

Script writer digs investigative reporting

By JANE LEHMAN
Of the Emerald

FLASH: Sex scandal inside Los Angeles police department.

FLASH: California state official has two families.

FLASH: Family travels around nation collecting charity donations.

For a non-existent newspaper, the Los Angeles Tribune from television's "Lou Grant" show has handled some pretty hot stories.

Michele Gallery is responsible for the scoops as researcher assigned to the show, which airs Monday evenings at 10 p.m. on CBS. The 31 year-old was in Eugene Saturday observing the Investigative Reporters and Editors conference to gather material for future episodes.

Gallery researches each episode of the 60-minute comedy-drama and maintains a link with the newspaper industry. She said the latter function brought her to Eugene this past weekend.

"I mostly try to pick up the texture, personalities and what journalists are worried about," she confided.

Her visit did provide her with some fodder, since she believes there is an investigative reporter-type characterized by people attending the conference.

"I'd love to see a show use him (the character type). He has sort of a low profile — the man who

doesn't mind searching records day in and day out." But none of the cast, which include regulars such as reporters Billie Newman and Joe Rossi, will fit the part, she said. "It'll have to be someone new, and he probably won't answer to 'Lou Grant.'"

Gallery herself has had little direct experience, with the world of mass communications, but she is now taking night classes in journalism. Her only exposure to the profession was a two-year stint as leisure editor for a TV station in Ohio. However, Gallery views her inexperience as an asset.

"Thank God, 'Lou Grant' is not written by journalists. Only a non-journalist can tell a TV audience

"Only a non-journalist can tell a TV audience about journalism — it gives it more credibility," — Michele Gallery.

about journalism — it gives it more credibility," she said.

Gallery spends much of her time in libraries with a microfilm reader poring over news printed in the Los Angeles Times, New York Times and Wall Street Journal. Recently she jumped in to a

study of judges for an episode dealing with incompetent justices serving on the bench.

She has also attended six conferences this past year, such as the one in Eugene, to keep a line on the industry.

The future of the "Lou Grant"

show is uncertain at best, according to Gallery. Even though they surpassed their primary Tuesday night competition, "Family," in December and entered the top 20 shows rating twice during that month, the program's ratings slipped dramatically when it moved to Monday nights at the end of January. Gallery attributes the decline to their competition against movies on other networks.

"We're totally governed by low Nielsen ratings," she said. Gallery expects to know by April 1, if the show will be renewed for another season.

Whatever the future, Gallery remains optimistic and is decidedly dedicated to her work.

"I care about every second of 'Lou Grant' from the wardrobe to the lines to the tie that Lou is wearing," she laughed.

As if in final proof of her zest for the job, she proudly stuck out her arm to display her watch. On the face was the emblem of the company producing "Lou Grant," the MTM kitty.

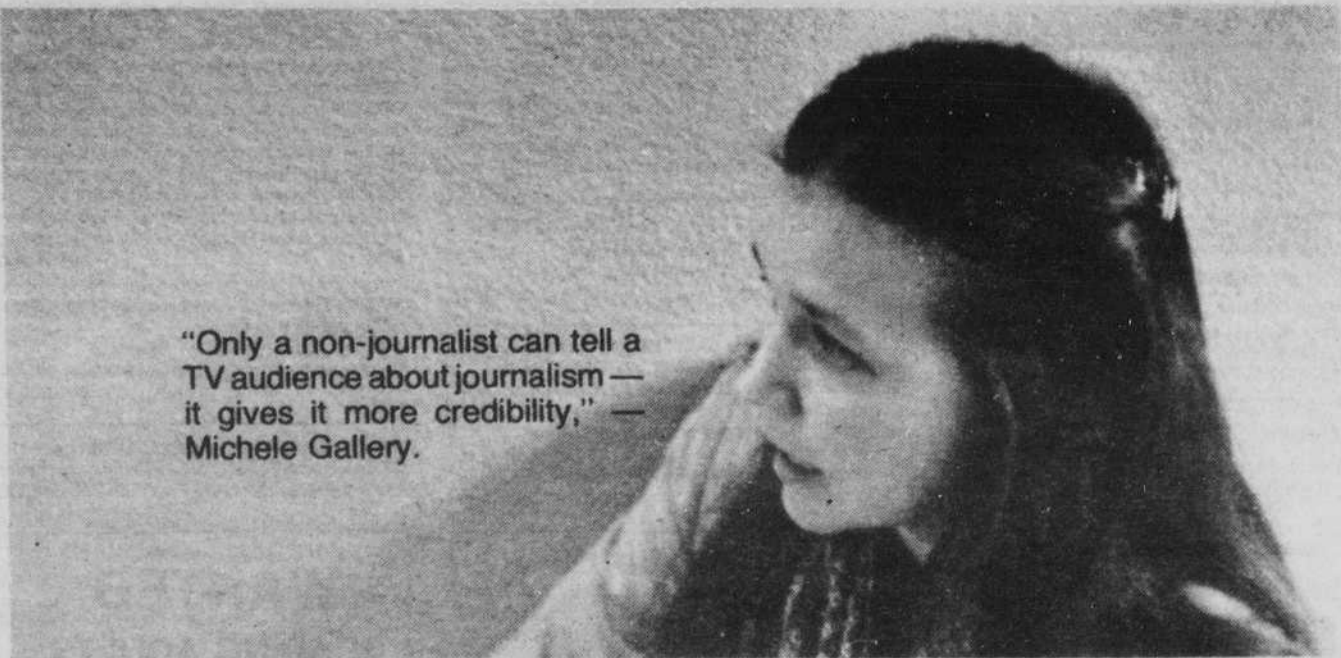


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