

aaaja

Newsletter of the Asian American Journalists Association

August 1986

Success in Broadcast News Depends Mostly on Writing

by Karen Seriguchi
and J.K. Yamamoto

Prehistoric storytellers who kept their listeners enthralled around the late night campfire may have had a lot in common with reporters today. Although they could not read or write, they knew how to organize information so that their listeners absorbed it easily, exactly the skill that good reporters have, news executives told an audience of about 100 last month at a Southern California AAJA "Careers in Broadcasting" seminar.

Bob Sims of KNX Newsradio discovered this talent in himself as an engineering student tutoring fellow undergraduates: "I liked to explain things. I liked to tell people things so that they understood, which is what you do in news to a great extent."

And as a news director, Sims said, "One of the things I look for in people who come to me for jobs is the natural storytelling ability, the ability to share information in a way that makes the listener learn effortlessly."

Jack Hubbard, director of recruitment for CBS News in New York, agreed. "The writing is critically important to us. I'm not looking for mechanics. There's a lot of mechanics who can put pieces together. We don't need that. I need people who can write."

For television news, Hubbard said, reporters also need to be comfortable with the camera "as a literary device." He explained, "In many cases you say as much with the picture and the placement of that as you do by writing the piece wall to wall. . . . We look for people. . . . who can understand a lot of information, absorb it, turn it around and tell it quickly, clearly, precisely."

But writing isn't all that Hubbard looks for. "Character is the number one determinant. . . . What we're talking about here is reliability. Very important. If I sense that does not exist, that sort of stops everything in its tracks.

"We look for people who can deliver content under pressure with a consistency of execution. Very very important. If you're in videotape at 6:28, you're fine if you know that you can rewind the piece in 30 seconds and still have another 30 seconds with nothing to do. But you need people to understand that you have to get the piece done by 6:29."

Hubbard added a strong liberal arts background, an understanding of broadcast

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—Jack Hubbard, CBS News

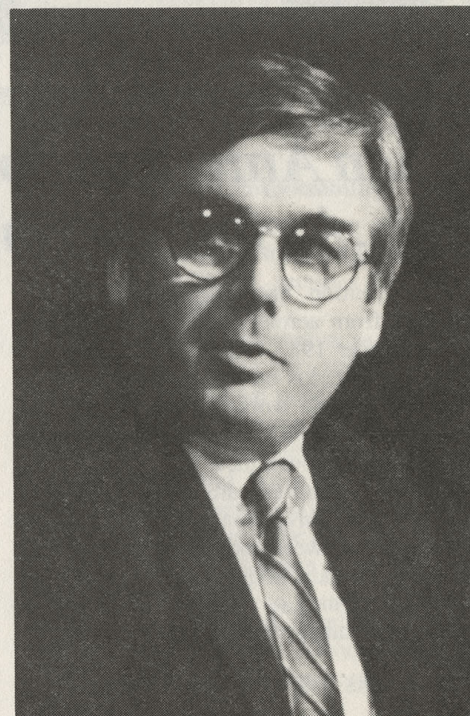
technology and physical stamina to his list of the ideal reporter's qualities.

Some would assert that even a candidate who possessed all these traits might not get the job, because "it's not what you know but who you know."

While Sims stated flatly, "I have never hired somebody as a favor to someone else," Nan Tepper, vice president of personnel for CBS Broadcast Group, acknowledged that contacts could help in getting a job. She said, however, that "there are a lot of ways [to get to know people]. Start with an internship, as many internships during your schooling as possible, because you do get to know a lot of people and they get to know you. . . . And never let contacts die.

"We're not necessarily talking about nepotism. . . . What's important is that you keep exposing yourself in an active way to the people who are ultimately in a position to give out jobs. There are a lot of acceptable ways to do that."

Photo by SACHI YAMAMOTO



Other panelists agreed with the importance of internships and even menial entry-level jobs in launching a career. As Sims noted, "Real entry-level spots are those where you don't get to do a lot of writing or on-air work. Those are greatly controlled by unions. But there are ways of learning despite those handicaps. Production things. Access to people who can critique your work, people who can coach you, who can show you how to get better."

Joanne Corliss, executive producer of KCBS-TV news administration, echoed Sims. "Being a news associate does give you access to people and opportunities for training. And a news associate will do anything," she said, including "driving a car and messengering people or tapes or data around town."

CBS News uses internships at stations across the country to build a farm club, which, Hubbard said, ensures that "six or

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Photo courtesy of HOKUBEI MAINICHI

Bill Sing, AAJA national scholarship chair, and Wendy Tokuda, Bay Area chapter president (at left), present scholarship awards to four Bay Area students at a reception held July 11 at KPIX-TV studios.

Receiving their awards are (from left) Kim Van Tran, Heidi Chang, Sharon Chin, and Holly Quan. See June newsletter for profiles of all scholarship winners.

Asian American Journalists to Gather in L.A. for 1st National Convention

A convention bringing together AAJA members from across the nation is planned for September 1987. To be held in Los Angeles, it will focus on professional development and include workshops, seminars and panels as well as a job fair with representatives of media companies.

Several committees are being formed to spearhead the convention, which is expected to begin in mid-week and run through Sunday morning at a local hotel, according to David Kishiyama of the Los Angeles Times, who is chairing the initial planning phase of the convention.

Kishiyama said that there is a need for

more members to serve on the organizing committees, which cover funding, professional development, site selection, job fair, and commemorative booklet.

"We are in need of a number of people to make this event a success," he said. "We want to make this first convention something an AAJA member can't afford to miss."

The proposed program will include luncheons and dinners with nationally recognized keynote speakers. The professional development events, scheduled for both print and electronic journalists, will focus on improving job performance, with seasoned professionals sharing their expertise in investigative reporting, writing and editing, management skills, and other topics that will aid journalists in and out of the newsroom.

Participants will have the opportunity to

be interviewed by a number of media companies, which will be invited to send representatives empowered to hire.

"Job fairs at which media companies may interview minority journalists have been one of the most successful ways to increase our numbers in the newsroom," said Kishiyama.

"Not to be overlooked is the social aspect of a national convention," he added. "We are planning a number of informal get-togethers where members and non-members may mingle and get to know one another." Tours of local media companies and tourist attractions are also on the agenda.

Serving as overall coordinators are AAJA executive director Karen Seriguchi and AAJA Southern California board chair Bill Sing. Committee members are: Funding—Yet Lock, Nancy Yoshihara and Tritia Toyota; Professional Development—Victor Merina, Alan Fong and Yoshihara; Site—Elaine Woo, Cherry Gee and Cindy Chow.

Kishiyama can be reached at 1-800-LA TIMES, ext. 7737.

Washington Chapter Elects New Board

Mei-Mei Chan, a USA Today reporter who was serving as acting president of the Washington Chapter, was elected president in June. Mike Yamamoto, copy editor at the Los Angeles Times Washington bureau, continues to act as secretary, and Patrick Chu of USA Today is treasurer.

Other board members are Dorothy Ing Russell of the Washington Post and Marge Kumaki, reporter for WMAL-FM. Yoko Arthur of the Corp. for Public Broadcasting is the chapter's activities officer.

Projects under discussion by AAJA's newest chapter include forming a speakers bureau for school career days; adapting the AAJA media guide entitled "How to Get Your News in the News" for Washington-area groups; and publishing a directory of local Asian American journalists.

Violence Against Asians on the Rise?

Anti-Asian violence, a source of concern for Asian American community groups in recent years, is the focus of an Aug. 25 panel discussion sponsored by the AAJA Southern California chapter and the Asian Pacific Women's Network.

On the panel will be Lucie Cheng, director of the UCLA Asian American Studies Center and co-chair of the National Conference of Christians and Jews' Multi-Cultural Task Force; Stewart Kwoh, executive director of the Asian Pacific Legal Center; Ben Lee, an officer of the Los Angeles Police Dept.'s Asian Task Force; John Saito, regional director of the Japanese American Citizens League and a member of the California Attorney Gen-

eral's Commission on Racial, Ethnic, Religious and Minority Violence; and J.K. Yamamoto, assistant editor of the Pacific Citizen and an AAJA board member.

Panelists will discuss whether violence against Asians is in fact rising in the U.S.; why Asians are targeted; what Asians have been doing about the problem; how law enforcement and government agencies have responded; and whether media coverage of the issue has been accurate and fair.

The program will be held 6:30 to 9 p.m. at the Pacific Bell auditorium, 1010 Wilshire Blvd. in Los Angeles. Parking is available in the structure on St. Paul St., one-half block north of Wilshire. Admission is free.

METPRO in 3d Year

Wada at Helm of Minority Training Program

by Shari Okamoto

Karen Wada of the Los Angeles Times has been appointed director of that paper's Minority Editorial Training Program (METPRO). In addition to recruiting, placing and monitoring 10 trainees for the 11-month program each year, she is responsible for 70 interns in the Times' Southern California bureaus.

METPRO, now in its third year, is a collaboration by the Times and the Times Mirror Company. The program takes minority participants through rigorous training that involves classwork, beat reporting and on-the-job experience.

At the end of the program, the Times assists trainees with job placements, although there is no guarantee of employment. After the 1985-86 session, nine METPRO graduates were hired by daily newspapers.

Looking for Potential, Not Experience

A major requirement for an applicant is a college or university degree.

"We aren't necessarily looking for someone with a lot of journalistic experience, because then they wouldn't benefit from the program," Wada said in a recent interview. "We're looking for people with potential."

This year the Times received more than 140 applications, but according to Wada, the number is "less than average" and is something she would not like to see repeated.

"One of my main priorities is to increase the quality and quantity of applicants," she explained. "I'd like to make the program national so that more people are aware of the program, and I would receive applications



Karen Wada

nationally [as well as locally]."

The program is beginning to accommodate budding photographers in addition to reporters, but the focus of METPRO remains on print journalism, Wada said. There continue to be only 10 spots available in the program.

METPRO receives a wide range of applicants, but Wada pointed out that overall, few Asians have shown interest.

When the program first began there was only one Asian trainee, she said, and this year there are two. She is uncertain why so few Asians apply for the program, particularly considering all of the benefits involved.

Aside from the obvious experience the program provides, trainees are supplied with a \$218 weekly stipend, free housing, utilities and medical insurance.

From Classroom to General Assignment

METPRO begins each year in mid-June with an intensive 8-week classroom session conducted by Cynthia Rawitch, an assistant professor of journalism at California State University Northridge. Trainees are then assigned to a series of beats—police, courts, and municipal government—and write unpublished stories that are critiqued by Wada.

In October, each of the trainees is assigned to one of the Times' twice-weekly suburban sections before finally joining one of the three

regional editions as general assignment reporter until the program ends in May.

The Times helps graduates find jobs by handling requests from other publications or through inquiries made by Wada.

"I think it is safe to say that by next year the new recruitments in June will probably receive an extension [to their association with the Times]," she added. The Times will try to place each graduate with other Times Mirror newspapers for one year's employment after METPRO training. Following the extension, a trainee "may or may not be hired permanently," Wada said, depending on his or her performance.

Heavy Responsibility

The METPRO director also oversees the work of 70 interns assigned each year to the Metro, or local news, sections of the Times bureaus in California.

"It's basically administrative work—people-oriented and solving personnel problems," Wada said of the dual position. "I just want to cram as much training as possible in the amount of time available."

The 27-year-old Wada has been an employee of the Times for six and a half years. She began her career at the age of 12, working on two weekly newspapers in her hometown of Montebello, Calif.

She is a graduate of Stanford University and has worked for the Associated Press in San Francisco and the Hayward (Calif.) Review.

At the Times, Wada worked as a copy editor and left her job as Westside section news editor in June to succeed Larry Lane as METPRO director.

Wada applied for the position because it provides her with an opportunity to work with young people and a chance to view the concerns of interns and editors objectively.

"I started at the Times as an intern, so I understand what the trainees might be going through. On the other hand, I used to be an editor so I can see their side of the situation, too."

Wada also feels that as an Asian American and as a woman, she can better comprehend the problems that minorities face in the field of journalism.

For more information on METPRO and the Metro internship program, contact Wada at Los Angeles Times, Times Mirror Square, Los Angeles, CA 90053.

Shari Okamoto is a free-lance rock music critic.



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Send articles, calendar events, and news to Asian American Journalists Association, 3921 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 315, Los Angeles, CA 90010; or call 213-389-8383. Deadline for submissions is the last day of the month.

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Contributors for this issue: Shari Okamoto and Sachi Yamamoto.



Photo by SACHI YAMAMOTO

Bob Sims (left), Joanne Corliss, and Ed Spray advising journalists at AAJA seminar.

ADVICE: Expect to Start at Bottom

Continued from Page 1

seven years from now, people that we've watched develop and grow up are going to be there." Hubbard's goal is "to take a lot of the guesswork out of how we hire people."

Varied Career Paths

All the panelists emphasized that there were no set ways to advance one's career.

"It's generally better to start in a smaller market and work your way up," Corliss said, though she did not rule out beginning in a major market like Los Angeles.

From there, she added, "The best advice I can give is to have a very open mind and to know where your skills are, but then again don't lock in so hard on that one goal that you bypass any opportunities or other options that come along. There's all sorts of ways to get what you want."

Corliss herself taught junior high school English before taking a part-time clerical job at a Fresno television station. She went on to reporting and then was asked to cover the assignment desk. "It wasn't my first love, but you find out in news that if you do have to fill in somewhere, you fill a need." Eventually she became news director at Fresno's number one station.

As assistant film editor at a small Indiana station, Ed Spray was also asked to fill in for an absent colleague—just when a scheduling problem left a one-hour slot empty that afternoon. Spray quickly edited a full-length film to fit the hour period.

"I had to produce," he recalled. "No matter

what was going to happen, that damn thing had to go on the air at 4 o'clock."

This taught him a lesson: "The pressure that you face [means] you have to make compromises along the way—not only in terms of the job that you're doing, but also in your career. I don't think you can be uncompromising and say 'I'm going to be an anchor by a year from now.' It doesn't work that way."

Spray worked at various stations as stage manager, television director, and program di-

"You have to make compromises along the way—not only in terms of the job that you're doing, but also in your career. I don't think you can be uncompromising and say 'I'm going to be an anchor by a year from now.' It doesn't work that way."

—Ed Spray, KCBS-TV

rector before becoming director of KCBS-TV broadcast administration.

Hubbard also advised journalists to start work in small markets and discouraged reporters without such experience from going to CBS News, "because they get to rip a lot of wire copy—and that is not an educational experience."

"There are three or four compartments in your life as you go along," Hubbard said. "The first ten years are really learning years. You wind up sacrificing a lot of time, energy, and effort and that's one of the things that you're going to have to do. How much are

you willing to give up to this business? Because it's going to take everything you've got."

Advice to Asians

When asked what advice they would direct specifically to Asian Americans, the panelists stressed assertiveness, especially during the initial interview.

"You might want to be sure that you don't come across as overly reserved," suggested Sims. "An interview is an employer's only opportunity to really get any clues as to who you are, so you don't want to hold back. You want to be perhaps less modest, more revealing about yourself than you normally would."

Corliss said that applicants should show they are "hungry" for the job. "You just have to come across Boom! 'Hire me!'" she said.

Tepper added that many Asian applicants may have a concept of "professionalism" that is "not necessarily consistent with the enthusiasm and hunger for the job that is part of this very competitive field."

She also suggested that many potential employees simply do not apply. "Oddly, we don't see enough people of Asian background who are coming to us in the entertainment and the news industry."

Hubbard cautioned, "It's very important, when you walk in the door, that you should not handicap yourself . . . Don't go in saying, 'I'm an Asian American, I'm going to have trouble getting this job.' Go in the door and say, 'I'm good, I'm going to show these guys I'm good.' That's the issue here, let's confine it to that. The bottom line is, can you do it?"

Being Asian may even be an advantage, some panelists suggested. In a market with a sizable Asian population, knowing an Asian

language can provide "a better edge," Corliss said.

"When you realize . . . the very low percentage of Asians in the news business currently, and couple that with an expanding population of Asians in the community," Sims said, "that makes it pretty clear that there are opportunities, especially in a city like Los Angeles."

The seminar was held at KCBS-TV studios July 9 in Los Angeles. CBS recruiter Eliza Keushgerian coordinated the event and moderated the discussion. KCBS news anchor Tritia Toyota delivered welcoming remarks.

Membership Roster

AAJA is pleased to announce that the number of dues-paying members has nearly tripled in the past year. Readers will find enclosed in this newsletter an application form for 1986-87. Membership runs from September 1 through August 31. Help AAJA reach its goal of 500 members!

Following, by chapter, are the 1985-86 members:

Southern California (founded 1981)

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Anthony Acosta
Vera Ellen Barker*
Archimedes Bobis
Edwin Chen
Diana Chi
Rita Choi*
Cynthia Chow
Francis Chu
Anh Do*
Vicki Esguerra
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Janet Wu (Boston)
Glen Wakai (Honolulu)*
Gayle Yamada (Miami)
Mike Yuen (Barbados)

Members At Large

†1986-87 dues received

*Student member
†1986-87 dues received

Friends & Associates

Among the 10 participants in the 1986-87 Minority Editorial Training Program (METPRO), offered by the Los Angeles Times and Times Mirror Company, are **Lily Eng** of Jersey City, N.J., a graduate of University of Michigan with a degree in communications and political science; and **John Fung** of San Francisco, a graduate of UC Berkeley with a degree in social welfare. (See story on page 3 for a description of METPRO.)

Jennifer Quong, formerly a reporter/anchor for KJZZ-FM in Phoenix, is now a news assistant at KNX Newsradio in Los Angeles.

Yong Ty Kim is a Metro reporting intern for the San Jose Mercury News. He graduated from Stanford University with a B.A. in journalism and an emphasis in computer science.

For the Record

Due to an editing error in the June newsletter, an article about Sacramento AAJA's "Careers in Journalism" workshop incorrectly identified Matt Chan's affiliation. He is the producer of "Evening Magazine" at KCRA-TV in Sacramento.

Career Opportunities

East West, a bilingual Chinese American newspaper, is looking for freelance writers. Send cover letter and writing samples to Richard Springer, 838 Grant Ave., Suite 302, San Francisco, CA 94108. Information: 415-982-8598.

The **Center for Investigative Reporting** sponsors 20 to 30 interns a year. Interns follow the full cycle of a major project, often contributing to final stories with sidebars or other reporting; are encouraged to pursue their own stories, and receive staff support for such work; and participate in seminars on investigative techniques, marketing, ethics, and other issues.

Interns earn a monthly stipend of \$50 for a minimum commitment of 15 to 20 hours per week for 3 to 7 months. Starting dates for internships are Jan. 1 and June 1; apply by Dec. 1 for the winter program and May 1 for the summer. Send resume, cover letter stating interests and briefly summarizing background and specialties, and writing samples (published work is not a prerequisite but is helpful in evaluating applications). Both students and non-students are encouraged to apply. Positions are available in the Center's offices in San Francisco and Washington, D.C. Contact Intern Program Coordinator, Center for Investigative Reporting, at: 54 Mint St., Fourth Floor, San Francisco, CA 94103, 415-543-1200; or The Atlantic Building, 930 "F" St. N.W., Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20004, 202-737-3990.

Be Counted!

Your membership dues of \$36 will support your fellow journalists across the country. Join the AAJA today. Membership application enclosed.

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