



Fall 2000 retreat. Clockwise from left: Cecilia De La Macorra, Nadja Schmeil, Nahid Seyedsayamdost, Preeti Dawra

# IMC NEWS

The Newsletter of International Media & Communications  
 School of International and Public Affairs  
 COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY  
 420 West 118th Street, Room 1319  
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## IN THIS ISSUE

### Co-Editors

Nadja C. Schmeil  
 Nahid Seyedsayamdost

### Assistant Editor

Natalja Kurz

### IMC Director

Donald H. Johnston

### Special thanks to

(Sonia) Eun Joo Yeo

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The Newsletter of International Media & Communications at Columbia University

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# IMC NEWS

## Writers' Breakfast Series

IMC, with MPA co-sponsorship, launched a series of talks this term called "Breakfast With a Writer." The purpose of the talks, which are open to all SIPA students, is to inspire and instruct students to improve their writing, no matter what their career goals may be.

The speakers are successful

professional writers who talk about their writing, how they do it, why they do it, and the professional and personal rewards they feel they derive from it. The fall sessions were held on Friday mornings, 8:30-10:30, with coffee and bagels. The plan is to continue them in the spring.

"The idea is that SIPA gradu-

ates improve their chances for success if they can express themselves effectively," explains IMC Director Pete Johnston, who conceived the talks. "Whether students are going into media and communications, or business, government or NGO's, they're going to have to write letters, reports, news releases, speeches, whatever."

The groundwork for the

series was laid last spring, with two successful trial talks by novelist/columnist Anna Quindlen and essayist Roger Rosenblatt. Confirmed by the popular reaction, the series was continued in the fall with talks by Prof. Helen Benedict of the J-School and SIPA's Adjunct Prof. Bill Berkeley - whose presentations are reported below.

## Bill Berkeley

by Fernando Casado

It was a rainy, cold Friday morning. The grayish sky was waking up from a night that stubbornly resisted to surrender. On the 11th floor of the International Affairs Building students gathered to meet Bill Berkeley for the second IMC Breakfast Talk With Writers.

Berkeley opened by telling about his experiences as an editorial writer for The New York Times. "You

have a lot of power, your articles create a lot of reactions. Everybody answers your calls and you get to talk to very important people, which sometimes makes you feel good. But you never leave the office and most of the time you don't know what you are talking about."

Earlier in his career, motivated less by writing than by reporting, he decided to go to Africa as a correspondent. This decision changed his life. "It's hard to explain what happened to me in Africa. I got completely hooked with it, and I

have been ever since," he said.

Berkeley lived in Africa for more than 12 years reporting in Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Zimbabwe, South Africa and other countries. "I have always wanted to shake people out of their complacency, especially Americans," he said looking firmly at the students. "I am very motivated by 'anger.' That is basically why I write, and I am more interested in the perpetrators than in the persecuted. Why do these people act like that? What makes them do

all these things?"

His statement consolidated when he read the account of a young killer in Rwanda from his book about Africa. When he finished, the coffee cups were half-full, but everyone was fully awake. The sky was gray with black clouds, and a rain of questions started to fall.

Berkeley admitted that not everything about being a freelance journalist was always as attractive as it seemed. "Well, for a long time I was scared to put my credit card

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## Helen Benedict

by Sarah Dreisbach-Penner

There are powerful and unique truths that can be released on the pages of fiction stories, but unfortunately these tales are often deemed weaker and less credible than their non-fiction counterparts.

This is what Professor Helen Benedict of Columbia's Journalism school argued and lamented at the first IMC Breakfast Series in Fall 2000. While discussing writing, she spoke about her latest book,

"The Sailor's Wife," a fictional tale of a young maiden from Florida who married a Greek sailor only to find herself living with her new in-laws in extreme poverty on a small island occupied by the military.

In discussing her book, Benedict highlighted how she was able to weave a realistic story with profound meaning and commentary on human existence without being constrained by what people were willing or able to share with her, as is often the case with non-fiction. In "The Sailor's

Wife," Benedict examines issues such as the concept of freedom and the impact of living in a war-torn area. Yet she is able to explore these themes through the lives of her characters, circumventing the need to report "just the facts".

However, in not strictly reporting the facts, a certain problem arises. Benedict explained that fiction is not as credible as non-fiction in our society, where "truth" is often understood as a compilation of provable "facts."

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## From the Director

The annual visit to SIPA of Palestinian journalists was of unusual interest and value this fall because of the concurrent Middle East crisis and the U.S. presidential election. As always, it was a learning experience for us as well as them.

The nine, young journalists participated in a two week training program at SIPA in November that the United Nations has sponsored annually since 1995. The program is part of a two-month stay in the U.S. for the Palestinians under U.N. auspices. The journalists arrived in New York just before the street violence erupted back home. It was their first visit to this country.

The United Nations brings the journalists to the U.S. as part of its broad program to help the Palestinian people move toward an independent state. Spending the bulk of their time at U.N. headquarters, the journalists observe how the media operate here, and take semi-

nars at SIPA that focus on the requirements for independent and pluralistic media, which are considered essential for self-rule and which the Palestinians do not have. This year there were five men and four women in the group, evenly divided between print and electronic media.

The seminars, held weekday mornings on the 15th floor, deal with subjects such as the history and ethics of journalism; building a free press and covering elections; covering ethnic and regional conflicts; interviewing skills; the U.S. media and globalization of the news; electronic journalism; computer-assisted reporting; cyberspace technology and how it's revolutionizing international communications. The seminars are conducted by Assistant Dean Lansner and me, along with a few journalism faculty members.

The Palestinians' visit always stimulates dialogues about the Middle East situation, and news coverage



by the American press. These dialogues usually produce clarification of, if not agreement on, the issues. They provoke questions and views that we Americans rarely hear. This fall, because of the Mideast violence and the election, the dialogues were more spirited than in the past, most notably in the brown-bag session with students co-sponsored by IMC and the Middle East Institute.

The Palestinians are appreciative of the opportunity, and they are eager to learn about our democratic way of life and our freedom of expression.

The crisis was always on the journalists' minds this time. and they

could not understand why Americans weren't more concerned about the street violence between Israelis and Palestinians, and the threat to the peace process. Their remarks reflected anger and frustration that have built up historically over the fate of the Palestinian people

"Americans don't know anything about us," one journalist claimed. "Or care."

Said another: "Most don't know where Gaza and the West Bank are. And they don't understand that we are still occupied."

Another blamed the American media, arguing: "They're always biased in favor of Israel. Why don't they tell our side of the story?"

Because they are journalists, and their visit was media-related, they constantly criticized the U.S. press—not just for its coverage of Palestine, but also for its scant coverage of foreign news in general.

"The U.S. is the leader of the world," a Palestinian said in one of

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## PA's Column

by Josh Bearman

Tradition has it that the ever dutiful program assistants for the IMC concentration write little columns for our semesterly newsletter. After Michelle and I conferred at what I can assure you was great length, she entrusted me this time around to capture both of our sentiments in one article, an article to be written not during the semester, with its peaks and valleys fresh in mind, but during our break, when SIPA is—and should be—the furthest thing from anyone's mind.

In Fall 2000, we started off like a shot. The ranks of the concentration grew. Both of the IMC information sessions during orientation were full. We took lots of names, and lots of people signed up for IMC classes. Growing steadily in reputation, Bill Berkeley's writing class officially became the hardest course at SIPA to get into. Communiqué and Slant both experienced unprecedented turnout for their respective staffs.

Before we knew it, the semester

was in full swing and the retreat was upon us. As always, our destination was a picturesque converted red farm house near Pauling in upstate New York, replete with silo, lake, country lanes (of sorts) and a just eerie enough decrepit cemetery out in the woods. Despite an unseasonably cold weekend, the retreat lived up to its billing and was "great fun for all—a real treat!" according to one participant. Some highlights included: several rousing rounds of volleyball; the team pizza bake; the 3-legged sack toss; fireside massage competition (I won); and, of course, the weighty but mandatory discussion of your future crushing debt (fellowships) and thankless careers (internships).

The two other big events of the Fall each year are the career and internship panels. The internship panel limped to a quiet finish (who needs an internship anyway, right?), but this year's career panel was another story. Surviving a bizarre and surprising assault by the seminar for surly seniors, the IMC career panel man-

aged to come off as a hit. All the panelists were fairly recent IMC alumni, so they were able to give pretty good advice on what it's like to come out of SIPA and enter the media job market.

Otherwise, there was a lot of media related activity in and around SIPA. We had a near miss with Philip Gourevitch and Sebastian Junger who were supposed to come speak about reporting in the world's most troublesome places, but we did get a chance to see Daniel Gan, a prize-winning Malaysian reporter and CPJ award recipient. We also got news that a very recent alumna, Sara Abramson, signed a book deal for a project she developed while in a SIPA writing course. Exciting for us hopefuls! To top it off, yours truly, acting as a legal representative of Columbia University, showed up in court with my fly accidentally down and a T-shirt that said KILL 'EM ALL: LET GOD SORT 'EM OUT and carried the day anyway (at least until the continuation date, on January 23). As a reward, Dean Lisa Anderson,



by executive decree, awarded our concentration with an official slogan: "Team IMC: Makin' It Happen!" Hats bearing this slogan will be available in late January for those interested.

Amidst all the activity, I have to say that the semester really flew by. Finals swooped in from the horizon; we all wore furrowed brows or glassy stares for several weeks; and our rescue did not come with the inevitable but sometimes cathartic academic experience known as finals, but rather with the intellectually barren three-week mind lapse that followed. But don't be fooled! Like lemmings, we'll be back at it again in mid-January.

## Interview with Sussman

by Natalja Kurz

Last semester, for the first time, SIPA students had the opportunity to take a class with the media critique, scholar and journalist Leonard R. Sussman. His judgment of SIPA—unlike that of the American news media—is more than positive, "Of the eleven years I've been teaching, it was the best year I've had."

He adds, "International affairs is a subject I'm primarily interested in. So, teaching here was journalism plus. A mix of journalism, diplomatic and financial communications, and other forms of interaction—country to country and person to person."

Sussman, whose involvement in journalism goes back a long time, has dedicated his entire professional life to improving the status and state of the media. He has worked as a radio news editor, as a US army technical sergeant creating an overseas news service, as vice-chairman of the US National Commission for UNESCO, has written for The New York Times, Washington Post, Christian Science Monitor, Los Angeles Times and many other papers; and he has taught at NYU, written several books, and meanwhile visited 48 countries.

Since 1982, Leonard R. Sussman has been senior scholar in international communications and executive director of Freedom House, a non-profit organization that supports the development of democracies and civil liberties worldwide. Sussman conceived and to this day directs the world-wide Freedom House survey.

As one can only imagine, Sussman has a lot to say and teach about American media and "the tensions of the recent past and present which influence the future of global communications and, indeed, world affairs," as his course syllabus reads.

One of the things he is worried about today is deregulation and the

resulting competition for resources that has led many journalists to forget their responsibility to inform rather than entertain. The outcome, according to Sussman, is dangerous, "There is a dumbing-down of information. And the first thing to suffer is international news. It is essential in this day and age for a society like this, which reports to be a major player in so many fields, to have the best information it can get. The information is there but the public doesn't get it much of the time."

Sussman puts the blame for lack of international news on the media, "Day-in and day-out there's very little market for international news. And when I talk to editors about it they'll say 'people don't want it.' But you're not serving your social responsibility as an editor if you don't give that which is also needed whether or not it's immediately wanted."

Sussman believes that the foundation for better journalism can be laid especially at schools like SIPA. Here, students gain a unique combination of knowledge and practical experience necessary to cover all kinds of issues, "Journalism schools have never given adequate attention to the substance of information, which is why SIPA does a good job, because here you deal with issues."

But the future of journalism depends not only on the media themselves, Sussman says. The general public needs to learn a lesson, as well. "Education is the key problem. The responsibility of journalists will only be tested when a public grows up with the educational background to demand more and better information."

Unfortunately, Leonard Sussman will no longer be at SIPA to contribute to the education of journalists and media consumers. He will spend the coming year finishing his book on the history of press freedom and preparing the next survey of press freedom and civil liberty at Freedom House.



Palestinian journalists attending lecture (see Director's Note)

## Director's Note

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the training sessions, "but it's hard to find a story about foreign affairs in newspapers here, and never on TV newscasts."

This kind of criticism was accentuated by the media's performance on election night when a result in the presidential race was forecast prematurely, followed by herd-like fumbling to recover. The Palestinians were incredulous.

"What does this say about the integrity and credibility of the American media?" lamented a Palestinian who reports for the Associated Press in Gaza. "How could this happen? Aren't they supposed to be the model for media

## UNESCO

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inating to interact with essentially Brasilia's second and third generation of citizens. To give you an idea at how young the city is: the oldest bar in Brasilia is 34 years old!

## Reuters

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few, many continue the parties in private homes, while the more adventurous go to clubs and discotheques just outside city. On uneventful weekends I drove into the mountains with friends. Brilliant greens of every imaginable hue carpeted foothills

everywhere?"

The Palestinians were even more incredulous, as was the rest of the world, at the election antics and court maneuvers that developed as a result of the Florida ballot fiasco.

"Is this the democratic system that we're all supposed to imitate?" one asked sarcastically.

Each year the Palestinians are immensely impressed by the academic environments of SIPA and the School of Journalism. They pore over the Bulletins we give them, and quiz us on the programs and requirements for admission. They covet the certificates we give them in recognition of their SIPA training. Some say they would like to study here, but so far none has. They're too busy covering the news at home.

Named after the capital of Lebanon, Beirut (pronounced bay-ru-chi), is the nexus of social activity in the city. If you ever find yourself in Brasilia, make sure to stop by this place and order a kibe and beer. You'll meet the entire city in a matter of hours.

speckled by cows munching lazily beneath cliffs whose peaks grazed the clouds. When I close my eyes to remember Colombia now, from the safety of my New York apartment, what I recall first is not the violence that saturated the news and punctuated our daily life, but this breathtaking view.

## Brazilian Summer at UNESCO

by Mike Hickman

A priest's vision, a president's promise and a communist plan created Brazil's third national capital. Brasilia is where Lorena Cohen (MIA '01/EPD) and I spent last summer, interning for the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The experience turned out to be as fascinating (and humorous) as the newfangled history of the second youngest planned city in the world (Islamabad, Pakistan is the first).

Brasilia looks as if Moscow transplanted itself onto the African Serengeti. Red dirt and modernist architecture subtly clash under the dry heat of Brazil's central plateau region.

During the first week at UNESCO I was already arguing with my boss, head of the communications divi-

sion. I wanted to write articles using UNESCO's vast studies on youth and violence, indigenous cultures and the environment. The Representative's office wanted the same but my new boss reminded me that I was not a journalist. Ultimately, I published three articles for UNESCO publications, while keeping in mind political considerations for the Office. I was living one of Professor Johnston's "ethical" dilemmas first hand—I had access to information that I really could not use the way I wanted. But our collective goal was accomplished. UNESCO/Brazil received international press, and I got clips.

One of those clips concerned non-governmental education programs for youth and military police in Rio de Janeiro. After querying UNESCO Sources—the Organization's international magazine based in Paris—

they approved my story idea and a \$750 budget that sent me to Rio. For three days I hung out with various NGOs running similar education programs for youth in the favelas (concrete slums surrounding the city) and with the military police. During the day I visited police battalions, and sat in on rudimentary classes in math, science, history and Portuguese, taught by volunteer teachers for Rio's extremely undereducated military cop. At night, I accompanied program coordinators checking on similar classes in the favelas. We would pass through bocas de fumas, drug areas controlled by armed teenagers who had completely given up on school for the drug game.

However, Brazilians are very social people. The UNESCO office immediately embraced Lorena and I to the point that we thought we had known these people all our lives. With two-

hour lunches and constant happy hours and dinner plans, the line dividing social and professional blurred heavily from an American perspective. Almost everyone in the office attended or had attended the University of Brasilia, the top international relations university in Brazil. But as the office's first foreign interns they didn't quite know what to do with us. For example, they knew that gringos from SIPA would definitely be work horses (they gave us a ton to do). Yet, we had no computer or place to sit! We had to be especially careful about complaining because it would inevitably be construed as a form of cultural arrogance (I complained anyway). But they certainly loved to point out faults in American history and culture.

Looking back, it was a lot of fun to spar with our Brazilian hosts and fas-

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## Alumni Notes

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is now a financial writer for The American Banker. He works out of the newspaper's Battery Park offices in lower Manhattan. He says he's very busy covering the stock markets, doing "lots of first-hand reporting" (a reference to a writing course he took at SIPA), and writing a daily column.

**Maria "Minette" Tirona** ('00), who is pursuing a career in television, was hired early in the fall as a production assistant for "Frontline," a documentary show on PBS.

**Ross Tuttle** ('00) has been busy doing freelance TV projects for PBS's "Frontline."

**Sonia Eun Joo Yeo** ('00) is with the Korean Mission to the United Nations, performing a variety of tasks, including writing speeches.

## Reuters Internship in Bogota

by Paloma Dallas

I left Colombia on a bright Sunday afternoon in August. I was saying goodbye to the friends with whom I had spent two and half months when my roommate's cellular phone rang. Eliana—a photographer in the Reuters office where I had worked as a reporter all summer—had a life dictated by the news. She bolted from the gathering, gave me a hurried hug and mumbled apology, and grabbed her camera bag to snap pictures of a car bomb explosion in the southern part of town. It seemed an appropriate closure to the summer.

When I first landed in Bogotá, I expected to find a city rising out of burned-out rubble, or at least some outward indication of the more than 30 years of war that has ravaged the country. I didn't. Instead, my first impression of the capital was of a modern city with a commercial cen-

ter replete with posh boutiques and trendy restaurants filled with stylishly dressed customers. Yet, an unsettling feeling crept over me as I drove north into a residential district and noticed that every house and apartment building was enclosed by a tall, wrought iron fence, and that private security guards were stationed on many street corners. A Colombian journalist later remarked to me that, unable to lock up the criminals, many Colombians had resorted to locking up themselves.

Bogotá, perched high in the Andes Mountains, is skirted on its eastern side by velvety green cliffs. This natural barrier has protected the city from the brunt of the war in which Marxist rebels have been pitted against ultra-right death squads and the Colombian government, costing more than 35,000 lives since 1990. The war has also left an estimated 2 million displaced from their homes,

## Learning Life's Verities through a Newspaper Internship

by Mitra Malek

Last summer was brutal. Truth be told, though. I never thought it'd be a breeze.

I replaced a full-time reporter, who, in my opinion, had been doing more than a fair share of work at The Asbury Park Press, a major daily newspaper in New Jersey. As the force behind a weekly portion of the paper, I was compensated \$375 for each of my 37.5-hour work weeks.

The deal went something like this: manage the section and write about nine articles every week. In essence, I was the lead reporter and assignment editor for my spread of newsprint, which covered three towns. This meant that in addition to delivering my own

pieces, I had to generate story ideas for stringers who contributed to my cause. Oh, and the week was always far longer than the packaged 37.5 hours—call it closer to 50.

I was shell shocked at the start. This was hit-the-ground-running, folks. I had scant mentoring but was charged with much responsibility. My copy editor was a loose cannon, exploding when the mood struck him. This was also my first time in a news room—an assault on tranquillity, particularly for those of us accustomed to polishing prose in the cozy comfort of our homes. My bureau was quite small, making shrill phone rings and surrounding conversation more pronounced than they would have been in a

with many coming to Bogotá in search of safety. Some have moved to the broken down and impoverished southern end of town, while others have built makeshift shacks in the folds of the mountains.

Everyone seems to make an appearance on Sunday mornings, however, when roller-bladers, bicyclists, and joggers flood streets that have been closed to cars for a few precious hours. It is the only outdoor exercise available to many since the risk of kidnappings—the favored tactic among rebels for financing their war against the state—has made travel outside the city more precarious. Bicycle repairmen and vendors, selling trinkets and fruit, also flock to the bike-path, clinging to an informal economy that has swelled as unemployment has soared to nearly 20 percent.

The bizarre popularity of a bike-path in war-torn Colombia was the first story that I pitched to the senior correspondent, and I was surprised when it was accepted. By the end of

my first week, I had had an interview with the city's mayor, Enrique Peñalosa—a staunch supporter of the social benefits of the bike path. Next, I did a story on forced disappearance in Colombia; human rights groups estimate that more than 5,000 have been disappeared by paramilitary groups and the military since the 1980s.

The feature stories were good because they got me out of the news room, but the everyday hard news stories were the more difficult to write. They had to be written quickly and under pressure. But, more importantly, they had to be discovered from reading and listening to local news reports and then double and triple checking with the appropriate sources. I learned to be perpetually tuned to the news, and always ready to follow a lead.

Despite the omnipresence of violence, people are determined to socialize and have fun. The bars are always packed. After the 1 a.m. cur-

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large office, where noises meld into a monotonous din.

All told, though, my summer of toil was well worth it, particularly in hindsight. It's easy now to reflect fondly on the delightful parts and spend less time mulling over the bad. On the positive side, I made my own schedule, rolling into the news room at noon, or whatever morn hour I chose. Sometimes I escaped the bureau and drafted articles in the sun. If I had nightly town council meetings to cover, my shift rolled forward a few hours, and I worked evenings, not days. As long as my section was filled properly, no one questioned me.

I often did my reporting over the phone. But for a handful of stories—usually a feature or profile—I soaked myself in the stuff that draws me to journalism: I went into the field. I frolicked at a fair; followed

mini golfers at beach-side; watched a beekeeper lord over his hives; stretched through a hot yoga class. I befriended a mayor and learned how to use a defibrillator. People reacted to my pieces: they'd call, send cards, write letters to the editor.

I took this position because I'd never worked at a daily paper, and it's what I hope to do after I graduate. I wanted to nose around, see how things were done. Writing published pieces was a bonus, I figured. Writing 100 of them was excessive. But that's OK. Life is a compromise. I'd been arguing against the adage for years. Last summer proved it true. The saying seems to stand whether you're involved in a labor of love or something to which you're indifferent. Love just makes it worth the while.

## Profile: Hans Greimel

by Mei F. Fong

Once, Hans Greimel (MIA '98) was just a penniless MIA student whose favorite hangout was Mike's Papaya at 110th and Broadway. Now he's stationed in Germany covering OPEC meetings in Vienna, IMF meetings in Prague for the Associated Press.

Greimel may have been no stranger to international life pre-SIPA, but he was definitely a novice in journalism. The 30-year-old University of Michigan graduate in philosophy and political science had taught English in Japan for two years. But it was his ambition for reporting that led him to SIPA in 1996.

"I knew I wanted to get into international reporting, and I figured SIPA had much more to offer than a typical journalism school," Greimel says. "First of all it's in New York so it has great networking possibilities and opportunities for part-time

jobs and internships. Second, being a SIPA student gives you access to classes at the journalism school—and the choice to take only the ones you want. Third, it's much better to go looking for a job being able to say, "I have a two-year masters in international affairs from Columbia" than to say, "I went to journalism school for a year."

Greimel also found that employers valued graduate students with a more practical slant, "especially true when you give a hard sell on the fact that SIPA makes us take all those economics and statistics classes. To the average editor at a newspaper that background is really valuable, and it's something that I always stress as giving us an advantage over journalism students."

During his entire first year at SIPA, Greimel interned at Voice of America in the New York bureau, and then in the Hong

Kong bureau during the following summer.

"That was a great experience. Voice of America is not a high profile name in news, but it is a great internship because you actually write and report your own stories from the first day," he says.

His internship at Bloomberg, during his second year, was not as rewarding.

SIPA helped Greimel after graduation, too. He got his first post at AP through a SIPA senior who scored him an interview with AP's Portland, Oregon, office—not an easy thing to do since AP only takes applicants with at least one year newspaper experience.

After a three-month probation period, Greimel was taken on as a full-time staffer. "I made it clear from my first day at AP that I wanted to go overseas, and I kept hounding my bosses with that goal. Eventually an opening came up in Frankfurt, Germany." Greimel spent three months back at the AP headquarters at Rockefeller Center

getting trained as an editor on the International Desk before he moved out to Frankfurt in December 1999, as a foreign correspondent.

Economic stories are a staple, but his favorite stories are the off-beat and wacky, including one on the Federal Aviation Authority investigating an airline for holding mid-air wet T-shirt contests on a charter flight to Mexico. "The girls were paraded into the cockpit so the pilots could judge them. Now that's what I call journalism," Greimel says.

Greimel remembers his time at SIPA nostalgically, but if he could do it all over again, he would have spent more time on language classes. "Languages are essential in getting posts overseas now with news agencies," laments the German and Japanese speaker. "Columbia is a great place to learn a language, and it's definitely worth it when you can walk into a job interview and honestly say you have mastered a foreign language."

made editor of the new magazine DSGN. He also heads a few special projects, such as design exhibitions and competitions; and he attends design and furniture fairs all over, including one in London.

**Raffi Khatchadourian** ('00). a journalist at heart, knew the Russian language and wanted to go to Russia after graduation. Last summer he got his opportunity, and he grabbed it. He took a job as an editor and writer for an English-language weekly newspaper in Moscow.

**Matthias Rieker** ('00), whose previous experience in Germany was in the arts field,  
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## Career Panel

by Lionel M. Beehner

As part of a career-related event series, the International Media and Communications concentration organized an informative career panel for SIPA students in November 2000.

On the panel were Jerry Markon of The Wall Street Journal, Jenny Anderson of International Investor Magazine and Sharon Epperson of CNBC, all three of whom had not dreamed of covering business news while at SIPA.

"I never thought I'd end up in business news, but I really like

it," said Epperson. After working for the YMCA magazine in Kenya and then three years at Time Magazine, Epperson's desire to be a foreign correspondent wore off and she took a job in television. Now she is CNBC's financial news correspondent.

Anderson had never heard of International Investor (II) before taking the job. "I always thought I'd want to write about politics," she said. Despite her lack of economics training, Anderson has written stories about everything from mutual and pension funds to economic reforms in Brazil. "It's a very broad place," she said. "The agreement is if you can pitch a story in under 500 words, you can

do it without being an expert."

Markon was no fonder of economics at the outset of his career. Prior to SIPA, he had worked for a tiny newspaper in Memphis, but decided he needed more education. After graduation, he worked at the Associated Press (AP), a job he acquired through contacts he made at SIPA. Markon found the working conditions at AP "horrendous," and the writing standards low. "I had no depth," he said.

Markon then worked for five years at Newsday in Long Island, where he covered education and financial issues. "I didn't know I had any skills in financial areas. I gradually

became the paper's budget expert," he said. And as of last week, Markon works for the Wall Street Journal. He stressed that the three most important things for fledgling journalists are contacts and clips (professional clips, not Slant, according to Markon).

The panelists all agreed that despite a competitive media market, there is high demand for journalists because of the loss of qualified graduates to dot-com companies. Another positive incentive for becoming a financial reporter, they pointed out, is that the salary is significantly higher than that of average journalists.

## Benedict

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This creates the challenge of coaxing readers into believing the story and becoming immersed in its truths.

To create this element of trust and credibility, Benedict puts her journalistic talents into high gear before writing a story. She does an enormous amount of empirical research and investigation before and during writing. In the case of "The Sailor's Wife" she researched the history and culture of Greece, read many Greek novels, and drew upon her own travel experience on the islands. Although many of Benedict's stories are fictional, they attempt to explore complex human issues within believable and accurate contexts and settings.

Professor Benedict was born and raised in England and has worked as both a journalist and a fiction writer, having published seven books, four non-fiction and three fiction.

## Berkeley

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in the ATM, because I thought I would not get it back," he said. But having a wife with a steady salary helped a lot.

Berkeley's latest research focuses on the Chinese Mafia in New York and the underground world from which it sustains itself. He said the adversities in downtown Manhattan were similar to those in Africa, but nevertheless, he chose this topic over others. "I have always tried to write things that made me feel that if I did not write them, no one else would," he said.

While Berkeley's travel and journalism experiences are fascinating, it was when he talked about his passion and motivation to write that one started to understand that this was not about a profession or a job, but about a lifestyle, a commitment to a cause, a reason for being.

"Combating racism is my ultimate goal on earth. This is why I exist," he said.

## Alumni Notes

**Erika Christ** ('98), a licensed pilot, keeps moving about. but manages to stay connected to airplanes and PR. After her PR job with an air enterprise in Alaska, where she did some flying herself, she returned home to Hungary for a spell. In November she moved to New Orleans, LA, where she's doing marketing, PR and sales for a small video production company that makes tapes for pilots. Here e-mail remains christ\_erika@yahoo.com.

**Angela Priven** ('98) has been in San Francisco writing a daily column for TheStreet.com, which an authoritative source has described as "very funny."

**David Bogoslaw** ('99) writes for Dow Jones Wire Services in New York, and his articles appear occasionally in The Wall Street Journal.

**Na Eng** ('99) has been at NBC-TV in New York since she returned from Zimbabwe where she made a documentary on a Fulbright Fellowship. At NBC she is assigned to Tom Brokaw's evening news program. Eng plans to show here documentary, which is about a poor African family, at SIPA during the spring term.

**Beatrice Grabish Hogan** ('99) won a Pew Fellowship in International Journalism to return to Central Asia this spring. The Pew research pro-

gram, based in Washington, DC, runs from January through April and includes a five-week trip overseas. Her most recent job in New York has been researcher at Vanity Fair magazine.

**Cara Buckley** ('00) is a staff reporter for the business section of The Miami Herald in Florida. She also covers legal and technical news, as well as business.

**Daniel Butenschon** ('00) is making good use of his experience as a former editor of SIPA's Slant magazine, and his interest in design. Since graduation he's been working for a New York firm called Totem, and in September he was