

# the Journalist

NEWSLETTER FOR JOURNALISM MAJORS & MINORS

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## Pulitzer winner shares experiences with students

*By Frankie Simoncelli*

Leon Dash, a former reporter for the Washington Post and currently a professor of journalism at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, spoke Feb. 7, in Buzzard Hall. Sheree Patterson, a member of the National Association of Black Journalists student chapter at Eastern, invited Professor Dash to speak.

Dash, who is most famous for his Washington Post, eight-part series about Rosa Lee Cunningham and her family, spoke to the crowd about his struggles as a reporter and the experiences he faced covering the story of Rosa Lee.

“Personally, my interactions with Rosa Lee Cunningham and her family provided a deeper empathy for those persons trapped in similar circumstances,” Dash said. Dash was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for his work, “Rosa Lee: A Mother and Her Family in Urban America.”

Dash spent four years following the lives of Rosa Lee and her family while exploring human poverty, imprisonment and drug use.

Dash said one of his most compelling reasons for following Rosa Lee was his curiosity about how the connections in inter-generational poverty work. Dash covered three living generations during his time with Rosa Lee. He chronicled the lives of Rosa, her children and grandchildren. He explored the poverty they lived as well as their choices and patterns of behavior through the years.

“Rosa Lee Cunningham’s story still resonates because many people know of people or have some family members caught in the same web of poverty,” Dash said.

He said that he repeatedly interviewed all adults and children in the family but it



*From left, Eugenia Jefferson, Meagan Morgan, Leon Dash, Sheree Patterson, and Tearria Ruffin pose for the camera. The NABJ members hosted a visit by the Pulitzer Prize winner.*

*Photo by Sally Turner*

wasn’t always easy getting the truth out of them. Dash said many people lie and do not tell the truth usually during the first interview because of their public mask.

Dash said that as a reporter you try to take that mask off and make the person getting interviewed feel comfortable, safe and protected. This helps to uncover the mask. He said that the universal human failure is the inability to keep a secret.

Dash shared his struggles of reporting, citing many headaches and much difficulty. Dash also spent a year living in a Washington D.C. ghetto and over 17 months examining, through interviews, the cause and effects of adolescent child bearing. Dash has provided riveting accounts of human behavior.

His methodology is immersion journalism where he interviews individuals several times about their family and childhood memories, school, memories of church and their expanded families. Dash has been criticized for his subject matter and his portrayal of poverty

among African Americans.

Dan Anderson, a junior physical education major, felt thankful for his life after hearing Dash speak.

“Hearing about what Rosa Lee and her family had to go through really makes me appreciate all the things I’ve been blessed with,” Anderson said.

“What really impressed me was the fact that Professor Dash never gave up on the story. I would burnout having to do all those interviews day in and day out under those horrible living conditions.”

Adam Lewis, a junior physical education major, said he was impressed with the patience Leon Dash showed and the story of Rosa Lee held his attention.

“The speech was extremely interesting as far as hearing all the things the family had to go through together,” Lewis said. “I couldn’t imagine living under the circumstances they did. If I were Professor Dash it would be tough to keep interviewing if I knew they were lying to me each time.”

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# Turning the page with Cathy Bayer

*By Angie Taylor*

“When I was young, I wanted to be a fire fighter or a physical therapist. But I really considered teaching because my whole family is teachers! But none of that was for me,” Bayer said.

Junior journalism major Cathy Bayer found her own niche while attending Bradley-Bourbonnais Community High School.

“I was introduced to writing for the newspaper my sophomore year,” Bayer said. “After a term paper about ‘One Hit Wonders,’ my teacher basically talked me into writing for my high school paper. The next two years I did, and my senior year I was the editor-in chief for the BBCH paper.”

But that was only the beginning for Bayer’s news career. When researching state universities, the decision came down to which one offered a daily paper.

“I actually visited Eastern before, and told myself I would never come here,” Bayer said. “But now, I can’t imagine being anywhere else!”

“Working at The Daily Eastern News has given me a real life experience,”

Bayer said. “I now know how to approach sources and the importance of meeting deadlines.”

Bayer’s experience hasn’t always been easy. Her first semester at EIU, she was too “chicken” to come into the DEN. After months of avoiding the paper, she was required to come in during the spring to write for a class.

“I still remember my first story was about the tanning age changing,” Bayer said. “I was so nervous! But it worked out, and I came back!”

Her sophomore year, Bayer was staff reporter and then copy editor. Last semester, Bayer was senior campus reporter. Now as news editor, Bayer is in charge of developing content, supervising new reporters, editing and producing headlines.

Bayer is also part of the editorial board, where she is sometimes asked to write editorials.

“Next year, I’ll consider editor in chief, but I love reporting,” Bayer said. “News editor is really as high as I want to go.”

On a typical work week at the DEN, Bayer works an average of six hours a day,

plus the occasional late night editing. But even with the long work week, Bayer thinks news has helped develop her into the person she is today.

“Although I’ve never been shy, writing for a newspaper has made me more comfortable talking to people I don’t know,” Bayer said. “It’s definitely helped me approach random people!”

Her experience at the DEN also helped her land a summer internship at The Daily Journal in Bourbonnais.

“It was nice to cover stories for a county, instead of campus news,” Bayer said. “But I came in ready to work. My experience at the DEN made the real world not as big and scary.”

After graduation, Bayer’s plans are to work for a daily paper and report. But she also thinks it can be tough for newspapers to survive television and Internet competition.

“Newspapers have become secondary to television, Internet news and blogs. That scares me because I love writing for print news,” Bayer said. “But I think print will always be around, or at least I hope so! If it’s not, I’m out of a job!”

*Cathy Bayer conducts a meeting with the DEN staff. Bayer, a junior journalism major, is the DEN’s news editor.  
Photo by Angie Taylor*



# Field goals, future goals together

*By Angie Taylor*

Junior journalism major Matt Daniels speaks about the tradition his family started early in his life.

“Every morning since I was five years old, the sports section has been waiting for me at my place setting,”

Daniels said. “My parents say I’ve always loved to read about sports.”

This year’s The Daily Eastern News sports editor recalls that at age 11, he knew he wanted to be a sports editor.

“And even to this day, I can imagine myself content at age 40 covering high school sports for a newspaper,” Daniels said.

While attending Edwardsville High School in southern Illinois, Daniels didn’t write for his high school paper, but played varsity basketball. He continues to coach his home team when home for breaks. Daniels thinks his personal experience combined with his knowledge and love for sports is what makes him a good journalist.

“My first story at the DEN was on the swim team, and it was really bad!” Daniels said. “But now I look back, and I’ve lost track of all the games I’ve covered and all the stories I’ve written.”

Daniels moved from covering tennis,

track and swimming his freshman year to covering women’s soccer, and men and women’s basketball his sophomore year. As a junior, he covered football in the fall, and then men’s basketball and women’s softball.

‘And even to this day, I can imagine myself content at age 40 covering high school sports for a newspaper.’

—Daniels

Although Daniels hasn’t had an internship, he thinks his experience at the DEN has prepared him for his future as a sports editor.

“I had to call [the head coach of the New Orleans Saints football team and Eastern Alumna] Sean Payton about a story last spring,” Daniels said.

“When he called me back the next

day, and I was able to ask four or five questions. It felt great. After that, I felt like I could really talk to anyone,” Daniels said.

But at times, sports coverage can be controversial. When readers open the paper and see an article that contradicts what they think about a team, Daniels says it’s all part of the job.

“People are going to rip you,” Daniels said. “But I write and report sports fairly. If you’re scared of what people say about you, you’re in the wrong business.”

With sports columns, writers are given the opportunity to voice their opinion freely. Daniels says these columns are what bring him the most e-mails from disgruntled readers.

“If you want to be a sports journalist or reporter, you need to possess the qualities of fairness and objectivity. Too many times, writers use their names to make themselves the story. But the team is the story.

Coaches are the story. The fans are the story,” he said.

Daniels plans to graduate in May 2008 to pursue his career as a sports writer.

“Sometimes covering sports is difficult because it’s hard to come up with new angles, hours are long and traveling is rough,” Daniel said. “But I mean, my job is sports. How cool is that?”

Journalism Job Fair  
Friday, March 30, 2007  
Newsroom

**\*Sign up sheets are posted on the front bulletin board at the DEN**

**\*Give J. R. a copy of your résumé or contact him for more information**

**\*jmryan@eiu.edu—John Ryan**

# WEIU-TV anchor places third for new anchor award

By Cory Dimitrakopoulos

2007 is the third consecutive year a student from Eastern has placed among the top three for a Broadcast Education Association award.

This year, WEIU-TV News Watch placed second in the TV Newscast division and Angie Taylor, a senior WEIU-TV anchor, placed third in the TV News Anchor division. Eastern also submitted students in the sports, weather and reporting divisions.

"Out of the 242 students entered in the News Division, about 10 of them were Eastern students," WEIU-TV news director, Kelly Runyon, said. The BEA awards program is held annually and acknowledges college students nationwide for their excellence in broadcast.

EIU is among a number of universities such as Arizona State University, Southern Illinois University, University of Maryland and Penn State that compete for the awards.

Students can compete in a variety

of divisions such as TV Newscast, TV Weathercaster, Radio Newscast and Feature Reporting, among others.

"WEIU and Kelly Runyon are the things that really prepared me [for this]" said Taylor. "The previous anchors [like Whitney Self] were also a big inspiration."

Taylor, who anchored the morning and late-night shows for WEIU-TV since 2005, as well as the live news for eight weeks in 2006, was the last of her friends at the TV station to find out that she had placed third.

"I was so surprised [when they told me]! When I submitted my tape, I didn't expect anything like this," Taylor said.

"It is very exciting that we did so well among so many schools," said Runyon. "Each year, we submit entries for their statewide contest and we always do very well, but to be recognized on a national level is just... wow!"

WEIU, which is considered part of the Eastern external relations department, is made up mostly of journalism and

communication majors who are dedicated to taking the time to ensure that their broadcasts are successful. Interested students can shadow a staffer to try out the field.

"We are lucky to have a strong caliber of students with a passion and drive for broadcasting. With accomplishments like these, we are really making a name for our program," said Runyon.

Runyon, who describes broadcast as hardly a nine-to-five job, also credits the University for WEIU's success.

"The University has provided us with great tools and equipment to produce our newscast on. What students are using here, they're going to be using in their professional careers," Runyon said.

The BEA awards program will be April 18-20 in Las Vegas, where Taylor will accept her award. Several WEIU-TV students and staff will attend the event.

When asked to give advice to aspiring television anchors, Taylor said, "Practice... and volunteer at WEIU-TV!"



**Angie Taylor, senior WEIU-TV anchor, placed third in the TV News Anchor division for the Broadcast Education Association award. Taylor, a senior, is also coordinating the Run for Glory, March 24, in memory of Glorivette Alegria, an Eastern student who died suddenly. The 5K run and 1-mile Fun Run/Walk will raise money for a scholarship in Glorivette Alegria's name. In addition to that project and her work at WEIU-TV, Taylor is active in PRSSA and The Agency.**

*Photo from WEIU-TV*



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