

MSU editor tackles news and loves it

By Steve Barnaby
editor

Managing a newsroom, any newsroom, is one heck of a job, even under the best of circumstances.

But when you're 21, and editor of a daily newspaper whose staff is college students, and whose readers are students and professors, the job takes on a special twist.

But Louise Whall, a 1977 Harrison High graduate, strives to take the hectic daily newsroom scene into stride by making quick decisions when the going gets rough.

She took over the reins of the Michigan State News on MSU's East Lansing campus earlier this year.

"The best advice I ever got was to do what feels right," she says. "If I don't know the answer, I make it up. I must make decisions and then regroup."

She joined the State News 1 1/2 years ago as an intern and has served as a staff writer and opinion editor.

"It's a real weird situation to be elevated to be everyone's boss," says Ms. Whall.

One of her biggest challenges is to keep her staff motivated — a task she faces by providing what she feels is a good example.

As editor she oversees the entire department, whose staff ranges from 30 during the summer to 54 members during the rest of the year. They all are students.

THE STATE NEWS, with the exception of its general manager, is operated entirely by students.

Ms. Whall fires, hires, determines news policy and maintains a working relationship with the rest of the departments within the newspaper.

"There is no such thing as a typical day," she says, with a slight trace of excitement penetrating her usually matter-of-fact voice.

Maintaining her position until next summer, she hopes to improve what

she feels is already a good newspaper.

The State News for most students and much of the faculty is a primary source of news. The paper covers news from around the world as well as on campus. It has won a number of awards for its journalistic excellence.

Ms. Whall hopes to carry on that tradition.

"There is a lot of news out there. We don't miss a lot of things, but we don't break a lot of things, either," she says.

That is something she would like to see changed.

The State News never has carried the reputation of being a patsy to the college administration, but Ms. Whall says a cordial relationship should exist between the newspaper and the administration.

"IT NEVER WILL like the good old boys, but you can be polite and get along," she says.

Serving a campus the size of a small city with such a diverse audience also requires a newspaper with broad coverage, she says.

"This is a general interest newspaper which must be balanced accordingly. For many students this is their only source of news," she says.

And students do miss it when a drop is skipped at one of the dormitories.

"We get calls all afternoon when the paper is missing. It's something that sometimes isn't appreciated until it is gone," she says.

Although countless hours of work lay ahead for the fledgling editor, Ms. Whall does find time for relaxation by coming back home to visit her parents Joseph and Shirley Whall, and by reading.

She enjoys the "lost generation" authors — Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald.

"Hemingway is the best literature you can read. It is crisp and has clarity of dialogue. Fitzgerald is simply beautiful," she says.



Louise Whall, editor of the State News, sits at her desk which commands a view of the news room.



Betsy Lenhard (left), managing editor of the State News, briefs Louise Whall on the current stories for the paper.

Photo editor Dorothy Neaton (left) shows Louise Whall the pictures that will be used in the next edition of the State News.



News Stories from different wire services provide the readers of the State News with a worldwide view.

Staff photos by
Randy Borst

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