

Couric Wins Earth Momma Award Twice, 1974-78.

By P.J. (Jay) Boatwright III, CLAS 1978.

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I worked at the Cavalier Daily from 1974 through 1978, finishing up as sports editor. My first year I wrote a few stories for the sports department. My second year I wrote more, and in my third year I was associate sports editor. In the first semester of my fourth year, the managing board, led by George Rodrigue, decided to restructure the paper's leadership, in particular the junior board. We had a meeting to debate and vote on the new structure in December, 1977. A leading aspect of the restructuring was a switch from two editors in each department to one -- from two sports editors to one executive sports editor. I was in favor of that, the new structure passed, and I became executive sports editor. While I was grateful for the opportunity, it was double the work. I spent more time at the CD than I did in class (that's nothing new, eh?) and I believe the old structure was reinstated within a year or two. But it was a rare imbroglio at the CD.

Our offices then were in Newcomb Hall on the fifth floor. The paper was printed in Culpeper. We had Compugraphic typesetting machines that spat out long strips of paper that we had to wax and paste on a layout page template. That Compugraphic machine was the big innovation at the time. We were very proud of it. The paper was published five days a week, Monday through Friday, and we usually had six or eight pages.

The managing board consisted of an editor-in-chief, managing editor, business manager and editorial page editor, as I recall. I recall Rodrigue as editor-in-chief and Jim Reagan as the editorial page editor. The latter basically flunked out of school -- he did nothing but work on the paper. I don't remember fraternity connections playing a role in the staff elections, but there were plenty of politics. Rodrigue, who went on to win a Pulitzer Prize, was brilliant--and consequently despised by some. At the end of his second year he was up for news editor. He narrowly lost, thanks to a group of people who organized to prevent his election. He became projects editor (usually at the time a death knell for anyone's ambitions) but he did such a wonderful job in that role that the following year he won election as editor-in-chief.

Katie Couric of NBC's "Today" Show was on the paper with me all four years. She worked in news and features, I think, and her claim to fame is that she twice won the Earth Momma Award, which was given annually to the female member of the staff whom the male members most wanted to, er, date. She may still be the only repeat winner--the Archie Griffin of collegiate journalism. (Editor's note: Archie Griffin is the only football player ever to win the Heisman Trophy twice.)

Salaries were not paid, except in the summer. One summer I stayed in Charlottesville and put out one sports page per week and earned something like \$40 a week for it. It was the easiest money I ever made. The paper was subsidized, which was always a point of contention when we published something controversial. There were always calls to yank our funding but I don't believe that ever happened during my time. Relations with the administration were, however, testy.

The most important event of the period for me were, of course, sports events. We covered Virginia's first and still only ACC basketball tournament victory in 1976. A .500 team unexpectedly defeated three nationally ranked opponents at the Capital Centre in Landover, Maryland. We then, true to form, lost our first game in the NCAA Tournament. We had the Sonny Randle problem. He was a former UVA football star who became head football coach and was driven out within a couple of years -- his last season we went 1-9 and lost games by scores like 54-3.