Student shadows Wall Street editor

By Michael J. Mooney

Floor after floor, in expansive rooms filled with cubicles and file cabinets, some of the keenest minds in journalism were snapping their keyboards, laughing into their phones while feverishly scribbling notes, hunching over desks to discuss art placement, tweaking stories and updating WSJ.com, the most widely read news Web site in the world. The Wall Street Journal is an iconic global institution, reaching more than 3 million readers. Professor George Getschow, my mentor at the Mayborn Institute, arranged for me to visit his old stomping ground while I was in New York.

Ken Wells, then editor of the Journal’s book division, met me at the elevators in The World Financial Building. Security was tight; I needed two different badges to get past the lobby, one of which required a guard photograph me.

Once inside, I was inundated with the sights and sounds of the highest level of professional journalism. Attire ranged from tailored suits with designer silk ties and polished shoes to jeans and wrinkled poplin shirts unbuttoned three holes down. The tall windows offered a view of the New York skyline on one side and New Jersey across the Hudson river on the other. Between them was a steep look down into the square cement pit, a reminder of the day everyone in the building feared for his or her life and the days afterward when this busy office sat dormant.

They ask about George, whom they call “the legendary Journal reporter, George Getschow,” about what he is like as a teacher, about how he manages to get all those fine writers to Dallas in the middle of the summer for the Mayborn writers’ conference. Referring to the suburb where he lives, they ask, “What exactly is a ‘Flower Mound’?”

After an hour seeing the gears in the Wall Street Journal machine, Well invited me to their regular pub downstairs. We talked about writing, building a career in journalism and living in Manhattan. As I left, I thought about the long trip back to Texas and what might take an entire career—to reach the top of the world of journalism.

Michael J. Mooney is a news-editorial student at the Mayborn Institute.
Mayborn Calendar

Monday to Friday, Dec. 11-15
Final Exam Week and Holidays at the Mayborn

Friday, Dec. 15
Fall semester ends

Saturday, Dec. 16
Graduation ceremony

Monday, Jan. 16, 2007
Spring semester begins

Joyce Carol Oates to give keynote at 2007 conference

The Mayborn Institute invites you to join writers and journalists from around the world at the third annual Mayborn Literary Nonfiction Writers Conference of the Southwest July 27-29, 2007, at the Hilton DFW Lakes in Grapevine, Texas. The keynote speaker will be acclaimed writer Joyce Carol Oates.

Oates has been nationally recognized for her novels, short stories, magazine fiction, essays, poetry, short plays and work in the genres of mystery, suspense, fantasy and horror.


Oates was recently awarded the 2006 Chicago Tribune Literary Prize for Lifetime Achievement.

The conference will comprise lectures, readings and panel discussions with leaders in nonfiction literature.

Visit the Mayborn online at www.MaybornInstitute.unt.edu.

Congratulations to our December graduates!

Patrick Dyer
Vanessa Gallegos
Christie Jones
Allison Mabry
Katy McDaniel
Britney Porter
Timothy Solano
Deidra Wesley
Joon Yang

Mayborn student Casey Conway gets a squeeze from Southwest Airlines co-founder and Chairman Herb Kelleher at the company Halloween party in October. Casey is doing her professional internship with Southwest in its corporate office in Dallas.
"We’ve just been robbed!" cried a Lomart grocery store clerk, as a man fled through the shop’s sliding doors. Instinctively, an off-duty policewoman, shopping in a yellow sundress and heels, ran after him. Once outside, she leapt into her car to pursue him on a winding chase through El Paso’s Western-style streets.

She chased him into a vacant lot, driving over a curb, and slammed her brakes. She jumped out of the car with pistol in tow, aimed her weapon and ordered the man to stop. As he slowly turned to face her, with arms raised, she saw three packages of pork chops stuck in his pants.

“It’s not easy running in heels,” Patricia Spencer later said, “but in a place like El Paso, officers are on call 24 hours a day.”

Spencer joined the police force when she was 20 years old. In the mid-1970s, there was only a handful of female police officers, but she rose through the ranks, working patrol beats, going undercover, working as a detective for 12 years, and serving a stint with the narcotics squad for the Drug Enforcement Administration. She was the first woman elected president of the El Paso Municipal Police Officer’s Association.

Spencer left the force in the early 1990s after earning the rank of sergeant. Since then, she has taken up home remodeling with her husband David, a retired El Paso police lieutenant.

Now, Spencer is back in the classroom—not in the familiar police academy, but in the Mayborn Graduate Institute of Journalism at the University of North Texas. She has swapped the shiny badge she once carried for a pen and notepad in hopes of fulfilling a lifelong dream of becoming a journalist.

“Journalism is a lot like the work of an officer,” Spencer said. “As a member of the force, I always sought truth, and journalists do this as well.”

Spencer was named a Mayborn scholar earlier this year and is intent on making her mark in the news industry, as she did in her previous career.

“Citizens placed their trust in me to seek justice when their lives had been shattered,” Spencer said. “I want to be the storyteller now and will go to the ends of the Earth to tell these stories.”

Desmond Rice is a news-editorial student at the Mayborn Institute.
Above, undergraduate Amanda McFerren and Professor George Getschow set up a table at the tent to sell Spurs of Inspiration, the Mayborn Institute’s literary journal. Right, Professor Jim Mueller’s son, David (left), and daughter, Sarah, come dressed as “newsies” to march in the parade with the three-tiered birthday cake float and the Journalism students, faculty and staff.

Eleven local bakeries competed in the cake contest at the Journalism homecoming tent in October. The Verde/UNT Dining Services cake won Best Overall Award for its antique typewriter chocolate cake.

The student judging panel, presidents of UNT Journalism clubs, taste each cake in the competition. Awards were given for best overall, best appearance, best taste, best grocery store and most innovative.

Professor Jim Mueller, former Professor Keith Shelton and Professor George Getschow (left to right) visit the Journalism homecoming tent.

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