything that will get us killed, whether we are in Iraq or at home covering violence.

—Sherry Ricchiardi
American Journalism Review

When an elderly woman was found dead earlier this year beneath a mound of beer cans in a van with her dead son, it was up to Donna Fielder, a veteran crime reporter, to visit the scene and battle the lingering stench of death. Fielder, who has seen a lot of bizarre things while covering the crime and courts beat for the Denton Record-Chronicle for almost 20 years, said the grisly case “is one of the strangest continuing stories” she’s ever reported.

“I stood in the front yard of that house where two people lived for years with none of their neighbors paying them the slightest bit of attention,” she says.

“There are some restaurants that know me so well, I think if I died and came back reincarnated they would still know it was me,” Griffith says. Yet she rarely resorts to any type of disguise. “Enough people know me now I think they would say, ‘Oh, go! there’s Dotty in a red wig. She looks pretty stupid,” Griffith says. Yet she rarely resorts to any type of disguise. “Enough people know me now I think they would say, ‘Oh, go! there’s Dotty in a red wig. She looks pretty stupid,”

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“I stood in the front yard of that house where two people lived for years with none of their neighbors paying them the slightest bit of attention,” she says. “I stood near the van where they both dealt perhaps as much as two months a year, and was assaulted by the strong odor of death and wondered how their neighbors could just have noticed. The one woman who lives around the corner came and talked to him (the son) several times in the weeks before he died as he was sitting in that van. She asked about his mother, and he once told her, ‘I guess Mother’s gone, and yet she did nothing and told nobody. She had to have smelled death in that van.”

Fielder is an icon of sorts in Denton for her popular Sunday columns and her crime reporting. She began covering the police beat after a stint as a writer and editor in the paper’s lifestyles section. In 1982, when she was lifestyles editor, she started writing her column that continues today. A mother of three and grandmother to four boys, she often has written about her family, including her mother, children and husband of 28 years, Richard, in her column. He died of lung cancer in January of 2002.

Keith Shelton, the former Record-Chronicle editor who first hired Fielder, says people will buy the newspaper just to read her work. “She’s one of the few people who can sell papers,” Shelton says. Some of Fielder’s life experiences molded her as a journalist.
Covering the crime beat for almost 20 years is more than a job for the Denton Record-Chronicle’s Donna Fielder. It’s an addiction.

Story by Megan Middleton
Photos by Ahna Hubnik

A dark, twisting road in Woody Creek, Colo., near Aspen leads to a towering gate. Iron vultures perch on top of two poles and glare down with glowing red eyes. “This must be the place,” I think. “How Hunter can you get.” No one but Hunter S. Thompson, king of the gonzo journalists, could have designed such a bizarre entrance to his house.

I had been in search of the elusive Dr. Thompson for weeks. His publisher, Simon & Schuster in New York, had passed along his telephone number and it had taken several attempts before we finally hooked up and had a rambling interview. The pull of meeting Thompson was too strong to resist. So in early April a couple of friends and I piled into a pickup and drove a full day from Denton to track him down.

My friend Michael Taliaferro, a recent graduate from The New School in New York, brought his camera. After leaving Denver we head to Thompson’s favorite local watering hole, Woody Creek Tavern. It’s hard to miss. A sign on top of the bar sports a huge pig wearing a Santa hat. Thompson isn’t there, but the bar owner calls his house to let him know we’ve arrived. It’s already 10:30 p.m., but it’s Thompson’s “working hour.” He’s got an interview to do and we wait. The bar closes, but the owner lets us hang out. We’re thinking we may have to sleep in the truck.

Finally, around 12:30 a.m. we get the word that we can go up to Thompson’s house. But first the bar owner hands us two posters with a big peace sign. Thompson has autographed them and scrawled “Bush Sucks” across the front. When we had talked by phone, Thompson blasted President Bush and the war with Iraq, which he called “evil.” He’s especially critical of TV coverage. “TV is just a wasteland of any kind of intelligent coverage of the war,” Thompson says. He singles out The New York Times for doing a good job “considering the situation, just blatant, outrageously illegal, unacceptable piracy – worse than piracy, international piracy – just invading this country.” He goes off on Bush again and chuckles when he remembers that I’m from Texas.

After driving on another twisting road for about 10 minutes, we find the house. Christmas lights line the stairs. We knock on the cabin’s door. Anita Bejmuk, Thompson’s fiancee, greets us. She has long blonde hair that’s braided and is very fit and pretty. Thompson dedicated his latest book, Kingdom of Fear: Loathsome Secrets of a Star-Crossed Child in the Final Days of the American Century, to her.

Bejmuk leads us through a front room with a large buffalo head on the wall. “This way,” she says, then goes off to grab some beers. Thompson sits in a kitchen area that has been converted into an office. His orange typewriter is piled high with papers in the cluttered room. Multicolored lights made of shotgun shells drape a window. On top of a shelf is Thompson’s famous hat, the one he wears on the cover of Kingdom of Fear.

Thompson isn’t there, but the bar’s owner calls his house to let him know we’ve arrived. It’s already 10:30 p.m., but it’s Thompson’s “working hour.” He’s got an interview to do and we wait. The bar closes, but the owner lets us hang out. We’re thinking we may have to sleep in the truck.

Story by Brooke Scoggins
Illustrations by April Kinser
strikes. A long gold chain and pendant hang from his neck. Reading glasses dangle on his nose. A cigarette dangles from his fingers.

Sitting down at the end of Thompson's desk a little nervously, I've been a fan of his books for years and enjoy the way he uses his own experiences to tell stories that millions of people want to read. He has a way of grabbing readers by the neck and pulling them into his stories.

In front of me are two versions of *Kingdom of Fear*, a rambling memoir of sorts that jumps around Thompson's life, from his first confrontation with the FBI at age nine when he got in trouble for pushing a federal mailbox into the front of a speeding bus, to his l a t e r e x c a m p s fueled by intoxicants. "I have a w e n t h e c h a n g e d much since I was turning over mailboxes," he says. The version of the book that was released in the United States has a cover photo of the author making an obscene gesture. On the back jacket is a photo of him naked (a rear view) and shooting a shotgun into the air. "See, he is looking at you on the cover and his back is on the back," I say with a chuckle. 'I never thought about that," he says. The second version, which may be released in Europe, has a collage of colors and pictures to appeal to a younger audience. He and Bejmuk ask what I think about it. Yeah, I respond, I like the brighter one.

To hear Thompson tell it, he got into journalism simply because he didn't have to punch a time clock. "I got frustrated with my job," he says, "so I got into journalism after I discovered what I think about it. Yeah, I respond, it has to be very interesting, and it has to be very interesting. "I never thought about that," he says. The way that I was writing was a lot of journalists have done it. Just the same, the way that I was writing was the same style of the times."  

Three of Thompson's books are considered landmark works of gonzo journalism: *Hell's Angels*, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1971) and *Fear and Loathing: On the Campaign Trail '72* (1973). His works routinely become books and the uncomfortable beds? It was writing, a lot of journalists have done it. Just the same, the way that I was writing was the same style of the times."

"It's not that I vacation for a living," says Patricia Rodriguez, a former travel editor for the *Viet Nam Daily*. "I'm more of a rebel and a celebrity, but also a writer and work in this office," he says. Thompson hands me a black binder with the "Hey Rube" articles he writes for *Esquire*. He wants me to read out loud. I turn a page and begin reading "Love Blooms in the Rockies." It's a long quote by Theodore Roosevelt. Part of it reads, "To announce that there must be no..." Thompson tells me. About a third of the way through I finally find my rhythm. Thompson puts his hands halfway in the air and grunts at certain points. I can only guess that he likes what he's hearing.

The writer hands Michael something to read, too. It's a long quote by a French author. "It's a pretty good style of the times," he says. Thompson adds: "It's hard work because there are a lot of people out there freelancing, but it's a lot of fun. To become successful at it you have to work very hard. Your work has to be exceptional, and it has to be very interesting."

"Traveling for a living is definitely for the open-minded and adventurous. Often, travel writers who take the road less traveled find some unusual things waiting for them. "In Italy, my French is terrible, so I said the words around a waterfall. My friend and I decided to stay in convents."

Thompson's outlook is bleak for journalists who want to continue the gonzo style versus conventional journalism. "Gonzo journalism is just something that was different," he says. "The way that I was writing was a lot of journalists have done it. Just the same, the way that I was writing was the same style of the times."

"Traveling is a beat that is also mixed with ethical dilemmas. For example, while it can be tempting to accept freebies from hotels, restaurants and tourist attractions, doing so could make it impossible to write about true life, so they don't take advantage of perks. "If a hotel or entity offering the perks will expect good reviews and the writer could be prone to oblige after spending a free week-end in a luxury suite."

"What's more, many publications forbid accepting freebies and may fire staff employees who take advantage of such perks. Rodger says that at the *Star-Telegram*, this policy also extends to freelance writers. "A lot of us don't want to buy stories that are from writers who have been on hosted trips. How can you take money from someone and then write

on an impartial story about them?" she asks. To ensure that her own stories are objective, Rodriguez prefers to remain anonymous in her travel destinations and saves any disputes with hotel or restaurant staff until her visit is almost over.

Because it seems so glamorous, many people are interested in writing travel stories – really more writers than are needed. "I think freelance travel writing is probably the hardest thing in the world," Thompson says. "I get about 80 submissions a month and of that I'll probably buy one or two." Naylor adds: "It's hard work because there are a lot of people out there freelancing, but it's a lot of fun. To become successful at it you have to work very hard. Your work has to be exceptional, and it has to be very interesting."

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an impartial story about them?" she asks. To ensure that her own stories are objective, Rodriguez prefers to remain anonymous in her travel destinations and saves any disputes with hotel or restaurant staff until her visit is almost over.

Because it seems so glamorous, many people are interested in writing travel stories – really more writers than are needed. "I think freelance travel writing is probably the hardest thing in the world," Thompson says. "I get about 80 submissions a month and of that I'll probably buy one or two." Naylor adds: "It's hard work because there are a lot of people out there freelancing, but it's a lot of fun. To become successful at it you have to work very hard. Your work has to be exceptional, and it has to be very interesting."

"Traveling for a living is definitely for the open-minded and adventurous. Often, travel writers who take the road less traveled find some unusual things waiting for them. "In Italy, my French is terrible, so I said the words around a waterfall. My friend and I decided to stay in convents."

Thompson's outlook is bleak for journalists who want to continue the gonzo style versus conventional journalism. "Gonzo journalism is just something that was different," he says. "The way that I was writing was a lot of journalists have done it. Just the same, the way that I was writing was the same style of the times."

"Traveling is a beat that is also mixed with ethical dilemmas. For example, while it can be tempting to accept freebies from hotels, restaurants and tourist attractions, doing so could make it impossible to write about true life, so they don't take advantage of perks. "If a hotel or entity offering the perks will expect good reviews and the writer could be prone to oblige after spending a free weekend in a luxury suite."

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