



Newshawk

Pulitzer Prize Winning Reporter Robert Keeler Speaks To SPJ Members

By Dana Deuell

Pulitzer Prize winning *Newsday* reporter Robert Keeler's job wouldn't be the same without his editor.

"I have a strong bias against editors," he said. "Many times I've said that the only good editor is a dead one."

Keeler sights the "weather" story as the most common example of an editor-created idea. However, he himself has done much stranger things to satisfy his editor's whims.

"I once cashed a check written on a T-shirt—a shirt that I was wearing at the time," he said. "When I went to take off the shirt, the teller thought it was a robbery in progress."

Keeler has worked at *Newsday* for 30 years, spending the last 8 of them as the paper's religion reporter.

He won the Pulitzer Prize for beat reporting in 1996 with his series on St. Brigid's Catholic parish. Interestingly enough, this story was originally his editor's idea.

The St. Brigid's series was an in-depth examination of the spirituality of the parishioners.

Each article in the series was around 4,000 words long.

To write the series, Keeler spent a year with the parish. He attended services, meetings, and small prayer



Robert Keeler Shares The Secrets Of His Trade

Newsday religion reporter Robert Keeler speaks with SPJ member Winnie Teo at Malone's after the group's February 6 meeting.

groups.

While Keeler says that there is no shortage of material on the religion beat, the beat does require that journalists approach their stories without searching for conflicts or attempting to quantify facts.

"It's hard to quantify an awakening of the spirit," Keeler said.

While writing the St. Brigid's series, Keeler broke many of the traditional rules of journal-

ism.

He participated in the parish's small group prayer sessions—instead of remaining purely an observer.

He also allowed sources to read what he had written to ensure that he had accurately represented the personal details of their lives.

Keeler says that being a Catholic helped him write the series.

"I'm a Catholic, I read the scriptures, and I definitely

have opinions," Keeler said. "I could have written about a year in the life of a synagogue, but it helped that I knew the language of a Catholic parish."

In fact, Keeler's religious beliefs almost lead him to choose an entirely different career path.

"I studied for the priesthood until I discovered journalism," he said. "Then I decided that the celibacy thing just wasn't going to work for me."

Region 7 MOE Winners Named

The following UI students were Region 7 winners in the 2000 Mark of Excellence Awards.

General Column Writing: 1st Place — Adam White; Sports Column Writing: 1st Place — Jeremy Schnitker, 2nd Place — Mike Kelly; General News Reporting: 1st Place — Katie Bernard and Anne Huyck, 3rd Place — Sky Eilers, and Zach Kucharski; In-Depth Reporting: 2nd Place — Ryan Foley; Feature Writing: 2nd Place — Anne Hyuck and Nicole Schnuppert, 3rd Place — Megan Manfull; Sports Writing: 2nd Place — Jeremy Schnitker; Best All-Around Daily Student Newspaper: 1st Place — *Daily Iowan*, University of Iowa

SPJ Officers Selected

The SPJ President for the 2001-2002 year will be Jeremy Shapiro. Shapiro, a senior, is currently the SPJ treasurer. He can be reached at shapiro@blue.weeg.uiowa.edu

The SPJ vice-present for the 2001-2002 year will be Dana Deuell. Deuell, a junior, is currently the SPJ newsletter editor. She can be reached at danadeuell@hotmail.com.

The 2001 National Convention will be held Oct. 4-6 in Seattle, Washington. Please contact SPJ advisor Dick Johns if you are interested in attending.

Annual SPJ You Be The Editor Panel Held March 9

By Dana Deuell

During a "You Be The Editor" panel held March 9, students in Professor Jeff Smith's Legal and Ethical Issues In Communication class had the opportunity to listen to a panel of media professionals and local residents discuss ethical scenarios.

Media professionals on the panel included: Lisha Brumbaugh, KCRG-TV producer; Lyle Muller, Iowa City Gazette editor; and Gayanne Torosyan, WSUI producer.

Local residents on the panel included: Bob Elliott, Iowa City resident; Susan Mask, Assistant to the President and Director of Affirmative Action; and Tia Johnson, UI freshman.

The panel was moderated by Jeff Stein, an Assistant Professor of Communication Arts at Wartburg College and former UI journalism student.

During the panel, participants from the media discussed what they would do when put in a particular ethical situation.

Local residents discussed how they felt the media should deal with these situations.

The panelists agreed on many points, but each added a different perspective to the discussion.

Case studies discussed involved off the record comments made by student athletes and "going live" from the scene of a recent shooting.

The panel was organized by UI junior and SPJ public relation's chair Kristen Johnson.

The panel is an annual SPJ-sponsored event.



UI Alumni Matt Ericson Discusses Graphic Design

Matt Ericson, a graphic artist at the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, spoke to SPJ members on March 27. At the *Inquirer*, Ericson is responsible for designing graphics for the paper and its website. He also works to keep the website user-friendly for *Inquirer* readers.

Ericson is a UI alumni. He worked at *The Daily Iowan* for three years, helping to develop the paper's website in 1996.

Ericson told SPJ members that he considers himself to be part reporter, part artist. "You're basically being a reporter," he said. "Only instead of using words, you're telling a visual story."