

In the wee, wee hours of morning

By Stephanie Drobat
special writer

The moon is still high in the sky when Colleen Burcar starts her morning. The public affairs director for WKQI 95.5 FM — previously WCZY — she wakes up when her alarm buzzes at 4 a.m. Part of the early-morning routine includes leaving her Bloomfield Hills home as quietly as possible to avoid disturbing her family — husband Bryan Becker and daughter Kimberly. Once at the radio station, Burcar checks the news service wire for stories for her newscasts.

Although Burcar loves her job at WKQI, she maintains that a broadcast career isn't glamorous by any stretch of the imagination.

"I get in generally at 5:15 a.m., pull together a quick newscast in 10 minutes and then I'm on the air," she said.

Throughout the remaining hours, she rechecks the Associated Press wire copy constantly for news updates, basing her topics on what people are talking about on the streets. She also chooses a "kicker" — an informative funny story — to end her newscasts on a positive note.

The majority of the WKQI staff arrives by the time Burcar reads the last of her five broadcasts at 9 a.m.

IN SPITE of her early mornings, Burcar is always cheerful, said Carolyn Hough, a former WCZY receptionist.

"She's a fun-loving person and a pleasant individual," Hough said.

And according to morning show personality Mark Andrews, "Colleen has a unique style unlike other female broadcasters who try to act like their male counterparts."

He added that Burcar's "incomparable voice easily transmits her bubbly and effervescent personality over the airwaves" to the listening audience.

Burcar enjoys working on the morning shows because of the flexibility. She can, she said, fulfill her commitments at her convenience. Those commitments include taping a weekly radio talk show and writing and scheduling the station's public service announcements.

Later, at home, Burcar can be found perusing magazines in search of kicker stories and spending time with her 10-year-old daughter. Her family's happiness is her primary concern and most important goal in her life.

"I want us to be happy," she said. "I want to be a good mother, a good wife and a good journalist third."

Becoming a good journalist was a slow climb up the ladder of success.

Burcar had little luck when she started looking for employment in the radio and television industry in the '70s. But in 1977, within the course of three days, Burcar auditioned at CKLW, was called back and put on the air.

Six years after her debut on CKLW, Burcar moved to WCZY and stayed when it became WKQI.

BURCAR DIDN'T have any contacts in the field of radio broadcasting when she first auditioned for jobs.

"I didn't know a soul, so it isn't necessarily who you know in the business," she said. "I think it's a matter of being in the right place at the right time."

She attributes part of her success to her educational background. She received her bachelor's degree from Michigan State University and a master's degree in guidance and counseling from Eastern Michigan University.

"I think that (getting an education) shows that you are able to handle responsibility," she said.

Burcar advises aspiring journalists to accept a beginning in entry-level positions and internships. Although they provide little or no pay, they do provide a wealth of experience, she said.

A case in point: When she worked at Channel 2 on "PM Magazine," producing two-minute segments, Burcar worked "diligently" on them. Her hard work, however, was for almost no pay.

"I was compensated something, but it was almost nothing," she said. "But when that was over, I had a tape and I had experience."

STUDENTS NEED to get a good education and experience to compete in a very tight job market, especially Detroit where job availability has decreased in the past decade, forcing newcomers to go to other markets in other cities, she said.

"Certainly, I think it's good to go in with really high goals and go for them, but be realistic," Burcar said.

Although Burcar doesn't lecture on the discriminatory treatment of women in the media, she clearly has an opinion. People have to think about where women are going and how they are portrayed.

Another case in point: Whenever you watch the news, one male and one female are co-anchoring or even two males anchors, but never two women, Burcar said.

"I think women can do just as good of a job of handling that as a man," she said.



Morning for Colleen Burcar comes early. As the public affairs director for WKQI-95.5 FM, she not only does early morning news reports, she has her own news

talk show and writes and schedules the station's public service announcements.

He keys in on power to become a karate legend

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Stories about Adams include raising and lowering the flame of a lit candle with nothing more than an intense glare, catching a razor-sharp sword (swung at Adams' head by a blind-folded guy) between his palms, stopping karatech (a martial arts weapon) swinging idiot in front of several alarmed police officers with just a handful of dirt.

ADAMS EVEN has a penchant for winning all of those giant stuffed animals at carnivals that nobody else can seem to win.

Sure, you say, I've seen those kung fu westerns on television. OK, we'll let some of Adams students (who would rather tell fibs about Mike Tyson than their teacher) paint some more of the picture.

"This one time at a Christmas party, I saw Sensei (a Japanese martial arts instructor) let 10 guys grab him," said black belt John Cox of Detroit. "There were two on each limb and three or four guys around his waist. Next thing you know, bodies were flying every where and Sensei is the only one left standing."

So he got lucky, you say. Well, luck is as luck does and Adams has done it all.

"I saw two guys swing live (sharp) swords at Sensei, one at his head and one at his legs," said second-degree black belt Burt Maben, who has studied under Adams for 10 years. "He jumped up and turned into a small

ball and the swordsmen missed. I've studied the samurai sword and know that one can easily cut you in half."

Yeah, but this Adams guy couldn't take Chuck Norris or, um, Bruce Lee, you say. Well, you're right . . . and wrong.

Back in 1966 in Cincinnati, Adams fought Norris in a karate tournament in which 20 of the top martial artists in the country (including Lee) were invited to do battle until only one man was left standing.

ADAMS, WEIGHING a mere 129 pounds back then, was edged in a decision to the larger Norris.

"It was a knock-down, drag-out fight," Adams said. "Five minutes of fighting and a lot of fun."

Yeah, but nobody could take Bruce Lee, you say.

Even though he never got the chance, Adams would have loved to face the legendary Lee. When asked what would have happened if the two would have met in a true, bare-knuckle brawl, Adams said simply, "He would have been in big trouble."

Adams began his career in martial arts in the late '50s. Hanging out at the local YMCA, practicing judo (karate was somewhat foreign then), Adams first befriended a Japanese exchange student who taught him the Shotokan martial arts technique, which emphasizes punching. Adams then met a Korean gentleman and learned a Taigondo technique, which involves mostly kicking.

These two styles helped Adams master the Isha-Ryu technique — 50-50 punching and kicking — which he practices today.

Adams reached his prime in the late 1960s when full contact karate fights were bare-knuckle battles that ended with blood and broken bones. A popular version now is the kick boxing seen on TV.

THAT'S CHILD'S play, according to Adams, who told this story on how tough it was back then:

"I once saw a fight where this guy from Montana named Jim Harrison was fighting my instructor," Adams said. "Harrison got hit in the nose so hard, bones shot out all over his face. Wanting to continue, (Harrison) went to the judges' table, grabbed a pencil and proceeded to push bones back into his nose with an eraser."

"Nowadays, you may see a cut lip and that's better."

Adams fought bare-knuckle, but to look at his face you wouldn't know it. At 129 pounds, he fought his way to become the North American champion back in the late 1960s, whipping guys that weighed as much as 100 pounds more than him.

He also reigned as state champion in Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Pennsylvania from 1964 to 1968. And that was an unlimited weight class. It got to the point where tournament directors paid Adams not to show up.

"No one would sign up if I was

there," Adams said with a laugh. The story of when all 129 pounds of Willie Adams fought the 6-5, 270-pound president of the motorcycle gang called the Heathens is a classic — kind of like a modern day David and Goliath.

ADAMS LIKES to ride motorcycles (he currently owns a 1983 Harley Davidson Lowrider) and owned a little Honda bike back in the 1960s.

He liked to follow the "Hells Angels" types on his bike and hang out with them at their parties. But the Harley guys didn't like him to hang out with them because, well, he didn't ride a Harley. Adams was at this huge biker party — 300 plus bikers — at Bailey's Beach in Canada. Sitting on



Scott Spiesak, 12, of Westland takes a punch from Shawn Wilson, 11, of Southfield during lessons at Willie Adams' Southfield Martial Arts Institute.

the beach, minding his own business, this guy notices Adams, says he's seen him fight and wants to know if he'd like to fight the leader of the Heathens. Adams said "sure."

"The next thing you know I hear this 'boom-boom-boom' coming across the sand," Adams said. "I look up and see probably the biggest biker of the bunch."

The president of the Heathens asked Adams if he'd like to "slap box," to which Adams replied, "You do what you want, I'll do what I want."

"He swung, I dropped him . . . He swung again, I dropped him again," Adams said.

By night's end, the Heathens president wanted karate lessons and every other president there wanted Adams (and his little Honda) to ride with them, Adams said.

"Everyone in this world has the right to walk around and feel as if they're a whole person even if they're small like me," Adams said.

The 1989 North American Karate Championship will be Saturday, Oct. 28, at Cobo Hall in Detroit. Registration starts at 7:30 a.m., with elimination bouts beginning at 9 a.m. The Black Belt Battle of the Stars will be at 8 p.m. Tickets cost \$35 each. The tournament is being staged by Willie Adams in association with Karate Tournaments Inc.