

Journalism Jobs: The Good, the Bad and the ...



UNUSUAL

As an Indiana University of Pennsylvania journalism student in 1985 with a passion for ministry, Mary Pellegrino found herself caught in two different worlds. (cont. on page 40)

By Abbey Zelko

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IUP journalism alumna Sr. Mary Pellegrino '85 is speaking at the 25th Jubilee celebration of one of the sisters.

Abbey Zelko is a junior journalism major at IUP. She hopes to pursue a career as a features writer for a major newspaper or magazine.

The summer before she graduated, Pellegrino '85 did an internship with the Pittsburgh City Parks Department while also doing a summer ministry program with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden, about 20 miles outside of Pittsburgh. She was working on public relations projects such as a fingerprinting for safety program while at the same time doing her ministry with women at the Allegheny County Jail. She realized she had a choice to make.

"Both were really good worlds to be in, but I had a greater attraction to work in the jail with the sisters," Pellegrino said. "I was inspired by the work with the sisters. Sitting with the women in jail and hearing their stories, I realized they weren't too much different from me."

Pellegrino joined the Sisters of St. Joseph in 1986, and became Sister Mary. Even though she decided not to make a career of journalism, she said she uses her education in ways she didn't expect.

"I serve on the Baden community's leadership team where I do a lot of writing and presentation making, and I represent the community publicly," she said.

But that doesn't stop people from questioning her career choice. Over the years, Pellegrino said, people have asked her if she feels like she wasted her degree. Her answer is always "no."

"I don't know of any career path that doesn't rely on the ability to talk with people, listen to people and be comfortable in many different situations," Pellegrino said. "It's a degree that can really cultivate people."

IUP journalism alumna Laurie Kuzneski '93, owner of Miss Laurie's Gourmet Kitchen in Indiana, had a similar experience when she followed her passion to a career outside of the journalism field. But unlike Pellegrino, she didn't realize her passion until after her college graduation. As a senior, Kuzneski never thought she would be preparing for a career as a cooking school owner.

"I didn't even know how to cook in college," she said recalling the first time she made a meal.

While on the phone long-distance with her mom, she attempted the task of making pasta with marinara sauce for her boyfriend. But Kuzneski was fearless. She wasn't afraid to host dinner parties and cook for other people. Her motto was "if it didn't work, I'd just order pizza."

Kuzneski says she has more guts than skill. "But I must have had more skill than I realized," she said.

She developed a love for cooking, which led to her business selling peanut brittle in November



-Photo by Abbey Zelko '14
IUP journalism alumna Laurie Kuzneski '93 teaches a Mediterranean-themed cooking class at Miss Laurie's Gourmet Kitchen in Indiana.

2002, and then to her first cooking class, which she taught in 2003. She teaches themed cooking classes, such as a Mexican or Italian food theme, at Miss Laurie's and also hosts a cooking camp helping children get involved in the kitchen.

"People think I just cook, but there's a lot of behind-the-scenes stuff that would be hard without my journalism background."

-LAURIE KUZNESKI '93

"I would get phone calls from people all the time asking cooking questions," Kuzneski said. "But when a friend called and asked how to make mashed potatoes from potatoes, I realized that there was a real need for cooking lessons."

Although Kuzneski turned in her pen and paper for an apron and a whisk, she hasn't neglected her journalism education and writing skills either.

"Seventy-five percent of my business is promoting and writing for my business, making videos and doing cooking demos," she said. "People think I just cook, but there's a lot of behind-the-scenes stuff that would be hard without my journalism background."

Tony DeLoreto '88, IUP journalism alumnus and owner of Spaghetti Benders restaurant in Indiana, agrees that his degree helps him in his job.

"I absolutely use my journalism skills in my job today," he said. "It's helped me write letters and ads for radio and newspapers and to deal with the public. A journalism background helps in any kind of business."

DeLoreto, Kuzneski and Pellegrino aren't the only journalism alumni who have pursued unusual careers for their major. In fact, according to Donald Asher, author of "How to Get Any Job," and an internationally acclaimed author and speaker specializing in professional development and higher education, these three are part of a trend.

"My observation of real people with real work lives is that most people have major shifts somewhere in their futures," Asher said in his book. "I know a college professor who turned his hobby into a multimillion dollar business. I know a soldier who became an engineer who became a real estate magnate."

Maybe these jobs aren't so unusual after all. "You can get any job with any major," Asher wrote in bold letters in his book.

IUP journalism alumni seem to agree. According to the 2011 IUP Journalism Alumni Survey, more than 90 percent of the 240 people who answered the survey said they concentrated in print journalism, general journalism or public relations in college. But not all of them pursued typical print journalism or public relations careers. The job titles of these alumni include accountant, assistant dean, associate professor, business owner, detective, environmental planner, insurance agent,

parliamentary assistant for the U.S. Senate, social worker and technical writer.

IUP journalism department chairman Randy L. Jesick said he also remembers some alumni with unusual jobs for a journalism major including a comedian, a country music producer, a dialect coach for movie actors, a lawyer and a priest. Even Brad Pitt, Denzel Washington and Sarah Palin were journalism majors.

With this amount of variety in jobs of journalism majors, Asher seems to be right.

"I don't mean that all majors prepare you



-Photo by Abbey Zelko '14
IUP journalism alumnus Tony DeLoreto '88 owns Spaghetti Benders, a restaurant in Indiana.

for all jobs equally well," he clarified, "but I do mean that at the juncture of college graduation, no job is inherently sealed off to you simply and solely because of your major."

Chance, inclination and hard work are more important than majors, Asher said. Employers look for skills. The most important characteristic of new hires is communication skills, Asher said in his book citing a survey of corporate recruiters by the National Association of Colleges and Employers. Corinne Antley '77, an IUP journalism alumna now practicing law at Dow Lohnes, can attest to that.

"I frequently have an opportunity to interview law-school students for jobs at my firm, and I invariably favor students with a strong writing background," she said. "Skillful writing is critical to successful law practice, whether one is writing Supreme Court briefs, legal memoranda for clients or colleagues or just emails and letters to clients."

Kuzneski agreed.

"I am so turned off when I get an email or a letter from someone that is poorly written," Kuzneski said. "It makes me not want to do

business with them. Writing skills are key in any industry. And when you have people skills on the side, it makes you even more valuable to employers."

But even with many different types of career paths for journalism majors to use their communication and writing skills, some have difficulty finding a job after graduation. According to the alumni survey, 28 percent of 202 people surveyed said that no job offers were available to them after they graduated. Maybe people aren't looking in the right places.

Freelance journalist Michael Koretzky has advised students at his "Weird Careers in Journalism" seminar in Las Vegas to keep an open mind when looking for jobs, according to an Oct. 6, 2010, article in The Working Press by Mark Anthony Smith.

"Jobs are out there," Koretzky said. "You just have to look beyond the normal."

IUP JOURNALISM ALUMNI WITH UNUSUAL JOBS

Alumnus

Larry Hojo '76
Corinne Antley '77
Bill Elmer '77
John Esposito '78
Suzanne Baker '80
Carole Long '80
Timothy Stein '80
Dane Foust '81

Francie Brown '82
Tim Flinchbaugh '82
Theresa Timcik '82
Vince Benigni '83
Randy Grossman '83
Clark Wigley '83
Rich Kuplinski '84
Mary Pellegrino '85
Marianne McGowan '86

David Prenatt '86
Tony DeLoreto '88
Dr. Michele Angello '89
Matt Hughes '89
Laurie Kuzneski '93

Job

legislative assistant
lawyer
comedian
country music producer
flight attendant
stock broker
priest
student affairs administrator
dialect coach
high school teacher
Air Force officer
professor
phlebotomist
Boy Scouts executive
union organizer
religious sister
pharmaceutical representative
minister
restaurateur
transgender counselor
restaurateur
cooking school owner

Q & A WITH IUP JOURNALISM ALUMNA CORINNE ANTLEY '77, A LAWYER AT DOW LOHNES

Q: Why did you choose to be a journalism major?

A: I chose journalism as a major at IUP because I enjoy writing. I'd been trying to write news stories since I was old enough to scribble my first name in a byline above a one-sentence story. I think I was six when I wrote a story about the terrible tragedy of how this writer stepped on a rusty nail. Equally important, in the early 1970s, everyone was mesmerized by Woodward and Bernstein and wanted to emulate their role in unraveling Watergate.

Q: So, why did you decide to pursue a career in law?

A: During college, I helped review a couple of papers written by a friend who was majoring in pre-law. The thought occurred to me that a law career might be interesting as well. My senior year at IUP, I was fortunate to be accepted as a legal intern by the Indiana law office of Mack & Bonya for a semester. I was able to apply my research and writing skills to preparing a legal memorandum for them. It was an excellent experience for which I am forever grateful. I definitely recommend interning or working as a legal assistant if you're contemplating a career in law. Law school is so expensive. Make sure that you like it before you make the huge investment.

Q: How long have you been working as a lawyer?

A: I have been working as a lawyer since I graduated from the University of Virginia School of Law in 1981. Things have changed a lot in 30 years. The University of Virginia School of Law had begun enrolling women students in significant numbers only a few years before I started there in 1978. When I first began practicing at my law firm, I was one of just a handful of women. If I attended a business meeting out of the office, I could be certain I would be the only woman lawyer in the room. The uniform for women lawyers those days was a tailored business suit and sometimes even a bow tie! Now, so many women are executives and in-house legal counsel at our client companies that the atmosphere has changed a lot.



*-Used with permission of Dow Lohnes PLLC
IUP journalism alumna Corinne Antley '77, a lawyer at Dow Lohnes, is discussing a section of the Tax Code with her colleague.*

Q: What responsibilities do you have as a lawyer?

A: My particular area of expertise is non-profit corporate and tax. In some cases I'm helping create an organization by writing articles of incorporation and bylaws, and in others I'm counseling the organization. I also helped establish our sports practice almost 10 years ago. Our firm currently represents about two dozen NFL players. My primary role with the sports practice these days is to talk with players about how they might like to establish a charitable foundation and what they can do with it when they do. But I also score some great swag occasionally.

Q: Has your journalism education helped you in your job today?

A: I will answer this question with a resounding YES! I frequently have an opportunity to interview law school students for jobs at my firm, and I invariably favor students with a strong writing background. The writing of many college and law school graduates is just not as strong as it should be. Skillful writing is critical to successful law practice, whether one is writing Supreme Court briefs, legal memoranda for clients or colleagues or just emails and letters to clients.

Q: Do you ever work with journalists?

A: Well, sometimes I have to respond to questions from journalists. Actually, I confess that I usually try to avoid responding to questions from journalists, such as when a nonprofit client of mine was embroiled in the Russian Crown Jewels Crisis in 1997. I was offered the opportunity to be on Greta Van Susteren's show, "Burden of Proof," and some nice young man from *The Washington Post* called me every evening for an interview, but at the request of one of my senior partners, I declined all opportunities to be quoted.

The last two years, I've also had the pleasure of serving as a presenter in the Law School for Digital Journalists sponsored by the Online News Association, which is a client of my law firm. My topic both years was how to form an online news business with an emphasis on nonprofit news organizations.

Q: Do you think a journalism background could help students in many different career paths?

A: I think that the study and practice of journalism provide a wonderful background for all kinds of careers. Not only do you refine your writing skills, but you also hone your research skills and interpersonal skills.