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McDonald leaves behind legacy

By Rene DeCair
 Emerald Associate Editor

The professor who could be Satan's mentor is leaving for a more heavenly job.

Duncan McDonald, arguably the University School of Journalism's most well-known and toughest teacher, has both entertained and frustrated students for 14 years.

This month he'll become the deputy director and chief operating officer for The Freedom Forum Columbia Media Studies Center at Columbia University.

"Now I can call myself Deputy Duncan," McDonald joked.

Working under the vice president of The Freedom Forum, Everette Dennis, who was the dean of the School of Journalism in the early 1980s, he'll oversee a staff of 30 and a budget seven times the journalism school's budget.

"Think big stuff," McDonald said. "It's an opportunity to bring people together in a very fertile, intellectual environment."

The "think tank" is one of the most prestigious in the country. It produces about 30 publications each year.

The advisory board is packed with big names including Ann Compton, Tom Brokaw and Walter Cronkite. Former hostage Terry Anderson is joining the center in the fall.

McDonald describes it as a place where people discuss important media issues and in "post-facto autopsies" examine such things as the press performance during elections.

McDonald will manage the think tank but won't do the heavy thinking himself. "I'm not capable of doing the deep thinking," he said.

When he goes, he'll not only pack up a lot of memories but will leave behind the legendary

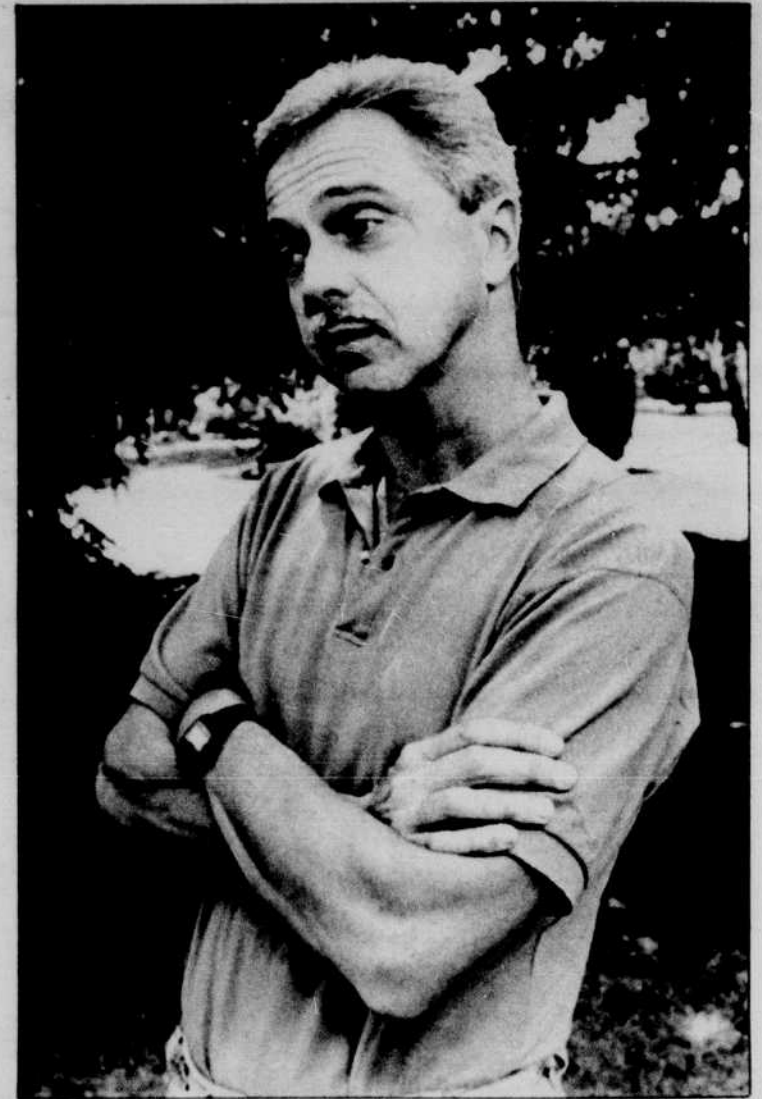


Photo by Jeff Paslay

Professor Duncan McDonald will be leaving the journalism school this fall to head for a media "think tank" at Columbia University.

class that both he and students call "Info Hell," or Information Gathering, as it is officially called.

McDonald helped craft the class, which is a hurdle into the school.

It requires that students, in addition to regular class work, research and compile a 50-

source annotated bibliography with government documents that could be used, for example, for an episode of *60 Minutes*.

It is to University journalists what the bar exam is to aspiring lawyers.

"The standing joke is, 'We hired someone this fall who wouldn't be quite as tough,'" McDonald said grinning. "The answer is — Satan."

McDonald has a reputation, and he knows it. But he sees himself as being a well-liked guy.

"I think students who have gone through one class with me have come to like me," he said. "I've never had a concern that I was a negative force."

Besides, he has a box full of letters of correspondence from former students to back up what he says. He figures he hears from about 200 a year who let him know about their lives. Some even send him pic-

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