The Passionate Editor

Sixteen essays from people who love being an editor and an appeal for journalists of color to join them

A PROJECT FROM THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF NEWSPAPER EDITORS DIVERSITY COMMITTEE

FOREWORD

DAVID YARNOLD

ASNE DIVERSITY COMMITTEE CHAIR

'It's a candid, gloves-off look at what's tough about becoming an editor.'

DAVID YARNOLD
Editor / Senior Vice President

San Jose Mercury News, San Jose, Calif.

America's newsrooms are filled with leaders of color. Many of them run newsrooms; others are responsible for parts of newsrooms as department heads; some run teams of reporters, photographers, editors or designers.

We've collected the stories of senior editors to give you a look at some of journalism's finest leaders. They demonstrate the range of possibilities for young journalists everywhere.

They all have special talents. They all share two secrets:

>> They lead newsrooms full of people who get to do what they love — write, photograph, edit. As they've assumed broader responsibilities, their ability to shine a light on injustice, to celebrate the nation's diversity, to hold up role models grows.

>> All of these leaders started in entry-level jobs. Others before them acted as mentors, opened doors, set examples. Now it's their turn to tell you about their challenges and what makes their jobs worthwhile.

We're aware that many young minority journalists aren't sure they want to become editors. The purpose of this book is to get into the heads and hearts of people of color who have made the decision to lead broadly.

These very personal stories will help you feel the passion and exhilaration that comes to editors because they can make such a difference to their communities.

It's a candid, gloves-off look at what's tough about becoming an editor, what the payback is and how it affects real people.

We hope you'll take inspiration from these journalists. Sixteen unforgettable people have agreed to have a conversation with you.

Have a seat and listen to their stories. They could change your life.

INTRODUCTION

GREGORY L. MOORE

MEMBER, ASNE DIVERSITY COMMITTEE; PROJECT EDITOR

'We had a story to tell; it is one of passion and making a difference.'

GREGORY L. MOORE
Editor

The Denver Post

Being an editor is not easy. It requires caring about the development and welfare of others. It requires enormous mental commitment and the ability to handle criticism and pressure from inside and outside. But more than anything, it requires a love of the story and storytelling.

For some, the rigors of editing seem to boil down to one big headache. Long hours. Grumpy subordinates. Pressure from the top down and push back from the bottom up.

Many of us who do it, however, really love it. We love shaping the news report; we love dispatching the troops; we love solving problems and being in the thick of things. And we love having a powerful role in directing coverage of minority communities that gets beyond the pathology we so often complain about.

That last point will happen only with our involvement, leadership, dedication and hard work. In a way, we owe it to the people who came before us, who served in editing roles through tremendous difficulty in hopes we would continue the struggle for quality journalism.

This book, in the most basic respect, is an appeal for you to join us.

The idea for this book was born last year at the National Association of Black Journalists Convention in Dallas. Bobbi Bowman, Diversity Director at the American Society of Newspaper Editors, suggested we gather minority journalists to talk about the need to get more journalists of color on the editing track and convince them to stay.

We gathered 35 journalists over breakfast and decided we had a story to tell. It is one of passion and successes and making a difference. We talked about why we love editing and being editors. And we agreed we needed to put those thoughts into a book and make the case for why editing matters.

Being a part of this enterprise, for journalists of color, should be about influencing it at the highest levels and delivering the best and broadest journalism possible.

We hope this book will inspire you to think about a career as an editor and aspire to go farther and farther up the ladder.

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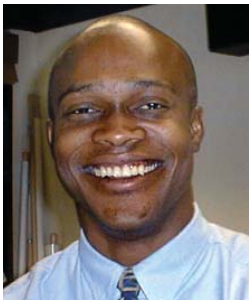


'When it comes right down to it, newsrooms will require us to thrive.'

ROB KING

Age: 41

Education: Bachelor of Arts in English, Wesleyan University.

First job in journalism: Copy aide, Washington Post; General assignment reporter/ graphic artist/ editorial cartoonist, The (Danville, Ill.) Commercial-News.

Best thing about your job: Dreaming up ways to make the newspaper a necessary read.

Most challenging thing about your job: Fostering an environment that enables colleagues to perform at their highest levels.

Those of us who have served any time managing in a newsroom environment learned long ago that we have at our disposal two primary means of coping: the Bottle and the Bible.

For the purposes of this exercise, let us pretend that I have chosen the Bible as my coping foundation. Please stop smirking; I said, let us pretend.

Regardless of how far we have fallen into the virtue-challenged environment that is the American newsroom, we have all at some point heard tell of a passage from the Bible referred to as the Golden Rule.

Permit me, then, to introduce five variations on that theme. These coping strategies seem necessary for folks like me: kind-hearted, hopelessly delusional people who remain committed to managing newsrooms of the present and future.

1. Do Unto Others ... Against All Odds. About 43 percent of newsroom managing involves stuff that is no fun. First of all, there's this "newspapering is a business" stuff, which slathers you with a regular coating of P-and-L and news-hole costs and quarterly manager meetings. Then you have the nettlesome issue of the folks who, for lack of a better phrase, "work for you." Turns out said folks can at times be lethargic or careless or randy or a host of other things you'd rather they not be. And of course, there's that sudden farewell you had to bid to doing some journalism of your own.

Well, this Golden Rule asks you to acknowledge that 43 percent, to accept it as a constant, and move on. Because 57 percent of your job represents unlimited opportunity to plan, to anticipate, to affect positive change in the newspaper and in the work lives of your colleagues. And it says here that the sooner that 43 percent stops being one's focus, the sooner it becomes an even smaller percentage of any newsroom manager's reality.

2. Do Unto Others ... All Others. There's a difference between being a newsroom boss and being a newsroom manager. This is probably true for any workplace, but as I have been too cowardly to try anything that didn't involve sitting down in an air-conditioned environment, I wouldn't know.

A boss concentrates on the responsibility of overseeing subordinates. A manager, on the other hand, has a responsibility to manage up, down and side to side.

You're doing your job when you tell your boss why an idea works or falls short. You're doing it when you offer praise or constructive

criticism to a reporter, photographer, copy editor or graphic artist. And you're doing it when a fellow manager needs support, an extra pair of eyes or a well-timed heads-up.

Looking forward, newsroom managers' roles are so vital to the continued success of this industry that doing just one or two of those three things won't be enough.

3. Do Unto Others ... As Others Have Done on Your Behalf. If not for the advice, support and regular beatings from saints named Alice Bonner, Mervin Aubespin, Dale Peskin, Phillip Dixon and Kenny Irby, you'd be looking at a blank page. These folks reached out to me, prepared me for bad news, took my name in vain, showed me what success looks like and helped me develop strategies for success of my own.

You know the names of your own saints. If you're anything like me, you remember the times they sat waiting on the other end of the phone line. And you also remember what they asked for in return. Nothing, right?

Well, that isn't exactly true. I know my saints fully expect remuneration in the form of my behaving in like fashion on behalf of those who follow. Yours do, too.

4. Do Unto Others ... But Make Sure You Do Unto Yourself, Too. Please, please, please find time to be good to yourself and to those who matter most in your life. As it's unlikely anyone who either supervises or works for you will tell this, I'll say it: Your value to your newsroom, to this industry, is incalculable. You must find the time to treat yourself and your loved ones like the precious things they are.

Exercise. Eat right. Sleep. Laugh.

One sunny fall day my father looked out the window of his office, saw how the foliage had suddenly gone ablaze, and got up from behind his desk. He then drove to his parents' house, put them in his car, and took them on a drive through the hills of northern Virginia.

Can you imagine how much better he felt going to the office the next day?

5. Do Unto Others ... And Do It Well. If you overheard a news designer complaining that Quark Xpress was inferior to Adobe InDesign, would you know what she was talking about? Ever ride a circulation route with a delivery truck and see the volume of honor box returns? Can you explain how common ad stacks might impact newsroom deadlines?

I believe the well-armed newsroom manager of the present and future should be able to answer "yes" to each of these questions. See, some of our colleagues may pride themselves on having remained ignorant of anything that doesn't involve good, hard reporting and subject-and-verb agreement, but that head-in-the-sand approach prevents newsrooms from keeping step with the changing needs of newspaper publishing.

As newsroom leaders, we must be prepared to step out of our respective comfort zones, to ask questions of colleagues on every floor of the building and those out in remote printing sites, and to offer solutions based on what we've learned.

Because when it comes right down to it, newsrooms of the present and future will require us to do more than manage. They'll require us to thrive.

A CHANCE TO TELL THE WHOLE STORY

CAROLINA GARCIA, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

THE MONTEREY COUNTY HERALD, MONTEREY, CALIF.

'I wanted to make sure people like me were part of the news.'

CAROLINA GARCIA

Age: 49

Education: Bachelor's in mass communication, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

First job in journalism: Writing a weekly column about Hispanics called Vistas Hispanas for The Milwaukee Journal in 1982.

Best thing about your job: How quickly you can inspire the staff to change the newspaper.

Most challenging thing about your job: Personnel, as in recruiting and retention, particularly diverse staff and too few resources.

As a new assistant editor in Milwaukee many years ago, I met with an upset mother whose deaf son had been missing for a few days. Her son was in his early 20s and lived on his own. He was good kid and called her often, the mother said. But she had not heard from him for a few weeks and wanted us to write a story. The mother had not filed a missing person's report but promised that she would. I agreed to run a brief in metro and asked her to keep me posted.

Over the next several days, the mother kept calling. After an especially teary conversation, in which she complained that the police were not helping, we ran another brief with his photograph. Newspapers run few, if any, articles on missing adults until the police become involved. Too many adults disappear for a time for personal reasons then resurface unharmed. Her son was a young black man who frequented gay bars, not the sort of person who gets attention from the press, let alone the police. A brief or two, editors concurred, would be plenty of news coverage.

But the woman's son did not appear. He had become one of serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer's victims. Dahmer, who killed 17 young men, cannibalized several of the bodies.

The day I recognized the name of one the victims as the woman's son was one of my worst days in journalism. I vowed never to disregard people that much of established America, newspapers included, considers on the fringes of society or the law.

One of the driving reasons I became a journalist was because I believed newspapers, and society in general, failed to include people like me. I had read newspaper coverage in my early twenties about Hispanics and wondered why the stories presented us as victims, in crisis or need (the brown-eyed children of the world who needed to be saved), or as perpetrators of violent crimes. While attending night school, I had worked as a community activist, marching over issues of bilingual education, police violence, and migrant farm labor rights. My desire to write and to challenge institutional thinking led me to newspapers. I wanted to make sure people like me were part of the news.

The death of the young man tested that vow, forcing me to question how to put into practice what so many others and I believe. How do you shape the news report? How does a journalist of color make a difference in the newsroom?

I had a chance to test that commitment. In reading the metro briefs I came across a report that police had found the body of a prostitute dumped in a garbage bin in a dangerous part of town. It was the second or third such discovery in recent months. The newspaper started an investigation and found that at least nine women, mostly prostitutes and almost all African

American, had been slain in the last two years and that the bodies had been dumped in or near the same part of town. We broke that story, prodding police to begin investigating the crimes more thoroughly.

An angry African American community railed against police and accused the paper of covering up the killings. Even though the newspaper uncovered the extensive nature of the crimes, the anger directed at the newspaper showed us how much work we have to do to gain the public's trust.

Those two experiences have stayed with me. Since then, I have often challenged the journalistic standards we use to determine who is newsworthy and who is not. I have been part of many conversations with colleagues about how we define the news and how we enhance coverage of people historically, and still routinely, excluded from the newspaper.

Being an editor makes it easier to challenge, question and push writers into asking deeper, more probing questions. When someone says that you can help shape the news report, believe it. You can. It takes understanding and honesty. Why cover one missing person and not another? Why write about one community's aspirations and not another?

As editors we can and should encourage debate about the role we play as gatekeepers of the news. We can and should question coverage standards we set, including the kinds and number of photographs published. We can hire diverse staff, mentor reporters and seek creative ways of adding new voices to our pages. As an example, when a talented Hispanic reporter left my newspaper recently to attend law school, we hired her as a freelancer to write a Sunday metro cover column about the Hispanic community, focusing on local people and events.

Good journalism is about getting the right stories, photos and graphics, and presenting it all on the page so that readers get it quickly and easily. This is a field that draws people who have a passion to pursue a story and then tell it to readers. But being an editor is also about supporting, promoting and pushing journalists, fresh or seasoned, to reflect and respond to the entire communities they serve.

I will always remember the face, the tears and the broken voice of the mother asking us to write about her missing son. My standards take that woman's face into account now, every day, as I do my best to tell the whole story.

CREATING REWARDS FOR OUR READERS

KATHARINE FONG, ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR FOR FEATURES

SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS, SAN JOSE, CALIF.

'The more diverse our pool of editors, the more reflective we will be.'

KATHARINE FONG

Age: 48

Education: Master of Arts in classical archaeology, Antioch University; Bachelor of Arts in sociology and film, University of California-Berkeley.

First job in journalism: Writer and editor for a modern Greek studies journal.

Best thing about your job: The variety, the talented people I work with, the feedback from readers.

Most challenging thing about your job: Connecting with a changing, diverse community; coping with limited resources.

Whenever a reporter or copy editor expresses interest in stepping into an assigning editor or higher position, my first inclination is to shout, "Are you insane?" Don't they see that the job is crazy, with long hours, daily crises, much hand-holding and ever-present deadlines?

Then I remember the other side of the job, the good stuff, what pulled me in and keeps me doing what I love: the opportunity to shape coverage and connect with readers; the challenge to make an impact with well-written, well-edited, original stories; the fun in working with a group of creative and smart journalists.

Bottom line: The job is important, and influential. An assigning editor can have more impact on a community and on readers over time than a reporter or copyeditor. Because of this, it's critical that young, aspiring and mid-career journalists of color consider editing as a career goal. The more diverse our pool of editors, the more reflective newspapers will be of the communities they serve.

An example: Almost one year ago, my paper, the San Jose Mercury News, launched a new, weekly Style section. On the face of it, the section is fun and breezy, with its focus on fashion, beauty and personalities; stories and short items track trends in popular culture such as "The Sexless Marriage," our obsession with body hair, one woman's journey from infertility to adoption.

But behind the scenes, Style is largely staffed by women of color – an Asian American section editor, an Asian American fashion editor, an Asian American designer, a Latina layout person. Many of our regular contributors are also women of color. Their ages range from 20-something to well into their 40s, and in addition to bringing their skills as journalists to the table, they bring their backgrounds, cultures, experiences.

The result is that Style cannot help but be seen through a diverse lens. Stories and photos regularly depict people of color, of all ages and occupations and points of view. We've run stories on the difficulties Muslim teens face in attending high school proms, when their families and culture dictate a strict dress code and oppose mixing of the sexes. Our story on late-life sex and dating — an increasingly active scene given our longer, healthier life spans — explored some surprising and unexpected issues. A potential upcoming story looks at how

the adult children of recent Asian immigrants are often compelled to deceive their parents in pretending to be non-dating virgins. And the faces we present in our fashion and beauty coverage reflect our core readership, which is about 50 percent Caucasian, 25 percent Asian and 25 percent Latino.

Like the editors of Style, assigning editors directly influence the stories that reporters write and how the material is presented in photos, layout and design. In addition to line editing stories, an assigning editor's role is to help generate ideas, determine what stories deserve attention, suggest ways reporters might pursue stories and sources, and make sure they've explored all angles.

Multiply that by the handful or more reporters an editor usually supervises and you've got someone with real power, an editor who can really make a difference. And an editor of color, of course, brings an added dimension in perspective and experience that can make stories even more authentic to readers.

Editors also play a big role when they help rethink and freshen content during a section redesign. Again, editors of color bring viewpoints and backgrounds that are essential in fully realizing a paper's potential to connect with its audience.

At the Mercury News, we're about to launch our revamped Features sections. The editors and designers have worked for weeks, with input from others, to try to come up with a 21st-century format that communicates news and information in an accessible way, and takes a broader view of entertainment and popular culture. We want our new sections to have attitude and spark, to reflect the intelligence, interests, and — most significantly — the rich diversity of our community. I'm gratified that I have been able to help shape what we present to readers.

So how can you break into the editing ranks? Number one: make your aspirations known. Tell your supervisor, tell the top editors at your paper. No one will know what you want unless you tell them. If you're not sure about the job, try a cross-training stint, or ask for internal training or an outside seminar.

It's always hard to pin down qualities an editor should possess, and different jobs call for different skills, but I'd say someone who can see and appreciate the big picture while being rigorous about basic details and facts, who is open to new ideas and ways of doing things, who is intellectually curious, and who has a MASSIVE sense of humor is perfect.

Good luck!

OUR ROLE HAS MEANING

RONNIE AGNEW, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

THE CLARION-LEDGER, JACKSON, MISS.

'We have not grown the next generation of editors, but it's not too late.'

RONNIE AGNEW

Age: 41

Education: Bachelor of Arts degrees in radio and television and English, University of Mississippi.

First job in journalism: Reporter for the Greenwood (Miss.) Commonwealth.

Best thing about your job: Interacting with all of the interesting people who want to have an audience with the editor.

Most challenging thing about your job: Juggling multiple duties and being equally good at them all. There are very high expectations.

As a kid, I never dreamed I would be an editor of a daily newspaper, but in the years that I have been, it's become my desire to see more people who look like me in the executive office.

There are too few of us now, and my industry is paying a great price for it. The price we pay is almost too subtle for outsiders to notice. We pay a price for stories that go untold, for young people lacking mentors, for diversity-free executive offices making decisions without full awareness of potential audiences.

To our detriment, we have not grown the next generation of editors, but through my optimistic perch, I find that it's not too late. We have a responsibility to find those bright minds and to let them know the impact they can have in newsrooms small and large.

The Clarion-Ledger is Mississippi's largest newspaper with a rich history of righting historical wrongs in a state which battles to get its true story out to a misunderstanding nation. The impact that a person of color can have in this state and newsroom is enormous. That fact is proven daily.

The Clarion-Ledger happens to be the only newspaper of its size in America to have both an African American editor and managing editor. We don't wear our ethnic title on our sleeves. But we do realize that we have been presented an opportunity like few others.

That opportunity puts us in a position of mentoring young journalists of color, working in communities with large minority populations and shaping a news report that reflects the diversity of our market. That opportunity requires us to lead our staff into subjects where they may not have gone, to get beyond superficial diversity efforts in search of the real story.

I should mention something else before I go on. As challenging as this job can be, as drained as I sometimes am at the end of the day, this is the most exhilarating job in the newsroom. On some days, I have to be Dr. Phil. On others, I have to be Oprah. On some days, I have to be an accountant. On others, I have to be a strategic planner.

At the heart of all of those responsibilities is one that I never lose sight of: I have to be an editor. There is great weight in that word. The people who hold that title should understand the power and the responsibility in the office that they hold.

If you do the editor's job correctly, you are responsive to your community. Newspapers, I have long believed, are the only true medium

by which community members can converse with each other. If an editor is doing his job, he is instrumental in facilitating that conversation.

That strong voice also can be used to do much good in identifying the next generation of editors. Last summer, I received an email from a young journalist who had crossed my path several years ago. I did not remember her name. I could not remember her face. But the correspondence she sent was more than confirmation that I am here for a reason.

"Dear Mr. Agnew," her letter read, "I am writing to let you know what an impact you made on me when we met in 1998 at a job conference. Because of your advice, I have been a reporter and am well on my way to achieving my dream of becoming an editor."

I keep that letter in my private file to remind me that there is a greater reason for me holding the editor's office. I constantly remind myself that I am not here for myself; I am here for the benefit of others. I find it important to tell young journalists the truth about being in charge. "Absolutely," I tell them, "being the editor gives you power and authority." But I also tell them that being the editor requires a commitment to seek the truth, a desire to understand unfamiliar cultures, a willingness to listen to the ideas of others.

It also requires an ability to give back, unselfishly. A few months ago, I took a walk through the neighborhood with my 11-year-old daughter. About 15 minutes into our walk, she looked at me seriously and asked, "Daddy, what does being an editor mean?"

I struggled to find an answer short enough to accommodate the attention span of her 11-year-old mind.

But when I really think about it, it is difficult to explain the job functions of an editor.

So I choose to think of the job this way: I am here to ensure that my community gets a snapshot of itself every day. I am here to chronicle the triumph as much as the tragedy, the celebrations more than the pain.

It is a job I love. But I won't feel complete until I have recruited others into this wonderful industry. I won't feel that I am done until I persuade more newspapers, big and small, that we have to find the next generation to assume our offices. That generation must reflect America's diversity.

A GRATIFYING TURN AS THE COACH

NORA LOPEZ, STATE EDITOR

SAN ANTONIO EXPRESS-NEWS

'I have found a great deal of satisfaction in helping others to succeed.'

NORA LOPEZ

Age: 40

Education: Bachelor of Arts, Pan American University.

First job in journalism: Weekend reporter at hometown daily, The Edinburg Daily Review.

Best thing about your job: Those 'aha' moments when you've helped a reporter see a better lede or find a fresh angle.

Most challenging thing about your job: Finding a balance between work and a personal life.

After nearly 15 years as a beat reporter covering cops, city hall and education, I finally became an assistant city editor when the opportunity to oversee the criminal justice team at the San Antonio Express-News opened up.

Although I'd enjoyed covering all of the basic beats for the San Antonio and Dallas dailies, cops held a special place in my heart. I loved the excitement of breaking news and the rush of adrenaline when writing on deadline. I also enjoyed covering the politics of the police department, the jockeying for power and the corruption it breeds. What better way I thought to give editing a try than to oversee the reporters doing the job I most enjoyed. I also thought it was about time I left my comfy front row seat in the peanut gallery.

In particular, I wanted to know just what did an ACE do? Why was it that when I did manage to turn my story in early, invariably my editor couldn't get to it for another hour or two? And why wasn't my editor sitting by his phone, eagerly awaiting my next update? Surely mine was the most important story he was editing that day. The answers, I now know, include budget meetings, graphics, photo requests, expense reports, evaluations, job candidate interviews, project meetings and oh yeah, editing. Although many had warned me about the endless meetings, no one told me that I would become a mentor-counselor-nagging mother to a brood of reporters with a wide range of talent and abilities, not to mention personalities. It took me nearly a year to really figure out whether or not I was truly suited for this job. And although I still miss seeing my name on a big Page 1 scoop, I have found a great deal of satisfaction in helping others to succeed.

The most gratifying moments in this job come unexpectedly. Like when you help a reporter turn an inside story into a metro cover piece, or a metro cover story into a 1A reader. Or when you coach a rookie reporter through his first byline story. Or coax greatness out of a reporter your bosses perceive as being average. And when I say help, I don't mean rewrite. I remember once asking an editor if they missed writing, and the editor replied, "No, I'm still writing every day." Dismayed, I told myself that if I ever did become an editor, I would refrain from wholesale rewriting.

It has not been easy. There are times — especially when you're pushing up against dead-

line — when it seems as though the fastest fix is to rewrite the piece. I am guilty of that. But I've found it's much more effective to point out the weaknesses/strengths in a story and allow the reporter to make the suggested changes. I especially enjoy it when I recommend a minor change, like turning a buried anecdote or fact into a lead, and seeing the reporter's face light up with understanding. The best compliment I ever got was from a reporter who turned in his story ahead of deadline because I was leaving on vacation and he wanted me to give it the first read. I knew then that he trusted me.

An editor's job is more than just checking copy for spelling, grammar and libel. You are a mentor, a counselor, a manager and a leader. You're an advocate for your reporters. You talk up their stories to other editors. You negotiate with the designers for more space when your reporter's story runs a little too long, but it's such a good read. You run down graphic information and put in photo assignments to help stories get better play. You assess your reporters' talents and capabilities, giving them direction when they need it or free rein when they don't. You make sure they have the tools and resources they need to succeed, whether it's attending a seminar or acquiring the latest police scanner. You see to it that they are well compensated and appreciated for the good work that they do. Your energy and enthusiasm sets the tone for your team. Reporters know when an editor is simply going through the motions. More than anything, they just want a little honest feedback.

I am still evolving as an editor. Some days I'm better at it than others. On those days, I walk around the newsroom mumbling that I'm ready to go back to reporting. But I know I'm lying. As one of my colleagues teases me, I enjoy being the mother hen. I like seeing my reporters shine and take pleasure when our team does well. As an editor overseeing a dozen reporters in several bureaus, I have more influence and impact on the daily product now than I ever could as a reporter covering a single beat. And I find that there is a lot of job satisfaction in that.

THE THRILL OF THE STORY

SHERRI JACKSON, CITY EDITOR

THE JOURNAL TIMES, RACINE, WIS.

'I'm proud that when readers see the paper, it's my handiwork.'

SHERRI JACKSON

Age: 38

Education: Bachelor of Arts in liberal arts, Dec. 1987, Southeastern Louisiana University; Master of Science in education, 2003, University of Wisconsin-Platteville.

First job in journalism: Editor, California Voice, a black-owned weekly in Oakland, Calif.

Best thing about your job: No day is the same. Each day is an opportunity to start fresh.

Most challenging part of your job: Leading change.

I'm a woman of power.

As the city editor of The Journal Times in Racine, Wis., I hold a tremendous amount of power. I determine what people will read when they pick up their newspapers in the morning.

It might sound egotistical, but I'm proud of the fact that when thousands of Journal Times readers see the paper, it's my handiwork. They don't see my byline, of course, because I don't write that often anymore. Yet I know I guide the assignments and the reporters, so readers do see the results of my leadership and my power every day.

What other job allows you to help shape the history of the community you work in? If newspapers are the first drafts of history, then I'm the first editor of the history books. With the hundreds of e-mails, telephone calls and snail mail I receive on any given day, I get to decide which coverage request will make the newspaper.

When historians record the events surrounding the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, I have the thrill of knowing I was among editors to lead newsrooms in reporting on and writing about one of the biggest events of my lifetime.

Only journalists would and could understand the intensity of a newsroom when there is a breaking news story, especially one with local connections. For example, when the space shuttle Columbia came apart above Texas, killing seven astronauts, including former Racine resident Laurel Blair Salton Clark, my newsroom became a command center for newspapers and television stations throughout the country.

I'm not ashamed to say that I was bursting with pride to know that I was leading the way and that bigger newspapers wanted what I had a connection to Laurel Clark's family and friends.

What other job allows you to shape the lives of young reporters while rejuvenating the careers of veterans? When a young reporter gets the biggest scoop of his or her life and doesn't know what to do with it, there's complete joy in helping coach the person through the reporting and writing process. Even so, I may end up doing a lot of rewriting with my name never hitting the newspaper. That's OK. My reward is knowing that I made a difference to that reporter and his career.

What other job gives you a clean piece of paper to work with the day after you've made mistakes? I've made many mistakes along the

way. Some have been costly, but all have been learning experiences.

Unfortunately, there's no management school for mistakes, except the one of hard knocks. But what is great about the business is you can't afford to dwell on today's mistakes because tomorrow has a new set of challenges.

And if I meet a challenge that is beyond me, I've been blessed with excellent mentors, including my executive editor, who are always willing to help me sort out the issues and develop strategies.

What other job would allow me to sit around the table with some of the smartest people in the world to make decisions that could make or break people's lives? Depending on which way the pendulum swings, we could bring joy or disaster. Either way, many people are depending on me to make the best decision given the situation.

Simply put, I love being an editor, and I wouldn't have it any other way. I am committed to the editing track. I want to move to the next level of managing editor or even executive editor. I've been bitten by the management bug, and I don't plan to stop until I become publisher.

STAYING GROUNDED WHILE RISING

KEN BUNTING, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER

'High and important on my list of advice is to know who you are.'

KEN BUNTING

Age: 55

Education: Associate of Arts in journalism, Lee College (Texas); Bachelor of Arts in journalism/history, Texas Christian University; one year of law school at Salmon P. Chase College of Law (Kentucky); Advanced Executive Program, Northwestern University.

First job in journalism: Reporter /management trainee Corpus Christi (Texas) Caller-Times.

Best thing about your job: Making a difference and having an impact on the quality of journalism in the Seattle P-I and the quality of life in the Puget Sound region.

If you are old enough and a political junkie like me, you'll almost certainly agree that the most memorable opening line ever uttered in a vice presidential debate was the one by Admiral James B. Stockdale, Ross Perot's 1992 running mate.

"Who am I? Why am I here?"

The ill-chosen opener, deadpanned into the microphone when it was the admiral's turn to speak, brought laughter from the audience, fueled weeks of pundit ridicule, and provided plentiful joke material for late-night TV monologues.

Shamefully, I must confess that I joined the rest of America in that chorus of mean-spirited chuckles. But in a manner of speaking, those questions — Who am I? Why am I here? — are precisely what Greg Moore and Bobbi Bowman asked me, along with other top newspaper editors, to address in personal essays for a book intended to inspire more young journalists of color to aspire to be editors.

Hopefully, the admission that I've struggled with the assignment does not make me appear as foolish as the admiral did on that night in Atlanta in 1992. But for the sake of imparting important advice that might help or inspire future generations of minority editors, I'll gladly take my chances.

My struggle with articulation was certainly not a lack of willingness. Nor was it that I consider myself uncentered, dishonest or particularly confused about how I came to this point in my life and career. In fact, high and important on my list of advice for young journalists who may now, or someday, see themselves as newsroom leaders is to know who you are and be who you are.

Reinventing yourself for your ambitions is a slam-dunk recipe for disappointment. Of course, you should never stop seeking personal and professional growth, no matter how far you rise, how much success you enjoy or how much satisfaction you find in where your career takes you. But be real, be honest and be focused on something other than self-aggrandizement.

I have a personal bias that the best leaders in almost any field are those who found that circumstances were right when the opportunity to lead presented itself. While it is not based on anything cursory, let alone scientific, my guess is that the majority of, and the most effective, newsroom leaders did not set out to be editors, and did not necessarily see themselves in that role early in their careers.

That is not to say that those who are goal oriented should stymie their ambitions. And,

heaven knows, we'll never reach acceptable levels of diversity in any of the professional or management ranks of our industry without people who push and advocate change.

But those who aspire to, assume, or luck into leadership roles need to understand that it's not all about them.

In my 11th year leading the newsroom at the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, I still consider it an honor and an important task of stewardship. I try to remain grounded in the humbling realization that the paper, its mission, our readers, my talented staff and my wonderful family are all more important than I am.

I worried in penning this chapter how I could explain, in a manner that would be clear and persuasive to aspiring journalists, that preparing for leadership isn't just about being smart, talented, hardworking or dedicated to high journalistic standards.

Yes, we reward those qualities and we look for them when we recruit. But an editor who is absolutely convinced that he or she is the smartest and most talented person in the building does not have cause to congratulate themselves. Instead, they need urgent remedial training in leadership and recruiting.

Every journalist knows, or soon finds out, that bringing passion and commitment to your job forces a balancing act for the rest of your life. The perks and trappings of the top executive's office do not make that part of it better.

Should you be lucky enough, as I was, to marry another journalist, there may be grudging understanding when you pack up the laptop to take it along on a family vacation or struggle with a time conflict between a big breaking story, your son's Little League game or an obligatory community civic event.

Remember, that balancing act is your challenge, not your spouse's. And, the key to finding balance is not simplistic or formulaic.

Thomas Kochman, the Chicago-based anthropologist who writes and lectures about cross-cultural communications, does an eye-opening lecture about how workplace conflict and management failures often grow out of cultural misunderstanding. Anglo managers are often shocked when they lose a top Hispanic staffer who took a pay cut and moved across country to be near their family, Kochman says. Or, they are baffled that following three days of bereavement leave for the death of a parent or sibling, an African-American staffer's performance and demeanor isn't back to normal.

I like looking around the room and studying body language when Tom gives that lecture to management groups.

There are, of course, some blank stares and grimaces of disagreement. There are also expressions of excitement and realization.

But I've also seen signs of disbelief on faces of managers of color, not so much questioning Tom's point, but expressing incredulity that no-brainer concepts were news to anyone.

It is a reminder for me that the challenges of a multicultural environment are real for all who want to lead. Journalists of color should not make the mistake of putting themselves above it.

SOME TIPS FOR THE TRADE

JIM JOHNSON, NEWS EDITOR

LINCOLN JOURNAL STAR, LINCOLN, NEB.

'Know how to do everything, but beware that you're not exploited.'

JIM JOHNSON

Age: 39

Education: Bachelor of Science in mass communication, print emphasis; Bemidji State University, Bemidji, Minn., 1989.

First job in journalism: Editor, Ojibwe News, Bemidji, Minn.

Best thing about your job: Having a big local news event and everyone works together to do a great job, and seeing the results the next day.

Most challenging thing about your job: Balancing my managerial duties with my love of working "in the trenches" with my staff.

For me, and perhaps like many others, being an editor was not what I set out to do when I decided to go to the small state college in Bemidji, Minn.

My passion was, and still is, photography. But as luck would have it, the college I went to gutted its photo program after I was two years into it. I had been working as the photo editor of the college newspaper and doing a little writing on the side. So rather than jump ship to another college, I shifted my major to journalism.

Which brings me to **Tip No. 1:** Be flexible.

I began taking classes in writing, editing and design, and using what I learned to take on other jobs at the college paper. I also took classes in other areas — some that interested me and others that I thought would be useful as a journalist.

I studied anthropology, sociology, political science, history, computers, several science and art classes and French (in hindsight, I probably should have studied Spanish).

Tip No. 2: Know a lot about that which interests you and a little about everything else.

During my last year in college, I began working part time for a small Native American weekly as a writer, photographer, copy editor and designer. A few times I even delivered the paper to the newsstands. (Tip 2b: Know how to do everything, but beware that you're not exploited).

Although it was hard to balance school and work, I found the yearlong experience very rewarding and got to know a lot more about the Native communities in northern Minnesota.

Tip No. 3: Take advantage of opportunities to work for newspapers that serve your particular minority group. Because they often have small staffs, you have a better chance to learn to do a lot of different things.

Although I never had a formal internship while in college, I consider this to be as good if not better than any internship I could have gotten elsewhere. (Tip 3b: Do an internship)

During my first year after college, I worked for the small daily in my college town as a reporter and photographer. It was probably the only place I have worked in journalism where I was the only minority. But this was the late 1980s and the idea of diversity in the newsroom was just catching on.

After about a year there, I got a call from a friend I worked with on the college newspaper. He was now the news editor at the Grand Forks (N.D.) Herald and was inviting me to apply for a copy editing/design position.

Up until then, I had been mostly doing writ-

ing and photography and only a smattering of editing and design. Computer pagination was still coming of age and I was always interested in the technological aspects of putting out a newspaper. And I always thought of myself as a solid, straightforward news writer who could edit another writer's story in a pinch. But what convinced to me to apply for the job was the chance to work at a bigger paper for more money.

Tip No. 4: Good pay is great, but it's nothing if you hate your job. Don't assume more money means a better job. But in this case it was a good decision for me and I learned a lot in the five years I was there.

During my years in Grand Forks I had several opportunities to attend corporate and industry-sponsored workshops and conferences, including the first Unity conference for minority journalists in Atlanta. This is also when I began being active in the Native American Journalists Association.

Tip No. 5: Become of member of your minority journalists association and take opportunities to go to conferences and workshops. These are excellent ways to make contacts with others in the industry. Most of my job opportunities came from people I met through these activities. Also, as you get older and wiser, you can help young minorities trying to break into the business.

After Grand Forks, I worked for newspapers in Spokane, Wash., Fort Myers and St. Petersburg, Fla., and finally Lincoln, Neb. Along the way I tried to learn as much as I could, improve my skills and take on more responsibilities.

Tip No. 6: Start small and work your way to the top. Personally, I feel I'm a much better editor having put in my time doing the grunt work at smaller papers than I would be had I went straight from college to a big-city newspaper. It's much easier to recover from your mistakes on a smaller stage. And trust me, you will make mistakes. But, hopefully, you will make fewer as you advance in your career.

With hard work and a little luck, you will succeed.

TAKING THE PLUNGE

RONNIE RAMOS, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

THE TIMES, SHREVEPORT, LA.

'Prepare for a role as an editor: Do what you are doing now very well.'

RONNIE RAMOS

Age: 40

Education: Bachelor of Science in journalism, University of Miami , 1984; Nieman Fellow, Harvard University, 2003.

First job in journalism: Part-time sports clerk, The Miami Herald, 1983.

Best thing about your job: Creating an atmosphere that allows reporters and editors to put out a newspaper that gets better each day.

Most challenging thing about your job: Managing people and trying to improve a newspaper.

The best editor I ever worked for talked me into becoming an editor when I was 26. I wasn't exactly thrilled with the idea – I was covering federal courts for the Miami Herald, a wonderful beat.

John Brecher (now a wine columnist for the Wall Street Journal) was one of those charismatic leaders who could get the best out of people. And he was very persuasive. He took me to a spring training baseball game one afternoon and promised to tell me everything I needed to know about being an editor. We ate hot dogs and talked baseball for a couple of hours. He then said we needed to leave. What about being an editor? I asked.

Oh yeah, just be willing to make decisions. Everyone will be coming to you for an answer. Don't be afraid to make a decision. That wasn't a lot of information. But that was the extent of editor training back then. In all fairness to John, he was the ultimate mentor. And he was right: as an editor you get paid to make decisions.

The best way to break in as an editor? Make sure you have a great mentor. The toughest part about being an editor is that almost every situation, decision and news event you will deal with will be a unique situation. There will usually be more than one right way – and more than one wrong way – to deal with the issue. Find editors who will talk to you, ask you tough questions and push you. You don't want a friend; you want someone who sees part of their job as making you better.

Try it out. At smaller and some mid-sized newspapers, there is often a need for someone to serve as the editor in charge on a weekend or during an editor's vacation. Offer to fill in and see what it's like. At larger newspapers, see if you can do a stint as a bureau editor to see what the job would be like.

Or just go for it. It's not a one-way road. One of the main reasons I became an editor is because John promised that if I hated it – or was bad at it – I could go back to reporting. Set your ego aside. Not all good reporters make good editors. Give it six months to a year and if it's not a good fit, go do something else in journalism you like.

When I look for new editors, I am most interested in how they think. Almost as important is how they work with people. We all have horror stories of the great word editor who treated reporters like trash. Those days are over. Good editors must be able to work well with other people. That is their job: to make reporters and their stories better.

Can they solve problems? Are they willing to look for a unique way to cover a story or do they fall back to the "way we always do it?" Do they get excited about a good story? Are they more interested in what gets in the paper than they are about taking credit for every good idea?

As far as prior experiences, I have seen good editors come from all kinds of journalism backgrounds. My managing editor started his career as a photographer. One of the best young editors I know was a page designer. The one thing they all have in common? They were all very good at what they did. They established their credibility as an editor by being a top performer before they were an editor.

This is the best way to prepare for a role as an editor. Do what you are doing now very well.

This is important for young editors for several reasons. First, it gives you a base for making different kinds of decisions. And, even though you have a title, you will need people to follow you and your directives. If they respect what you did before you became an editor, you will get the benefit of the doubt.

It also works up the command line, especially if you become an editor at the same paper. Your editors will give you more leeway and chances because they had confidence in your previous work.

Finally, change your expectations. All good journalists have egos — it's what motivates us, gets us through the editing process and allows us to place our work before thousands of readers.

The thrill of seeing your byline or photo or design in print needs to be replaced. A good editor needs to get satisfaction from seeing a good coverage plan come together, reporters working together and a newspaper getting better.

And never, ever forget the people. The best compliment I ever received came a few years ago. A former reporter I worked with was a major player on the Miami Herald's team that won the Pulitzer Prize. I was gone from the paper and had nothing to do with the winning effort. I called to congratulate an editor, who was celebrating. Manny Garcia heard I was on the phone and picked it up.

Amid the heady chaos of a newsroom celebration, he paused. "I wanted to say thanks for believing in me and giving me a chance," he said. "I really appreciate it."

That's why I got into editing.

THE EDITOR'S CHECKLIST

RICK RODRIGUEZ, EXECUTIVE EDITOR / SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT

THE SACRAMENTO BEE, SACRAMENTO, CALIF.

'What do I look for in an editor? It's all about making a difference.'

RICK RODRIGUEZ

Age: 49

Education: Associate of Arts, Hartnell Community College; Bachelor of Arts in communications, Stanford University

First job in journalism: reporter, The Salinas Californian (Hometown newspaper)

Best thing about your job: Seeing the newspaper have impact, entertain and inform. Also seeing people grow in their jobs.

Most challenging thing about your job: Juggling everything from personnel issues, to budget issues, to reader complaints to journalism issues. It never ends.

Promotion is not something most newsrooms do well.

One day you might be a reporter and the next you're an editor, managing folks who the day before were your colleagues, your friends, your cohorts with whom you regularly joined in complaining about management.

You've had little or no training in performance management. You don't quite understand the strategic goals of the paper or maybe you didn't even know the paper had strategic goals. You've never been responsible for doing a daily news budget or a newsroom budget. You didn't realize that your former peer took that much editing and managing. You're pressured from the top and the rung below.

What all seemed from afar to be so easy, all of a sudden isn't. Why, you might say, would you want to become an editor then? Because you can really make a difference in a newspaper, in a community and in people's careers. And that's what many of us got in the business to do, to make a difference.

So what do I look for in an editor?

>> **Passion for the business.** A good editor must be able to inspire, to motivate and to come to play every day. You'll find that your passion for good journalism and for people can be infectious. Everyone might not agree with the direction you set or they might even complain about whether you should be an editor. In the end, focusing on good journalism helps bring folks to common ground.

>> **Credibility and ethics.** Credibility is the foundation for any top-notch newspaper. It's the thing we as an industry have to sell. Editors have to be credible both to the public and to the people with whom they work. They must establish and enforce ethical standards.

>> **Fairness.** This is important not only for the journalism but for the management of journalists. You've got to have steely determination in this business but an open mind. I don't believe that anyone can meet a standard of "total objectivity." We are, in fact, subjective when we choose what we think is the lead of a story or the best photograph or the top story of the day. But what we can and must insist upon is to try to be fair with the way stories are written, researched and presented. We must be fair in our dealings with employees, with other departments in the newspaper, with readers and with subjects of stories.

>> **The ability to deal with tough person-**

nel issues. Perhaps one of the hardest transitions to make is going from being a colleague — one of the gang — to a supervisor who controls assignments, raises and the opportunity for advancement. It isn't easy telling someone who is your friend that he or she isn't meeting standards or that their raise isn't what they thought or worse yet, that they are fired. Fairness here again plays a role but so does confidence in the fact that you've done the right things, that you've had the tough talks, that you've tried to put the person in a position to succeed and that you've been even-handed in dealing with situations. The flip side is that it is enormously rewarding to see folks succeed and to know you've played a part in that.

>> **Skills.** You have to be a pretty good journalist. It's kind of like being a baseball manager: Candidates with solid fundamentals, good ethics and good people skills often succeed.

These are but a few of the qualities that I look for in editors and newsroom leaders. Now what should you look to your leaders for as new editors?

>> **Training, both formal and informal.** It is done much too rarely. If there is no training budget, go to lunch with other supervisors, pick a mentor and exchange ideas.

>> **Support in your decision-making.** This doesn't mean blind support. There will be times you make mistakes. You can minimize those by learning and adhering to the newspaper's standards and goals.

>> **Room to grow.** Ask for more responsibilities as you develop and then deliver the best you can. Ask your editors to allow you to take risks. If you succeed, great. If you don't, grow from the experience. But don't make reckless or unrealistic promises. It will hurt your credibility in the long run.

Editing isn't easy but it is rewarding. To me, it's all about making a difference.

MAKING THE MOST OF THE POSITION

VICTOR PANICHKUL, MANAGING EDITOR

THE STATESMAN JOURNAL, SALEM, ORE.

VICTOR PANICHKUL

Age: 39

Education: Bachelor of Arts in journalism and international politics, Baylor University.

First job in journalism: Copy editor in Springfield, Mo.

Best thing about your job: The satisfaction that comes from helping people maximize their potential.

Most challenging thing about your job: Finding personal as well as professional balance.

'Spending time with people is the most valuable investment you can make.'

Go ahead. Ask me what I love about being an editor.

Is it starting my day most mornings answering calls from irate readers? Or managing financial budgets and keeping track of the news hole?

Those things are actually the furthest from my mind.

Making a difference in my community through the stories we tell. That's what I love. Helping people grow creatively and professionally in our craft. That's what gets me excited.

Much of the challenge for me as managing editor at the Statesman Journal involves a delicate balancing act. Balancing administrative demands with journalistic ones. It's a constant struggle, especially at small and mid-sized papers where there aren't very many layers of management. But a successful balance will ensure that you are getting to do enough of those things that make you happy and feel fulfilled, as well as give you those financial bonuses when you complete your goals.

Minimizing paper-pushing time

It's important to try to minimize paper-pushing time and maximize people time. Here are some strategies:

Don't let press releases and other correspondence pile up. Touch it once and get rid of it by assigning it as a story, schedule it in your calendar if it's an event you need to attend, or dump it.

Create and use form letters to deal with application rejections or other recurring correspondence.

Don't rely on your memory. Use Microsoft Outlook or other calendar programs. Schedule everything. If you have an assistant, give her access to your calendar.

Maintain a to-do list on your calendar. Be sure you allot enough time for each task so that you don't overload your day.

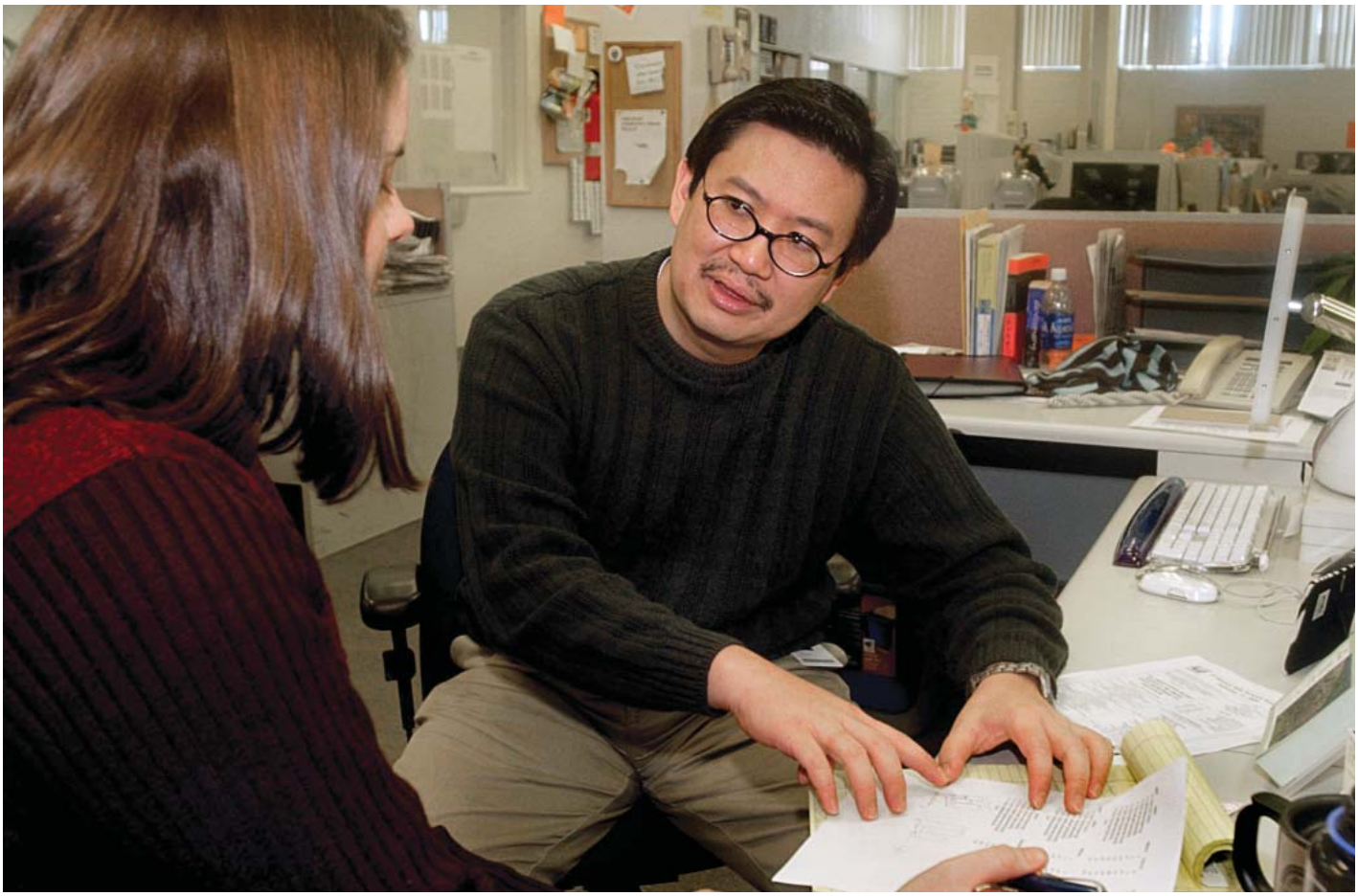
Delegate as often as possible. Especially when it's something that will help someone else grow.

Maintain files in Microsoft Word or other programs on people you have to evaluate. When they do something good or bad, call it up and write it down. It will save you tons of time when you have to write performance reviews. If you don't do that you're more likely to remember the negative things than the positive.

Maximizing people time

Spending time on people is the most valuable investment you can make.

People crave feedback, which is necessary for professional growth. Reporters, photographers, designers, artists, copy editors... it doesn't matter who they are. If you don't give them regular feedback, both positive and constructive, they'll soon think you don't care. And then they're only one step away from not



caring about their own work in the paper.

It's important for people to feel like their input is sought and valued. So it's vital to build a collaborative environment by involving others in decision-making. It may take more time to do things this way but the end result will be much better.

Talented people will stay if given an opportunity to shape their own future. So find opportunities for people to try out something different: assigning, copy editing, designing. There are plenty of opportunities with vacation coverage, maternity leaves, and such.

Some strategies to help make the most of your people time:

Make it a point to stop by the desk of staff members whose work was noted positively in the morning news meeting critiques and pass along praise.

Find positive things to say about someone's work before offering constructive criticism.

To further a collaborative environment, involve teams of people in coming up with solutions. Give them a goal and let them loose.

Don't make it seem like you're the only one calling the 1A lineup. Ask other people for their opinions. It will create a more diverse page that will appeal to a broader range of people.

You eat lunch every day, as well as take coffee breaks. Use that time to get to know staff members and find out what they're thinking and how they're doing.

Post every position that comes open in the newsroom. You might not realize that someone you hadn't thought of is interested.

In meetings — when assigning tasks or giving coverage directions — sum up who's following up on what so that everyone who has a task understands that they have an assignment.

Before reporters head out on a story, be sure they completely understand the point of the story. Never just email them a budget line. This will prevent re-writing and re-interviewing later.

While thinking about people, it's also important to keep in mind that you've got loved ones at home that you need to spend time with, too.

Make room for important family events and keep your promise to be there!

If you're going to be late for dinner, you or your assistant better call home ahead of time. There's nothing more embarrassing than an overcooked meal and a stewing spouse.

WHAT IT TAKES

PANKAJ PAUL, DESIGN AND PRESENTATION DIRECTOR

THE NEWS JOURNAL, WILMINGTON, DEL.

PANKAJ PAUL

Age: 39

Education: Bachelor's in communications, Master's in English, Panjab University, India

First job in journalism: News Artist, The Daily Record, N.J.

Best thing about your job: I work with some energetic and creative journalists. We do great journalism and learn something new everyday.

Most challenging thing about your job: It can be easy to get bogged down by the routine and the mundane. We are always looking for innovative ways to keep our journalists – and our readers – actively engaged in the news process and the newspaper.

'One leadership style is right for you: the one that you are comfortable with.'

Oswaldo Jimenez, assistant photo editor for the News Journal in Delaware, became a manager to offer guidance, support, and encouragement to individuals with a passion — and to challenge and inspire those without it.

Jill Fredel, assistant managing editor for the News Journal in Delaware, said she was ready when she could see the difference good editors could make and the drag that bad or unenthusiastic editors could cause. Jill knew she could be one of the good ones.

Deborah Henley, assistant managing editor for Newsday, was drawn to the role because she enjoyed the collegial process of working with others to achieve good journalism — the roll-up-your-sleeves-and-sit-down-beside-someone kind of process. But she also came to realize that she wanted to be a leader in the newsroom, someone pressing for standards she thought were important and a voice for different perspectives inside and outside the newspaper.

Oswaldo unfailingly challenges the mundane; Jill has the uncanny ability to coax that extra something from everyone; and Deborah's passion just leaves you awestruck. After all the years that they have been managers, they are great leaders because they all love what they do.

Wouldn't it be great if all leaders were like them? They are not. However, there are still enough of them who can be positive role models you can look up to and learn from.

So what kind of leader will you be? You must have heard a lot of talk about leadership styles. What kind of style should I have? What is the best style?

There isn't one. There are many that will work. There is, however, only one kind of leadership style that is right for you: The one that you are comfortable with.

What qualities should a person have if he or she is thinking about being an editor?

You must have energy, enthusiasm, a worldly and curious view and the ability to achieve good work through others.

You also need to have achieved at whatever you chose to do originally — reporting, photography, graphics, design, copy editing; have intellectual curiosity; work well with others; are interested in other aspects of the newsroom; and have an ability to solve problems or at least present possible solutions.

Here are qualities that all good leaders share:

>> They are approachable, up-front, fair and open to new ideas and thoughts.

>> They are teachers, but are not afraid to learn new things and never afraid to admit they are wrong.

>> They communicate.

>> They are kind, patient and take the time to listen - and give credit where and when it is due.

>> They always lead by example, and when the opportunity presents itself, they are not afraid to take chances.

>> They value creativity, but understand that not everyone has the skill set to do the jobs they sometimes are asked to perform, so they find ways to teach.

>> Most importantly, they love what they do.

What do you look for in young aspiring editors?

Jill Fredel says editors look for that want-to attitude; beyond that, they look at their competencies. Editors want someone who already is skilled at what they do, and someone who shows an ability to learn and to grow. They also should be able to work with others and show an affinity for solving problems.

Richard Leonard, Director of News Recruiting for Gannett, says he looks for strong leadership qualities, first and foremost. Also, among other things:

>> Enthusiasm, tempered only by maturity.

>> Solid news judgment honed by experience.

>> A sense of fair play and a strong ethical core.

>> An understanding of the value of diversity and the inclusion of many voices.

What is the role of mentoring?

Mentoring is a way of recognizing our accomplishments. For many minorities, mentoring is perhaps the most important aspect in encouraging and preparing the new "non-traditional" leaders. When minorities who aspire to be managers see more people like themselves in leadership positions, it shows them that it is possible to accomplish their goals. Also, a mentor may have encountered some of the challenges a new leader might face and consequently help them overcome some of those difficult tasks.

What experience does an aspiring editor need?

It is crucial that you learn about and understand the people you oversee and the communities you cover. Here are some other experiences that Oswaldo Jimenez finds important:

>> People experience: Interaction with individuals from all walks of life. Exposure to people of different levels of knowledge, talent and personality.

>> Real-world experience: An editor should feel comfortable walking the beat, as well as writing or editing or photographing a story. He/she should know his community and its needs.

>> Newsroom experience: If not directly hands-on, then involvement with a team at all levels, from all departments.

What is the best way to break in as a new editor?

Be the best at what you do — and then some. Learn as much as you can about the newsroom. Make friends with the artists, copy-editors, designers, photographers and reporters. Learn what makes them good at their craft.

Make the most of the opportunities that come your way, says Deborah Henley. Prepare yourself by learning what you can from everyday experiences. Then, you will get your chance to show what you're made of when the big story hits and you're the one chasing it.

THE EDITOR'S CHAIR: A POWERFUL PERCH

CARLOS SANCHEZ, EDITOR

WACO TRIBUNE-HERALD, WACO, TEXAS

CARLOS SANCHEZ

Age: 43

Education: Bachelor of Journalism from the University of Texas at Austin

First job in journalism: The Coloradoan in Fort Collins, Colo.

Best thing about your job: The ability to change community perceptions about our institutions

Most challenging part of your job: Educating the community about how we operate.

'I walked away with the knowledge that my newspaper was a force.'

I sunk into a leather seat at the head of an ornate conference table at which sat a dozen of Waco's richest and most powerful men.

They had gathered at my request because they were angry and talking boycott over my newspaper's coverage of an athletic department scandal at Baylor University, one of Waco's most visible institutions.

At that moment, far from being intimidated, I knew that I had arrived.

I had made it to the back room, where public policy and even community fates have been decided in this country for years.

In the past, if these rooms had any minorities often it would have been to serve coffee.

To be in this room not only as an active participant, but as the guest of honor — the honor being to criticize my newspaper's coverage — highlighted one of the most exciting and unexpected aspects of becoming a newspaper editor: playing the role of community leader and newsroom diplomat.

If there is an upside to having so few minorities in the nation's newsrooms, it has to do with minority journalists developing the role of community diplomat.

All of us have been there.

In addition to our roles as journalists, we are called upon to mediate concerns by racial or ethnic minorities in the community who see us as approachable, as one of them.

The challenge, as I see it, is not compromising my profession while trying to ensure that the community member walks away feeling the newsroom is more accessible than he or she originally thought.

Honing that role as diplomat has served me well at the executive level. In the case of my meeting with the Waco leaders, I was able to convey exactly why we provided the type of coverage we did on Baylor and not feel threatened by their criticisms.

By the time I left that meeting, these men

said that they felt that I had given their concerns a fair hearing, had listened without being defensive and they even began conceding that it is unreasonable to expect that I would ignore news in the community, even if it were unflattering to a major institution.

After that day I heard no further talk of an advertiser boycott.

That I could play that role with these men in a community whose back room has historically been exclusively white filled me with a sense of achievement. These were men to be reckoned with; but as I arose from my sunken leather chair, I walked away with the knowledge that now I, or more specifically my newspaper, was a force in our community to be reckoned with as well.

ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE TO LEAD

PETER BHATIA, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

THE OREGONIAN, PORTLAND, ORE.

'The path I have chosen has paid me back in extraordinary ways.'

PETER BHATIA

Age: 50

Education: Bachelor of Arts, 1975, Stanford University.

First job in journalism: Editor, The Bhatia Tribune, age 10 or so, in my hometown of Pullman, Wash. (Thankfully, no copies survive.)

Best thing about your job: Getting to work with a wonderful collection of creative professionals whose ideas, energy and commitment inspire me every day.

Most challenging thing about your job: Balancing the competing needs of the different parts of the news operation. Saying no is necessary, but isn't fun.

To be or not to be an editor. It is a tough question.

Editors work hard. The hours are less predictable that a reporter's. Sure, we make more money but is it an acceptable tradeoff against free time (and overtime, long lost to exempt status) and family and personal time? This, too is a tough question.

For me, it was a decision thrust upon me very early in my career. It is the path I chose and one I don't regret. Actually, writing that I don't regret it reads like I have thought about regretting it. I don't. I haven't. I celebrate the path I have chosen. It was the right one. It has paid me back in extraordinary ways that go far beyond a paycheck.

It has allowed me help others, in ways big and small — whether it involves a story going into tomorrow's paper or key decisions about career. It has allowed me to be a coach and it has taught me to be a diplomat (careers I might have pursued if journalism hadn't called).

It has allowed me to give shape to coverage, to work with the broadest array of reporters and editors, photographers and artists, and to actually have a role in determining what the paper is going to be, both daily and over time. That influence and experience is worth its weight in bylines.

It has allowed me to understand how the entire newspaper works and runs, not just the newsroom. It is a bigger world out there around the building than just what we do in the newsroom. Understanding the issues faced in advertising, circulation and production have made me a better citizen of the newspaper.

And it has forced me to think bigger, about the role of the newspaper in the community, about how the newspaper plays a part in readers' lives, about how we have had to change over the years to remain viable in the ever-changing business world of which we are a part.

And I'll even admit that learning how to do budgets hasn't hurt my management of my personal finances, either.

All that added up, it has given me a chance to lead. There has been a lot of learning along the way, and there is always more to come, some of it from experience, some of it from great mentors. But I am grateful for the opportunities and challenges it has brought me and for the extraordinary experiences along the way in markets big and small. Breaking news, major projects, investigative editing, strategic planning for news initiatives and the entire paper, new products, redesigning the paper, career counseling, working with others to build their skills — all these things and more come to those who choose the editing path.

Plus, and this is the secret some don't like to tell: it is a heck of a lot of fun. Where else can you work with incredibly creative people, stare down a deadline and measure yourself by what hits the doorstep the next morning.

Editing isn't for everyone, to be sure. Don't become an editor if you don't want to work hard. Don't seek this path if you aren't committed to work of the highest quality, whether it is journalistic or managerial. Accept the fact there are frustrations and days (and sometimes nights) where everything falls apart. Know you will be a lightning rod at time for problems that aren't of your making.

Are there tradeoffs? Sure there have been plenty.

Early on, as a young editor, I figured I had to outwork and "outquality" everyone else. But as the years have passed I have come to understand that there must be balance between home and work and that ultimately quality matters as much as quantity. To be sure, the long hours are necessary when big news is breaking or you are pouring that project of the last six months into the paper or some extremely difficult personnel crisis has arisen. But it is not a sign of weakness to leave early some day to catch your child's play, or game, or concert, or to take an early slide on a slow day in order to spend some quality time with a spouse. I found time to coach my son's basketball and Little League teams for several years.

The good news for new editors these days is that the bosses get it. They've seen the change over the past few decades as women and minorities have risen in management and have brought different and equally valid sensibilities to leadership positions. Each succeeding generation of leadership in newsrooms adds a new level of "getting it." Each generation makes us better.

Today, more than ever, newsrooms need inspired leadership and good editing. It is your future and our future. We need different perspectives and different backgrounds. We need new energy and talent. We need to keep improving what we do and serving our readers in the best ways we can.

There's no question: being an editor is hard. But you won't regret it. And believe me, there isn't a better job than one that gives you the opportunity to lead.

HELPING OTHERS DO WHAT YOU LOVE

GAIL RAYOS, ASSOCIATE MANAGING EDITOR / BUSINESS NEWS, ORLANDO SENTINEL, ORLANDO, FLA.

'Bring others along: Developing people is the greatest reward.'

GAIL RAYOS

Age: 41

Education: University of Florida, College of Journalism and Communications, Bachelor of Science

First job in journalism: Business and general assignment writer, Gannett News

Best thing about your job: Working with reporters and editors who are really excited about getting the big story ... and are eager to do it again the next day.

Most challenging thing about your job: Making sure you manage the day so your time and energy is spent with the reporters, out in the newsroom, in the community.

I liked being a reporter. I *love* being an editor.

Many veteran editors look longingly back to the days when they worked the street, got the big scoop or were called on to draw A-1 on the biggest news day of the year.

I cherish those days and clips too. Now I get a different piece of the action.

As an editor, I get to do all those things through other people — a job I find even more satisfying.

A colleague who often talks to college students and beginning journalists puts it this way:

"The best thing about editing is the opportunity to improve your people's work. You can help others get better."

He added, "And it's always better to give than to receive."

Whether you are 15 years or two months in the journalism business, it's not too early or too late to think about the possibilities of becoming an editor.

I often get asked: How do you know when you're ready to be an editor? How do you know if you're making the right move?

Moves in journalism are just as unpredictable as the news we cover.

You could draw a career roadmap — a good way to set goals and consider ways for getting a broad range of experiences. I had one, and it got better and more ambitious with every draft.

But opportunities come when you least expect it — and from some of the most unexpected people and places.

When you get asked, think long and hard before you say yes or no. If you think the answer is no, think again and consider this: The person making the offer may know more about what's best for you now than you think you do.

Just about every job I've had came that way.

I never thought I'd get to be part of the editorial board — and enjoy that part of the newspaper as much as I did. From presidential elections to the mayor's race, race relations to the Iraqi war (yes, the first one with the first President Bush), as the commentary editor I had the opportunity to be a part of some of the biggest stories of our time in a way that I never had the chance to tackle as a reporter.

A couple of years later or so, while settling in on a long plane ride West, out of the blue a senior editor told me about a plan he was

hatching. Would I be interested in helping him start a new reporting team? Two years into that job, across the newsroom the city editor left — and another door opened.

Looking back, I took many a detour to the job I get to do today. What did business writing (my first job) bring to the table that would prepare me to be an assistant news editor? Or from that, to be on the edit board? Or to run the entertainment news team? Or edit the work of ace city hall reporters? Or now, steer the team that covers Wall Street and Disney's Main Street USA?

There's no one formula for being ready to take the leap into a life of editing. Reporters often find a good fit as assistant local editors. But copy editors get to run reporting operations. And reporters sometimes make the best copy chiefs.

The best prep work comes in the way you execute your current assignment:

1. Be outstanding at what you do now: Own every aspect of your beat, 24/7. Take charge of your section. Don't let anyone write better headlines than you do.

2. Be first in the door: In the chaos of a breaking story, nothing beats a reporter or desk editor who's there and ready to go.

3. Establish your brand: If you've done NO. 1 and NO. 2, you are well on your way. Find a niche you alone can fill.

4. Be an apprentice: If there's a reporter or editor you really admire in your own newsroom, find ways to learn from him or her. But don't stop there. Go outside the building and find a mentor who can genuinely coach you through the hurdles (personally and professionally) and is willing to help you get ahead.

5. Have a vision — and share it with the boss. (Yes, sometimes, the bosses don't know you want to do anything else.)

Once you get the chance to be an editor, do all of the above and more.

1. Continue to be an apprentice: Be willing to learn from those who work for you – you can't know it all.

2. Get out of the office: Don't get bogged down in meetings and paperwork. Job shadow a reporter. Write a story once in a while.

3. Push ideas: Now that you're the boss, you have the power to steer resources to get things done. Find ways to bring your team's ideas to life.

4. Be a different voice: As an editor, your opinion gets a broader audience. Draw from your own experience, your own community to offer a perspective others in the room may not have. You'll be valued for it. After all, it's your duty and responsibility to shape the newspaper to best fit your readers' needs and interests.

5. Bring others along: Developing people is the greatest reward of this job. Make things happen for the next in line.

A TRADITION OF LEADERSHIP

CAESAR ANDREWS, EDITOR

GANNETT NEWS SERVICE, MCLEAN, VA.

'The next generation of editors has stellar examples to consider.'

THE NEGRO SPEAKS OF RIVERS

I've known rivers:
I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.

I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:
Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

— Langston Hughes, 1921

CAESAR ANDREWS

Age: 45

Education: Bachelor of Arts in journalism, Grambling State University.

First job in journalism: Municipal reporter for TODAY, Cocoa, Fla.

Best thing about your job: Seeing great work published.

Most challenging part of your job: We're a wire service, so appealing to local newsrooms and then connecting with their readers is a huge order.

When Langston Hughes wrote about rivers, he was retelling the classic story of legacy. We draw strength and confidence, he was saying, from knowing that others like us have endured similar journeys.

It is poetry worthy of this moment, as the news industry struggles to attract more top editors from black, Hispanic, Asian and Native American talent pools.

Newcomers to management quickly discover what their experienced colleagues know so well. That the job of editor is loaded with contradictions. It is fulfilling, yet often frustrating. It's a showcase for collaboration, yet sometimes a stark source of loneliness. It provides tremendous opportunities to enrich journalism, as long as distractions can be kept at bay.

Each individual who joins the ranks of editors concocts his or her own formula for motivation, standards and success. But what all share in some manner at some point is the need for inspiration and encouragement. Thanks to the growing legacy cast by editors of color, there's plenty to be found.

Consider Robert C. Maynard. In 1979, he became the first black editor of a mainstream metropolitan daily, the Oakland Tribune. Well before then, he was crusading for the industry to do right by diversity.

Consider William F. Woo. He spent a career practicing thoughtful

integrity, becoming top editor at the St. Louis Post-Dispatch in 1986, a first for Asian Americans.

Take note of Gerald Garcia and Dennis Britton, among the earliest top Hispanic editors in the modern era, Garcia as editor and publisher of the Tucson Citizen starting in 1981, Britton as editor of the Chicago Sun-Times in 1989.

Then there's George Benge and Mark Trahant. These two pioneering editors in the 1990s extended a rich Native American heritage into mainstream newsrooms. Benge achieved a series of firsts as top editor at Oklahoma, Indiana and North Carolina dailies. Trahant was editor and publisher of the Daily News, which served communities along the Idaho-Washington state line.

This group is representative of editors who carved out their milestones within just the past four decades. But the influence of diverse editors reaches at least as far back as the 1800s. Disinclined to wait eons for mainstreaming, parity and journalistic justice to take hold, they did something remarkable for such racially brutal times. They created their own press.

The editor of the Southern Patriot in Charleston, S.C., was Jacob Newton Cardozo, a Hispanic journalist well before the ethnic term was coined. He landed that job around 1817, eventually becoming the owner.

Samuel Cornish and John Russwurm started Freedom's Journal in 1827. This first black newspaper in the United States was followed 13 years later by Frederick Douglass' The North Star, and since then by legions of other ethnic newspapers.

Editors of the Cherokee Phoenix in Georgia encountered mob assaults after launching the newspaper in 1828. The Cherokee Nation regrouped in Oklahoma with a new publication, the Cherokee Advocate.

Some consider San Francisco's Golden Hills News the first Asian-American newspaper. It launched in 1854 to serve a growing population of Chinese immigrants.

Reflecting on this history of ethnic journal-

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Andrews: New chapters in a legacy of color

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ism in early America may not solve the mysteries of how to land your next promotion. But doing so offers powerful, always relevant reminders of how predecessors confronted harshness and unkind odds. It also provides context for building upon today's hard-earned progress.

Evidence of this progress is significant and can be found today in the changing look of newsroom leadership.

A sampling: Picture Carolina Garcia running the Monterey County Herald in California. And Bennie Ivory holding forth at The Courier-Journal in Louisville, Ky. And Evan Miller, leading The Star Press newsroom in Muncie, Ind. Picture Ronnie Agnew at The Clarion-Ledger, Jackson, Miss. And Gilbert Bailon at The Dallas Morning News and its Spanish-language Al Dia. And Peter Bhatia juggling his tasks at The Oregonian in Portland and as president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors. And Karla Garrett Harshaw, editor of the Springfield News-Sun in Ohio, senior editor for Cox Community Newspapers, and next in line to lead ASNE.

Picture these editors and a notable gallery of others in senior management positions as they create new chapters in a legacy of color that continues to grow.

And reflect upon the example set by the late Robert McGruder, wise and delightful as editor of the Detroit Free Press. He was among the path-breaking editors who not only racked up individual accomplishments, but who also committed themselves to replenishing newsrooms with evermore diversity.

Of course, blacks, Hispanics, Asians and Native Americans did not advance the cause all alone. Numerous whites can stake claim to success so far. Many are inspirational themselves, for providing career opportunities to talent previously ignored.

Thanks to all contributors, more diverse journalists than ever are now in the stream — running newsrooms, nearing the upper rungs, or at least thinking about leading. The next generation of editors has stellar examples to consider as they construct their careers.

Langston Hughes might find much that is poetic to write about the editors of 2004.

Yet, this story remains mixed and incomplete.

No one who cares deeply about diversity and journalism is satisfied. Much, much more is required.

Hughes' original homage to the Euphrates, Congo, Nile and eventually the Mississippi, now flows across the Amazon, Ganges, Mekong, Yangtze, the Rio Grande. And any other place where inspiration can be found.

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Greg Moore
Editor, The Denver Post