The alarm clock went off at 9:15 a.m. on Jan. 20, just four hours after I’d checked into my hotel room in Manchester, N.H. Despite the latest night of sleep deprivation, I felt amazingly refreshed and ready for the next leg of my political reporting adventure.

It had been an exciting night that had stretched into the next morning. Howard Dean had a surprisingly poor showing in the Iowa caucuses. At a postcaucus rally, he’d let out a scream that would be replayed thousands of times. And then I’d flown with his campaign from Des Moines to Portsmouth, N.H., where rocker Joan Jett and several hundred Deaniacs greeted the plane’s arrival at 3:30 a.m. with a rally.

As if someone had planned for a more celebratory mood, the flight attendants on the midnight charter served lobster, shrimp and ice cream sundaes. The tab for an open bar also would be passed along to the three dozen or so news organizations with reporters, photographers and producers aboard.

As a general assignment reporter for the Chicago Tribune, my job for the month leading up to the caucuses and eight days in New Hampshire had been to shadow Dean while chronicling the former Vermont governor’s often unconventional presidential bid. By the time of the caucuses, the paper had six reporters and a photographer in Iowa.

Dean proved to be a fascinating story. He was always fiery and had a knack for committing news. In retrospect, there were signs that his campaign was going to implode, from his yelling at an elderly voter in northern Iowa, to having to waffle on his pledge not to use his wife as a campaign prop.

My Iowa assignment had started shortly after Thanksgiving, when I essentially moved to the state to report on, among other things, Iowa’s demographics and economy, and the gradual disappearance of caucus meetings held inside rural farmhouses.

Four years earlier, I’d covered the caucuses as a reporter at the Des Moines Register, so I knew how the process worked – and how the state milks it for all it’s worth.

But this experience was different. In 1999 and early 2000, I’d bounced between several candidates: Steve Forbes one day, George Bush or Al Gore the next.
Around the School

BY DR. MARK NEUZIL
Chairman, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication

Memories of caucuses past, and the evolution of polling

Elsewhere in this issue of Nota Bene you will read about the experiences of St. Thomas journalism alums covering the 2004 Iowa caucuses. Their experiences remind me of my own days in Iowa, as a newspaper reporter and as a citizen, one who grew up in a family that believed such involvement was a primary civic responsibility of those living in a democratic society.

The Iowa caucuses are a strange event. At one level, the caucuses are retail politics as one would imagine they were practiced in the “old days,” before about 1960 and the introduction of television in the mix. Candidates meet voters face-to-face and listen to their concerns, and they are asked to respond to a variety of issues. One story that makes the rounds every four years is the big-city television interviewer (is there any other kind?) talking to an Iowa farmer in bib overalls (is there any other kind?) about the candidates.

Interviewer: “So, what do you think of Governor Jimmy Carter?”

Farmer: “I haven’t made up my mind yet. I’ve only met him two or three times.”

That’s retail politics. Candidates visit nearly every little village. About the only town they stay away from in Iowa is West Branch, birthplace of Herbert Hoover. No one wants to be compared to Hoover.

I remember standing in a junior high gymnasium in 1988, watching a room full of people debating the merits of Jesse Jackson, Dick Gephardt and Michael Dukakis as Democratic presidential candidates. If you thought about it from a historical perspective, the idea that these folks were treating Jackson as a viable option was pretty amazing. (Although Gephardt won.)

I think the biggest change in the media coverage of the caucuses, and politics in general, since I started as a stringer for United Press International in 1976 is the transformation of political writers into sportswriters. Now it’s all about who is ahead. I cannot recall reading any kind of lengthy profile of a candidate — any candidate — this year without some reference to public opinion polls in the story.

Reliance on public opinion polling as a story staple can lead to bad journalistic habits. Sure, people might need to know how their neighbors are feeling about the race; they might even enjoy reading the horse-race stories. But I would argue it doesn’t serve the citizenry very well on at least two counts. One, incessant poll stories take time and space away from other important issues. And they are easy to write, especially for the reporter who lacks imagination, good sources or time.

Two, there is a group-think effect. Many potential voters simply want to go along with the crowd, or they do not want to be seen as backing a loser. They may support a front-runner even though a candidate further down in the polls is a better match for their ideas. This is a real concern in a place like Iowa, where there are no secret ballots during the caucus. You head into the neighbor’s living room and raise your hand when someone asks how many of you want Al Sharpton to be the nominee. Then all your friends and neighbors look at you and one of them says, “What are you, nuts? He’s gonna get beat like a tied-up goat.” And you say, “Yeah, well, I guess I was for Kerry all along.”

Part of this is Iowa’s fault, at least indirectly. It was in Iowa in the early 1930s that George Gallup began his experiments with politics, sampling and public opinion surveys. Gallup was a native Iowan, a journalism major at the University of Iowa and a faculty member at Iowa and at Drake University. His mother-in-law, Viola “Ola” Babcock Miller, decided to run for Iowa Secretary of State in 1932. She was about 60 years old and a veteran of the late-19th century women’s suffrage movement, which culminated in women earning the right to vote in 1920. She also had little chance of winning. Besides having a gender handicap, she was in the wrong party; Iowa had consistently voted Republican since the Civil War. And home boy Hoover was running for re-election on the national ticket.

Gallup wanted to try out his ideas. He polled potential voters and accurately predicted her upset victory. And she was re-elected two more times before dying in office at age 65. She made light of her win, saying Iowans were OK with voting for a woman for the job of “secretary” of something.

Miller is well remembered for founding the Iowa State Patrol. By 1935, Gallup had founded the American Institute of Public Opinion in Princeton, N. J., and was issuing weekly polls on a variety of subjects, principally politics. Miller’s campaign was the last time Gallup took sides in a political contest, and later in life he became a foremost proponent of term limits.

Once polling became a formal part of the political culture, there was no getting the toothpaste back in the tube. Even huge mistakes like the 1948 Dewey-beats-Truman polling debacle, when Gallup and others stopped polling two or three weeks before election day and missed a swing of third-party voters back to the President, didn’t slow it down for long.

Even with all the polling, my impression in reading the campaign coverage from that post-Miller period is that reporters didn’t focus on the polls like they do now. I don’t have any empirical data to back up this assumption, but it would be an interesting notion to test.

For example, last fall I spent several hours examining the clips from the Des Moines Register and Tribune morgue on the 1950 Iowa gubernatorial race. (My grandfather was a candidate.) Nowhere in the files in any story was a poll ever mentioned.

A few times during the television coverage of the caucuses this year, a TV reporter would do a stand-up (LIVE!) in front of the old Iowa historical building. When the reporter mentioned the polls (“Dean was AHEAD! Now he’s BEHIND!”) I thought it was ironic. The old historical building is now called the Ola Babcock Miller Building.
McGill brings world home to Rochester

BY RYAN POST ('04)

Doug McGill's career in the journalism big-time started in the cafeteria line of a Manhattan YMCA. It eventually took him through the newsroom of the New York Times, then overseas and now back to his hometown of Rochester, Minn.

McGill, a former New York Times reporter and foreign bureau chief for Bloomberg News, joined St. Thomas last fall as an adjunct faculty member. He commutes 83 miles from Rochester on his teaching days. He joins a long line of talented professionals who for decades have complemented the expertise of the St. Thomas journalism faculty.

A career in reporting as wide and diverse as McGill's is something one might expect was choreographed from the time he was a student. But that wasn't the case.

On a stopover in New York City in 1979, on his way to pursue writing in Paris, a morning breakfast at a Manhattan YMCA changed McGill's goals.

After deciding against following in his dad's footsteps and becoming a doctor, McGill had worked as a writer for the Twin Cities Reader and as editor of Statewatch, now defunct Minnesota publications.

"I just knew in my heart that I did not want to be a doctor," McGill said.

At the end of the YMCA breakfast counter, he picked up a copy of the Monday edition of the New York Times and decided right then that he was going to be a reporter for the Times.

But getting in the front door of the Times wasn't, and isn't, an easy task. In the months after that breakfast, McGill found work as a typist.

"I could pretty much go anywhere in the world and get a typing job," said McGill, who mastered 95 words a minute.

In New York, McGill eventually found work at the Ford Foundation, where he bumped into important people who could help him make his goal of working at the Times.

"I needed a good personal connection, because I didn't have any," McGill said.

Fred Friendly, the former president of CBS News who was then at the Ford Foundation, was impressed enough with McGill that he promised to get him a job at the Times.

When McGill's phone rang the next day, it was the Times offering him a job as a copy boy.

He was in.

Being a copy boy at the Times meant doing legwork for reporters three to four times a week. But he spent his nights and weekends doing reporting and writing of his own — work that would eventually impress the Times enough to hire him. At least that's what he hoped.

After two years as a copy boy, continuing to work extra hours, he used an assignment from New Yorker magazine to catch the attention of the Times. He showed the managing editor at the Times the article he was to have published by the New Yorker.

One week later, he was hired as a general assignment reporter for the Times.

As a reporter, he covered the courts, crimes and other areas, taking the subway or bus to get from place to place. But 10 years after his first day as a copy boy, McGill decided that it was time to move on.

"The New York Times was my graduate school," McGill said. "You don't stay at graduate school forever; you move on."

He moved on to stops as a foreign reporter in London, Tokyo and Hong Kong. He spent much of that time working for Bloomberg News, when business news was really taking off. In 1999 and 2000, he was founding editor of Virtual China, a daily online newspaper about China in English.

After a decade abroad, the turn of the 21st century found McGill back home in his native Rochester. The Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks made him realize just how little Americans knew about the cultures and lands foreign to them.

His desire to explain what he knew from his time abroad pushed him into the idea of writing about immigrants and other cultures.


During this time, he decided he wanted to get into teaching, something that didn't immediately lead him to St. Thomas.

After outlining his journalistic experience in an interview at the University of Minnesota, McGill was told he was unlikely to be hired without a doctorate.

Fortunately for McGill and the St. Thomas community, his professional experience was enough to get him hired by Journalism Department Chairman Mark Neuzil.

Neuzil said he was "impressed with his international experience" and his "curious mind."

St. Thomas is a professionally oriented school that doesn't immediately exclude job candidates who do not hold a doctorate, Neuzil said, especially if they hold such important experience as McGill does.

Looking back on his time at the New York Times and abroad, McGill is proud, but he doesn't regret not staying in any one of those places. He makes it a point to make new goals and to continue to challenge himself.

Even a job in his 20s as a reporter at the most famous newspaper in America didn't sway him to leave his Minnesota roots forever.

"The big time is just the small time, only bigger," McGill said.

It's an attitude his students would do well to emulate.

Ryan Post is majoring in print journalism and minoring in English. He is a senior staff writer at the Aquin.
McGivern’s path leads to career at West

BY MIKE DOUGHERTY (’89)

Each person takes a different path as they develop in their chosen profession. Barb (Lammers) McGivern’s path might be called the building-blocks approach as she became the director of technology product development at West.

West, a Thomson Company based in Eagan, provides legal research and technology. It has been McGivern’s home since shortly after she graduated in 1990 in Journalism and Advertising at the University of St. Thomas.

“I thought I’d go on to be a copywriter after college, but to be honest, I thought I could be happy doing just about anything,” said McGivern, a native of Davenport, Iowa. “Living with five other college grads in a house on Goodrich was really fun, and finding a job right away was tricky. My best friend’s brother worked for West and recommended that I apply for a job in his department. I did, and 13 years later I’m still there.”

Today, McGivern oversees a team of lawyers, technologists and interface and usability specialists who design, build and maintain westlaw.com, which West calls the premier legal research site on the Web.

Her beginnings at West were in technical support, where she learned everything about Westlaw and West as a company. She also received a heavy dose of learning about computers and technology. The job involved taking calls from customers at law firms, law schools and government agencies, then talking them through troubleshooting and research problems and providing general customer service.

After three years, McGivern became a technical writer at West, work she feels was enhanced by her experience.

“Here, I could apply a core competency, writing, and also add a certain clarity, which I developed supporting customers who had difficulty using our products,” McGivern said.

After two years of writing “how to” materials about West products, McGivern says, she realized West could do things differently and make a significant change that would benefit the company and its customers: make the products usable in the first place, meaning West would need less customer support and fewer instructional materials.

“The practice of user interface design, (also called human factors, ergonomics, and usability) is, at its core, designing products with user input, to support actual user tasks, based on proven user interface design principles,” McGivern says. “It’s the way we design products at West as standard practice now, from CD products to Forms software to westlaw.com. Everything is user validated before it’s considered done.”

In her director’s role, McGivern enjoys developing the people on her team, seeing a great idea through from conception to product launch and spending time with customers and getting new ideas for product development.

Along the way, she met her husband, Gene McGivern, St. Thomas’ sports information director. They met on a blind date more than 11 years ago after Gene had come to St. Paul from Ames, Iowa, where he was the sports editor of the Ames Tribune. Outside of work, their focus is on their children Bridget, 8, and George, 6.

They live in Eagan, where the children are in third grade and kindergarten. McGivern said their home is equidistant between her office at West and the children’s school, so she’s able to volunteer there every other Friday after just two minutes commuting.

McGivern reflects on her time at St. Thomas and says she never envisioned herself in her current job. She credits the liberal arts approach with helping her develop professionally and discover a great career.

“I am a big fan of a liberal arts education for someone like me. Spend your time in college experiencing many disciplines, get the basics down, find a general area of concentration with wide practical application and then find your way,” she says. “If you find something you love, go back to school and get an advanced degree. I have a few regrets, that I didn’t study abroad, and that I didn’t study harder. I sometimes regret that I didn’t get an advanced degree right after college, before I had a family. I didn’t have that insight then, but I share that with others whenever I can.”

McGivern says the Persuasion in Writing class at St. Thomas remains a staple in her work today.

“Not a day goes by when I’m not trying to persuade, negotiate or sell by e-mail, memo, business case or in person,” McGivern says. “Another course that was particularly interesting and it turns out, valuable, to me was Layout and Design. In Web development (as in yearbook and newspaper layout), you need to be aware of eye flow, design guidelines, trapped white space. Much of what I do lately is quick assessment of designs; over the years, I’ve developed a design sense and my time in that class was instrumental.”

As for the future, McGivern says she’s strongly considering an advanced degree.

“I’m proficient at designing and building products and I’d like to contribute more in terms of financial and strategic planning, so a MBA is probably in my future,” McGivern says.
Journalism Professor Jeanne Steele, along with University of St. Thomas colleagues in Engineering and Biology, traveled to Mali, West Africa, during January Term to explore opportunities for St. Thomas students to study there.

Steele’s trip coincided with the launch of a far-reaching US-AID project that aims to establish Community Learning and Information Centers in 11 cities and towns strategically located throughout the country.

Equipped with computers, satellite receivers, VCRs and DVD-players, the centers are designed to give all Malians — many of whom are subsistence farmers who live in mud huts and rely on water from rivers or hand-drawn wells — access to information that can improve their lives.

Culturally-appropriate content is the greatest need at the centers. Steele says St. Thomas journalism and communications students can help fill those needs. The challenge, she says, is to figure out how to fit into the university’s existing course and degree structure. Money is also a factor. Travel costs alone are nearly $1,500 from the Twin Cities to Bamako, the capital.

A U.S. foreign service officer early in her career, Steele served with the United States Information Service (USIS) in neighboring Ivory Coast and visited Mali some 30 years ago. In many ways, the country is unchanged, she says.

“It remains painfully poor, but its people are exceedingly rich in spirit and full of hope,” Steel says.

Steele and colleagues Camille George and Chester Wilson also met with faculty at the University of Bamako and representatives of World Vision, Enterprise Works, and ASDAP, non-governmental organizations dedicated to promoting development.

The trip was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture through a Higher Education Challenge Grant awarded to Montana State University.
Iowa does presidential politics in a way all its own

BY MARK GINTHER (’89)  

As a Minnesotan who loves politics, I had always watched the Iowa caucuses with great interest. I was with KSTP-TV in St. Paul for seven years, the last four as assistant news director. So in 2000 I sent a crew down to Des Moines when the Republicans and Democrats were selecting a nominee to run for president. Until that time, that was the closest I’d been to covering the caucuses.  

Then in April 2003, I took a new job as news director of WHO-TV in Des Moines, an NBC-affiliate owned by the New York Times Co. I had just enough New York Times Co. I had just enough  

Moines, an NBC-affiliate owned by the New York Times Co. I had just enough

Broder, who dazzled us with stories of past presidential campaigns, including his first in 1960, when he sent stories back to Washington by telegram.

There were celebrities on the campaign trail as well. Visits by actor Martin Sheen (“I’m a big “The West Wing” fan) and director Rob Reiner, not to mention endorsements from Al Gore and Bill Bradley, broke up the monotony of always listening to Dean.

On Jan. 28, the day after the New Hampshire primary, I flew home to Chicago on Southwest Airlines. The flight was on time, but I missed the lobster and open bar from the earlier flight – not to mention the action.

John McCormick is a general assignment reporter at the Chicago Tribune. He was a reporter at the Rochester Post-Bulletin and computer-assisted reporting coordinator at the Des Moines Register before joining the Tribune in 2002.

John McCormick

While I was able to stay often in the comforts of an Embassy Suites or Marriott, there were many nights in small-town Iowa. Dean liked to stay in hotels that cost less than $100, so we often found ourselves in places that weren’t exactly five-star.

The hotels were often quaint and comfortable but weren’t built to handle a press corps and campaign staff of more than 50 who all needed to shower at the same time in the morning.

Then there was the food. By Christmas, a pair of jeans I’d packed no longer fit. Between the expense account dinners and greasy meals on the bus (including one prepared at a state prison), I’d managed to put on 15 pounds in eight weeks.

We ate outstanding dinners in Des Moines, where the national press corps headquartered for much of January.

One highlight was a dinner that included the Washington Post’s David

Caucuses

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

next. I’d also rarely spent a night away from home.

The technology this time also was dramatically better. Filing stories to Chicago was relatively easy, even from the back of a moving bus in rural Iowa, with the use of a wireless data card or a data-enabled cell phone.

Even before going to Iowa, I was away from home for several weeks, working on a 4,000-word profile on Joe Lieberman, an effort that took me to Connecticut, New York, Oklahoma, Iowa and Washington, D.C.

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John McCormick

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Genteel lecture becomes media circus

BY TOM SNEE ('88)

When we booked Wesley Clark in March 2003 to deliver a September lecture at the University of Iowa College of Law, we looked forward to a genteel and informed analysis of world affairs from a prominent former general and TV talking head.

As media relations coordinator for the law school, I expected the usual coverage for such an event: local newspapers and TV stations, maybe the statewide Des Moines Register, but that’s about it. Academic lectures, even from prominent speakers, don’t usually make the front page in out-of-town newspapers.

But it wasn’t long before I realized this would be no ordinary academic lecture. By May reporters from national news organizations started calling me to ask if Clark planned to declare his candidacy for the presidency at our lecture. Unknown to me, Clark’s name had surfaced among political wags as a possible candidate, and because he was speaking in Iowa just a few months before the caucuses, it raised a collective eyebrow among the media. That tends to happen in Iowa, when even the most mundane event takes on international importance if the person involved is rumored to be running for president. They must be greasing the skids for the caucus, the thinking goes, and it leads to a rough syllogism: Person X is rumored to be a presidential candidate; Person X is in Iowa; therefore, Person X is considering a run for the presidency. (You should see what happens when Hillary Clinton comes anywhere near the state.)

Through the summer, with Clark saying almost nothing about his plans, the lecture took on even more significance as a winking confirmation that he was, indeed, seriously thinking about running for president — as in, “Clark will not confirm his intentions, but he does have a lecture scheduled Sept. 19 at the University of Iowa, in the home state of the nation’s first presidential test.” In chicken-and-egg fashion, this brought even more media attention and made the lecture even more significant so that by the day it was delivered, it had become a huge international political event.

Reporters called for credentials from as far away as Germany and Japan. Correspondents from Time magazine called me at home. A desperate newspaper editor from Pittsburgh, unable to send her own reporter, asked me if I’d cover it for them (I declined). A dozen satellite trucks lined the street outside the hall, and C-SPAN, Fox and CNN all wanted to broadcast the speech live. “Yes,” Clark’s booking agency said; “Absolutely not,” said his still press-shy campaign. It took two days of tug-of-war before the campaign won out. In the end, about 150 reporters and photographers packed into the lecture hall, and we were front-page news around the world.

It was, in fact, Clark’s first major address after formally declaring his candidacy two days earlier. It kicked into high gear the steady line of candidates and media folks parading through the University of Iowa campus. Dick Gephardt visited the university’s unionized employees, and John Kerry sipped coffee with students. Dennis Kucinich was here often, no doubt because liberal Iowa City is one of the few places in otherwise conservative Iowa where his New Age ideas were not laughed out of the coffee shop. Has-been rocker Joan Jett played acoustic versions of her old hits for Howard Dean, saying it wasn’t just his anti-war position that appealed to her; it was that he balanced the Vermont budget 11 consecutive years as governor. Who knew rock stars were fans of balanced state budgets? Several of the university’s political science faculty became celebrities themselves and were interviewed so many times for background and analysis that it wasn’t unusual for their names to appear in 10 newspaper stories a day for days on end. CNN joined the fun by parking its political bus on campus a few days before the caucuses and broadcasting live, the anchors wearing ill-fitting Hawkeye caps received from our university president.

It was wild and hectic and, toward the end, barely under control. While Iowans often complain about this quadrennial circus, we do so only because we’re expected to. We love it, and everyone knows we love it, because how else would Iowa make front pages in Brazil and Russia and Japan if it weren’t for the caucuses? Strangely, though, none of it included Wesley Clark, the man who started everything last September. After all the hoopla, conjecture and build-up to his appearance here, he abandoned us, deciding to forgo Iowa and focus on New Hampshire.

Tom Snee is media relations coordinator for the University of Iowa College of Law.
Alumni news

Brian Bellmont ['90] has had work published in MSNBC.com's entertainment section, covering television and movies. Bellmont is owner of Bellmont Partners, a public relations and writing business based in Eagan.

Gael Fashingbauer Cooper ['89] is entertainment editor and producer, covering TV and books, for MSNBC.com. Previously, she was travel editor and producer for MSNBC.com. Fashingbauer Cooper edits, assigns and writes stories about television, reviews books from memoirs to cookbooks, and writes an entertainment Weblog called Test Pattern (www.testpattern.msnbc.com).

Sara Cziok ('03) has joined LaBrecche Murray Public Relations in Minneapolis as an account assistant. Before joining LaBrecche Murray, Cziok was at Porter Novelli in New York. At LaBrecche Murray she will work on accounts that include Target, Allianz Life Insurance and 3M.

Kevin DiLorenzo ('88) is senior vice president and managing director of Olson + Co., a Minneapolis-based ad agency. He was a senior partner at Carmichael Lynch Spong Public Relations in Minneapolis.

Kevin Duchschere ['80] was granted a fellowship to study urban and suburban issues at the Knight Center for Specialized Journalism at the University of Maryland. He covers Washington County and western Wisconsin for the Minneapolis Star Tribune.

Jared Morris ['93] is in direct U.S. retail communications for Nike in Beaverton, Ore., where he works with the company's stores on corporate directives and branding. He also has taken up running.

Jarred Opatz ['92] is special projects editor for the Ashland Times-Gazette in Ohio. Opatz and his wife, Jamie, just had their second child, Seth. Seth joins his brother Evan, 3.

Jack Sullivan ['93] has joined the Pioneer Press in St. Paul as a transportation and metropolitan growth reporter. Sullivan was a regional reporter for the Associated Press, based in Washington, where he covered North and South Dakota, Montana and Wyoming.

Shannon (O’Connell) Toman ['92] is change agent for Carlson Marketing Group and is enrolled in St. Thomas' Master of Arts program with a focus on Organization Development.

Dave Walsh ['83] is vice president of communications for Biopolymer Engineering, Inc., a private biotech company in Eagan that is primarily focused on developing pharmaceuticals that enhance the effectiveness of cancer drugs, specifically monoclonal antibodies and vaccines. He also writes and edits for Basilica magazine at the Basilica of St. Mary in Minneapolis.

Edward Walsh ['63] has retired from the Washington Post after 32 years on staff, including time as chief of the newspaper's Jerusalem and Chicago bureaus. He most recently served as a general assignment and political reporter and covered six of the past seven presidential campaigns.

Mike Zipko is the communication chair for the Bush/Cheney 2004 Minnesota campaign. Zipko is in public relations and media relations at Goff & Howard in St. Paul.

Minnesota Daily alumni honor Larson

Retired St. Thomas journalism professor Norman Larson will be inducted into the Minnesota Daily Hall of Distinction in April for his “many contributions to the Daily and his field.” Larson, the second full-time journalism faculty member at St. Thomas, held several news positions at the Daily, the University of Minnesota’s student newspaper, including reporter, news editor and associate editor for the editorial and opinion pages. Late in his career, Larson was on the board of the Minnesota Daily Alumni Association and was the board’s representative to the Daily Board of Directors.

In 32 years at St. Thomas, Larson taught writing and editing, as well as media law. He advised the Aquin, the Aquinas yearbook and the campus chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists. He retired in 2000.

After two years of active duty in the Navy, he worked in public information and public relations for Minneapolis corporations before he joined the staff of the Minneapolis Tribune. While at the Tribune, he returned to the University of Minnesota and earned a master’s degree. He taught at the University of Kansas before joining St. Thomas’ faculty.

He will be inducted April 23 at the Alumni Association’s annual banquet.

Student news

Aquin wins MNA awards

The Aquin, St. Thomas’ student newspaper, won 12 awards on Jan. 30 at the 137th annual Minnesota Newspaper Association Better Newspaper Contest in Bloomington. The weekly newspaper finished second in the General Excellence competition, open to all university, college and community college newspapers in the state. The Aquin was awarded first places in Typography and Design and Best Use of Photography as a Whole.

Grace Hanson was voted top college columnist in the state; her entry titled “War with Iraq” topped 28 others. The judges said, “The writing is straightforward, and the emphasis is on content, not herself, but the piece has a conversational tone.”

The feature writing team of Margaret Broeren, Nicole Christiansen, Jennifer Nielsen and Jane E. Stalter won first place for their series on St. Thomas’ decision to admit women called “When Women Arrived.”

Rob Wittrock won first place for Best Illustration; Xenia Grushetsky won the top prize in Editorial Cartooning. The judges said of her work, “This is a potential Herblock,” referring to the late Washington Post cartoonist.

Second place awards went to Justin Gilmore in General Reporting; Sarah Whitmore in Best Social Issues Feature story; the editorial page staff; and photographers Lisa Joy LoMurray (portrait) and Ania Gunderson (features).

The Aquin adviser is assistant journalism professor Michael O’Donnell.

Tommie PR gives students hands-on experience

Students participating in the St. Thomas chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America have formed a student-run public relations firm, Tommie PR.

The firm works free of charge for on-campus groups and nonprofit organizations. Through Tommie PR, students are able to gain practical on-the-job knowledge, including working with professional clients.

For the past year, Tommie PR has produced the St. Thomas crew team’s biannual newsletter. They recently completed work on an annual report for Compatible Technology International, an organization working in developing countries to help make safe food and water.

Tommie PR members Justin Gilmore, Michael Kelther and Jennifer Lymburner worked closely with administrators at CTI to produce the annual report for CTI’s volunteers, partners and past and potential donors.

Groups or individuals seeking assistance with writing, design, event planning or any other communication and publicity needs should contact Tommie PR via e-mail at ustrppress@hotmail.com.