This photo was taken by Tom Wrench of Plainwell HS. It won first place in Division Four of the Portrait category. The photo is of Will Zuidema, who likes to create films. The judges said the photo contained “excellent composition and lighting with effective use of story telling elements.”
The President’s Column

So, what do you do for a living?

I seem to remember enjoying my undergraduate years, even the going-to-classes part. But after nearly a decade of teaching, I can say with a good deal of certainty that I took a whole bunch of education classes in college that did very little to prepare me for my job as a publications adviser. I think I had an inkling that this was going to be the case when I was the only journalism student in a room full of English majors, taking a course called “teaching in the English content area,” or some such title.

I’m really not bashing teacher education itself; I went through a top-notch education program and had some very knowledgeable instructors along the way. But the problem with teacher education is that it is impossible to prepare for what you face when you actually enter the classroom. It doesn’t take long to realize that your own teaching position in a particular school is completely different from that same job in a different building. This is especially true in publications classes because, as we all know (but nobody else knows), you do approximately 985 different jobs each day.

Have you ever stopped to think about how many tasks you do that are listed nowhere in your job description? You have thought about it? You’re thinking about it right now? Me, too! At various times this week, if somebody had asked me that dullest of cocktail party questions, “so, what do you do for a living?” I could have answered in a variety of clever ways. In truth, I don’t believe I’ve ever been to a real cocktail party, but I’ve seen them on television, and people always seem to be explaining what they do, while eating tiny food that came from a tray. At any rate, in this fantasy world I’ve created, someone might say, “what do you do?” and I could have said each of these and not really been lying:

“Oh, I’m glad you asked! I’m a motivational speaker. Lately I’ve been pushing newspaper reporters to see the importance of finding one more source for their story.”

“Well, interestingly enough, I’m a travel agent. Lately I’ve been looking into flights for a journalism conference for a group of high school students.”

“Don’t tell too many people, but I’m a detective. Lately I’ve been trying to track down one elusive 17-year-old who still hasn’t turned in a senior picture. The yearbook students are convinced that this kid doesn’t actually exist.”

“I’ve just been hired as a graphic design consultant. Lately I’ve been working with a section editor on the same headline for longer than I care to admit.”

“Oh yeah, what they say is true; I really am a diplomat. Lately I’ve been trying to make nice with the head football coach about a not-exactly-favorable newspaper editorial written on his team.”

“Well, it’s steady work being a computer technician. Lately I’ve been connecting a new laptop to the

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Stet

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MIPA Calendar

Dec. 15, 2005
Late fall yearbook deadline

Feb. 24, 2006
Deadline for contests

March 4, 2006
Judging at MSU

April 25, 2006
Spring Conference

July 17-21, 2006
Adviser Workshops

July 24-28, 2006
Adviser Workshops

July 30-Aug. 3
MIPA Summer Journalism Workshop

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**Yearbooks as journalism**

By Joe Higdon

Some folks don’t think yearbooks and journalism have anything to do with each other. Some folks, like Joe Higdon, will say that’s just plain wrong.

“**MIPA is all about Journalism. It doesn’t have anything to do with yearbook,**” a newspaper student told me my first year of advising yearbook at Plainwell High School.

This student is not alone. Some students do not understand that good reporting, writing, and complete coverage of an entire year are the responsibility of the yearbook as well as the newspaper.

However, MIPA does much to help newspaper students and advisers establish their programs as a journalistic endeavor.

The progress of each program depends in large part on the willingness of the students to carry through with that kind of focus.

Although not intended as a comprehensive approach, the following advisers have shared information on what helps establish more sound journalism in their yearbook programs.

The right schedule helps build a strong program. A yearbook produced during class hours, as opposed to after-school hours, tends to give more time to teach and foster writing skills.

“The class offers an opportunity to have kids expect instruction,” said Lydia C. Cadena, adviser of Reflections at Novi High School.

Selecting one’s own staff makes a difference in sound journalism in a yearbook program. As opposed to yearbook chosen by students and treated as a blow-off class, advisers find they have a better program when allowed to select staff according to their criteria.

These advisers get feedback from teachers and look for characteristics such as reliability and trustworthiness. They also look at writing skills on essays written as part of the application process.

Thorough reporting is part of sound journalism.

One area in which advisers give their students focus is writing captions. First, every picture should have a caption. Second, every caption should contain the 5 W’s and H. Jenny Domino, adviser of The Odyssey at Orchard Lake Middle School, said her staff members ask for information when the picture is taken.

“**Remember that there is no such thing as boring writing. There are only boring writers.**”

—Pam Beitzel, yearbook consultant

An adviser can ask for specifics to reinforce sound journalism. For example, Rod Satterthwaite, adviser of The Unsinkable at Dexter High School, requires a minimum of two sentences. The first sentence identifies everybody and the event. The second sentence relays information that the reader can’t tell from looking at the photo.

“This is where the real interviewing happens,” he said.

To reinforce the importance of interviewing, Melissa Yeoman, adviser of The Pines at Traverse City Central High requires at least three captions in each layout to have quotes.

Nevertheless, advisers have found that students can be resistant to learning and practicing sound journalism in the yearbook. For example, staff members complain that no one reads the body copy. Advisers explain that no one reads it when it’s not strong writing.

Staff members can take it personally.

Pam Beitzel, a yearbook-publishing representative in southwest Michigan, says to her advisers’ staff members, “Remember that there is no such thing as boring writing. There are only boring writers.”

Yearbook staff members who apply a stronger journalistic approach tend to have more of a feature angle to their body copy. To encourage their staff members, advisers show them good feature stories as examples. These examples show that students don’t want to just read about an event. They want to read about people caught up in an event.

Two factors stand out in helping prepare students to approach a yearbook program as a journalistic endeavor. The first is an introduction to journalism class. This gives students the basics. Armed with that, they don’t look at old books and do the same thing. They look to see what they can improve.

The second is the MIPA summer workshop. Some advisers require attendance for editorial staff; it’s optional for others. Staff members who attend return energized for the year ahead and have more of a critical eye for design, writing and coverage.
Close to 2,000 students and teachers attended the MIPA Fall Conference at the Lansing Center. Nearly 80 sessions were offered for both students and teachers.

Nikki Schueller, adviser at North Farmington HS, critiques the yearbook from South Lake HS. Adviser Tim Allen sat in on the session with members of the Shield staff.

Bobby Hawthorne, author of The Radical Write, inspires students with examples of good and not-so-good writing.

Detroit Free Press reporter Kelley Carter shares stories of interviewing rap stars.

Linda Puntney, executive director of the Journalism Education Association, is always a big hit with MIPA members.
Ike Lea, an instructor at Lansing Community College, shares some Photoshop tips and tricks. Lea will be teaching his abundant Photoshop knowledge with teachers who take his class this summer at MSU.

It was standing room only in Brian Town’s video production sessions. Brian is the adviser of TV25 at Haslett HS.

Laingsburg students carry on the tradition of more than 15 years of helping at registration.

Elaine Sayre of Kalamazoo Central HS joins some of her students for a MIPA photo at the conference. Sayre has been advising publications for eight years.

These students enjoy a good laugh at something Bobby Hawthorne said in one of his sessions.
Everyone thinks that teachers—especially first-year teachers—don’t have a life outside of school. They spend their time incessantly planning lessons, grading papers, and meeting with students. Some might even keep a cot to sleep on in their classrooms—right? Wrong.

As it turns out, I began my first year of teaching at Rochester High School managing my school life and home life quite well. I was passionately involved in both teaching, advising the student newspaper and spending time with Mike, my boyfriend, and my friends. The delicate balance seemed to fall into place.

Sure, there were times when I had deadline week at work and I was there until 10 p.m. every night. There were times when I just needed a nice dinner out with my boyfriend in order to reconnect. There were times when my girlfriends had fights with their boyfriends, and I put the paper-grading aside for the night. I had it good. I was not experiencing the nightmare first year of teaching that everyone warned me about... until one day when all hell seemed to break loose.

I had a check-up with my doctor regarding past problems with irregular cells. Unfortunately, there were a large number of irregular cells once again and after a bit of discomfort and some liquid nitrogen, I left the office with six prescriptions and instructions to stay in bed for three days.

Damn. I had parent teacher conferences the following day; there would be no possible way to skip out on work.

Mike—the boyfriend—managed to forget about my appointment Monday and stayed at the office until late that night. When he finally came over to hang out, he started off boasting about selling a home. I was in large amounts of not only physical, but emotional pain. How could he forget?

I managed to make it through Tuesday with the help of some friends at work who made sure that I had my mail and lunch delivered to my classroom. I didn’t have to leave my comfy chair for even a minute during the school day.

Parent teacher conferences seemed to sail by, but the pain was persistent, and there is something immoral about taking strong painkillers and attempting to talk to parents about their kid’s problem with verb tenses. I managed to make it home in one piece—barely.

I called for a sub on Wednesday immediately when I got home. I spent the day Wednesday lying in bed dozing on and off, taking my pain killers, and anxiously awaiting the spaghetti dinner Mike had promised me later that evening.

I called him at seven and he responded that, because he sold two homes that day, he would have to stay late at work and he was not going to be able to make it for dinner.

I lost it.

I cried and told him he took me for granted and that he should be available to take care of me when I have experienced such a traumatic surgery. Boy did he take that poorly... and he ended our one-year relationship.

How was I going to make it through Thursday? I showed up at school on and started working through the last books of The Odyssey with my first hour. Kids were raising their hands and answering questions—was it possible that they actually understood parts of The Odyssey? It was similar in my other classes of language arts—kids responding and showing some form of interest in the material (perhaps because Odysseus slays 100 men and sleeps with his wife for the first time in 20 years).

My Talon staff members were working hard putting the finishing touches on their articles before layout week. As I flipped through the copies of articles I beamed with pride. These kids were the most dedicated journalists I had ever known.

My beginning journalism students were fighting over editor positions for our mock newspaper. They all wanted a shot at a leadership role—it was amazing.

I sat back at the end of the day on Thursday thinking about how I had gotten through such a tough day. It was the kids. They were my passion. They were my life. They would help me through.

They might not be aware—but the small successes that they were able to experience Thursday made me smile—which is something that I wasn’t sure that I would be able to do for weeks.

So, I’ll nervously await the results from my biopsy. I will retire my diamond encrusted heart necklace from Mike into its fuzzy, blue box. It will be hard. But I’ll pick up that stack of personal narratives or newspaper articles and put my energy into my kids. I love my job, and I couldn’t be happier that I am doing what I was born to do. Maybe I’ll even haul in my own cot someday.
Third Annual Junior High 
JOURNALISM DAY

Gloria Olman, second from right, talks with junior high advisers at the junior high conference. Olman taught high school journalism for more than 30 years.

Two students interview a tree. It was all part of a session where students had to choose an inanimate object to interview. Coming up with questions was the interesting part.

Students from Halley Magnet School in Detroit enjoy a session on photography.

Brian Fisher, editor of Noise, leads a discussion. Fisher brought most of his staff, and students had an opportunity to learn about different positions on a publication.

Tara Ward stresses good interviewing skills in her session. Ward is an MSU intern at Haslett HS, where she works with Julie Price.
I know that you probably have a similar list. Of course, those listed above are in addition to the job I actually got hired to do, which I’m still pretty certain is to teach. During second hour this morning, believe it or not, I was just like every other language arts teacher. A group of 30 of us were discussing the significance of Dr. T.J. Eckleburg’s eyes in chapter two of The Great Gatsby, and a notion crept into the back of my mind like it sometimes will in these situations. I started thinking about how weird it would be to not have all these jobs. If my days consisted only of lectures, discussions, tests and essays, I guess those education classes might have come in handy after all. I just wouldn’t be very interesting at cocktail parties.

Robin Williams, author of The Non-Designer’s Design Book, calls it the Joshua Tree Principle. Once a Joshua tree is identified, a person will see them everywhere. (A person living in Michigan will see box elders.) The landscape will never look the same again.

In the same way, once staff members identify good design principles and strong journalistic skills, they own that knowledge, and it changes their perception. MIPA helps students gain that knowledge and control it.

Then students, parents, and newspaper staff will never look at a yearbook the same way again.

Advisers! Sign up to help judge MIPA newspaper, yearbook or video entries on Saturday, March 4, 2006. Visit the MIPA Web site to download the registration form.

www.mipa.jrn.msu.edu