

MacMillan: radio brat—CBC anchor

by Gilbert Bouchard and Dean Bennett

Television wasn't the first career choice for CBC anchorperson Joanne MacMillan. In fact, it wasn't her second or third either.

MacMillan, a former "radio brat", didn't even originally start out to be a journalist. Holding degrees in English and Educational Psychology, she was working with mentally handicapped children in Halifax when she decided to become a media hound.

"I was working with emotionally disturbed children and in locked hospital wards," she said. "But when one kid beat me up, and another one broke my arm, I decided to get out."

Getting out meant becoming a \$75 a week traffic reporter for CJCH radio in Halifax. It was at this bargain basement radio job that she first began to show her insatiable

drive, and also first faced the stings of sexual discrimination.

"I was the first full-time woman on the air in Halifax," she said. "The morning jock I was working with tried to give me the bum's rush, but the afternoon jock was pulling for me. I didn't know what was going on."

MacMillan didn't stay at the bottom of the radio heap for very long. A scant three months after being hired to do traffic she was offered a \$25,000 a year job with CHUM radio in Toronto, something unheard of in her business.

"You just didn't start in radio in Halifax and move to Toronto in three months. It just wasn't done," says MacMillan.

Following her stint with CHUM, she eventually returned to CJCH, rising to the head of the FM newsroom. Unfortunately she was growing dissatisfied with radio. A bigger

challenge was needed, MacMillan felt, since her present job had reached saturation and showed no more possibility for advancement. And then, out of nowhere, a call from a friend in Edmonton with a very unusual job offer.

"She told me the CBC was auditioning anchors to replace Alex Moir, but I told her I can't do TV," said MacMillan. "Up to that point, I'd never even wanted to work for the CBC. I called them the state TV and radio. I was the biggest CBC basher. But my friend kept bugging me, so I made a demo tape and sent it out."

The CBC was impressed enough by MacMillan's tape to fly her to Edmonton and executive producer Denis McVarish practically hired her on the spot.

MacMillan denies flatly that she was hired because of her gender. There's no doubt in her mind that

she was hired because of her brains and news abilities, but MacMillan still finds it hard working against ingrained sexist beliefs. She still gets people coming to her and saying that while they like her they would still prefer to get their news from a man.

"It bothers me, but there's nothing I can do about it."

MacMillan is also perfectly satisfied working in Canada, and has no desire whatsoever of moving south of the border. She explains that the major U.S. markets boast only seven women on air, and that too much emphasis is placed on beauty and youth.

"Canada has a far better system because women like Barbara Frum and other women in their mid-forties have broken ground for women like me," says MacMillan. "I'm not a naturally beautiful woman."

Not that any station can afford to hire someone just on the basis of looks. MacMillan says that the days when the anchor came into the studio at 11 and left at 7 are long gone. Cost cutting and budget restraints have expanded the typical anchor's job description. MacMillan, for example, generates new ideas, does studio interviews, writes her own copy, and produces features.

Even though she describes her job as "the best job in town, working for the best station regardless of union restrictions", MacMillan misses covering hard news. As an anchor, MacMillan is part of CUPE, while reporters are members of the writers' guild. CUPE doesn't allow MacMillan to cover hard news, and limits her to features and generating news ideas which she passes to other reporters. For a woman who considers news to be her life being limited to only giving out story ideas frustrates MacMillan.

"When I get a newsworthy story I don't want to give it away," says MacMillan. "I gave a story idea to a reporter that became a national story. That's nice, but it didn't have my name on it."

MacMillan, like many others in her field, is an avowed media junkie. "I love information. I'm so darn nosy. I can't stand not knowing what's going on." She reads three newspapers a day, any magazine that's out that week, plus follows all the competitive news shows, locally, nationally and from the U.S. But as a news source, she prefers TV.

"TV has the greatest impact. In TV you're writing the pictures and some of the images blow me out of the water. TV gives you a bigger bang for the buck."

PC Youth play politics, party in Calgary

by M. Levenson

The U of A Progressive Conservative Club, the largest political club on campus, seems to be having trouble attracting candidates for its executive positions.

Out of seven positions open, only two were contested. The positions were open for candidates nominated from the floor, but only one of the candidates previously nominated by the club failed to get the nod from the membership.

The elections were held after the speech by Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Jim Horsman last Wednesday at 4:00 p.m.

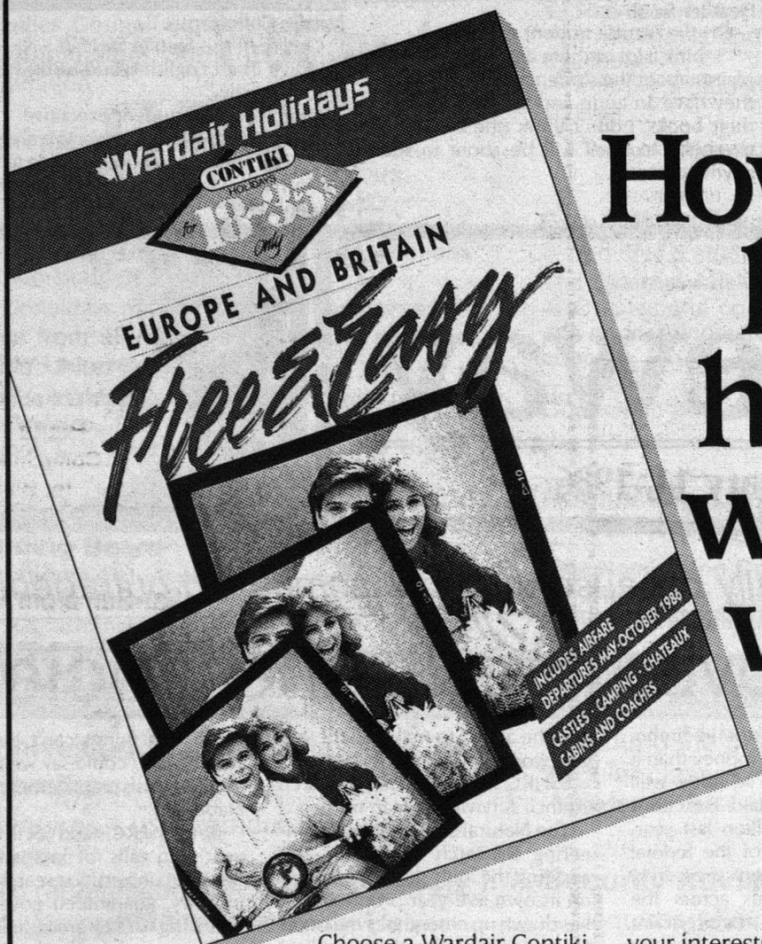
Elected by acclamation were Carl Savard (President), Padraic Carr (VP Policy), Carol Backstrom (VP Events), James Heelan (VP Communications), and Breandan Carr (Secretary).

In the contested elections, Matthew McCallum was elected to the VP Finance position and Shelly Paulson was elected as VP Membership.

In a related story, heavy-duty politicking caused minor structural adjustments to the Delta Bow Valley Hotel in Calgary.

The hotel was the scene of the 1986 Annual General Meeting of the Progressive Conservative Youth of Alberta (PCYA) held over the weekend.

Several of the U of A PC club members went to Calgary seeking positions with the PCYA executive. Rob Splane (SU-VP Finance and Administration) was successful in his bid to become the PCYA VP Finance, as was fellow U of A delegate Janice Foster who was elected to the VP Communications position.



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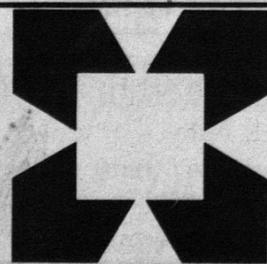
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