

# City editor leaves mark of excellence

Sherry Rainey  
Oregon Daily Emerald

Tom Detzel is a master juggler. But rather than tossing about swords and flaming torches, he balances something far more dangerous. As the city editor for *The Register-Guard*, Detzel coordinates the daily news.

During the course of the day he takes phone calls, answers questions, coordinates story ideas, gives advice, makes on-the-spot decisions, sits in meetings, edits stories and balances the 27 egos who work below him.

"I try to be a facilitator," said Detzel, 40. "As a city editor, you have to know what's going on in all the beats, and you have to be open and receptive to all things. You have to be a better listener and a better communicator; each reporter has different strengths and weaknesses."

Kevin Miller, electronic information editor and former city editor for *The Guard*, said being the city editor is the hardest and most important job in the newsroom.

"No one is more responsible for generating quality news than the city editor," Miller said. "It is a very stressful and demanding job. There is a tremendous amount of turnover."

As if following Miller's prediction, Detzel is leaving the paper in July after 10 months in his position. He has accepted a job at *The Oregonian* as the assistant leader for the family, children and education team.

With 14 years in the newspaper business, however, change and transition are nothing new for Detzel.

He grew up in rural Pennsylvania, graduated from Dover High School in 1972 and enrolled at the University of Pittsburgh.

Although it was home, Detzel didn't agree with local perspectives of the world.

"The whole town was predominately conservative," he said. "Opposition to the Vietnam War was in vogue. I picked up a lot of that stuff. I felt like I didn't fit into that part of the country."

"I was always interested in politics, and I read a lot of newspapers. I thought a journalism career was a great way to contribute something, and provide me with a lot of versatility — I believe I have a talent for writing."

He came to the University of



DETZEL

Oregon in the mid-1970s to pursue a journalism degree but didn't graduate until 1982. Half way through the program he took a job at *The New-*

*port News Times* in Newport, Ore.

After graduating, he worked at the *Springfield News* as the business editor until he was hired by *The Register-Guard* in 1983.

At *The Register-Guard* Detzel worked as a court reporter, an environmental reporter and the legislative reporter.

"Eventually I got sick of politics and was thinking of leaving the paper," he said. However, in 1989, he was promoted to assistant city editor and in August 1994 became the city editor.

As city editor, 10 to 12 hour days are fairly routine.

"I'm still learning how to manage the stress," he said. "Most of the time when I worry, it's needless worry."

But *Register-Guard* staffers said Detzel's stress level doesn't keep him from being a strong leader.

"A city editor is like a quarterback," Miller said. "He has a good mix of skills and knows how to lead people. It's a rare day if Tom hasn't walked to his desk without someone asking him a question."

The staff said Detzel can relay positive support, boost newsroom morale and still maintain high standards.

"He is the kind of guy that will leave you a note if you did something right in your column," columnist Karen McCowan said.

Local government reporter Jeff Wright agrees. "If Tom thinks I'm doing a good job and tells me why, he is conveying to me that he is engaged in the day-to-day operations."

Secondly, Detzel's energy has created a new atmosphere in the newsroom.

"Morale in the newsroom has improved dramatically over his tenure," Wright said.

Columnist Don Bishoff remembered that Detzel's predecessor was not universally loved. "When Tom took over, it helped bring the staff back

**T**om is one of the reasons I like working at *The Register-Guard*. He is really smart and dedicated to doing a good job. Tom is putting out good newspapers.

— KEVIN MILLER  
electronic information editor for *The Guard*

together," he said.

Beth Hege, rural and Springfield reporter, said, "Tom has freed up a lot of people's creativity here."

Detzel's high expectations have been described as his main weakness.

"Tom is over zealous, in terms of having his reporters work too much for him," Wright said. "But most reporters would rather have a city editor err on the side of too gung-ho."

Hege agrees. "Sometimes his expectations are unrealistic; they are too high," she said. "And at the same time, Tom is very respectful to me and has a lot of confidence in me."

Assistant city editor Michelle Hymen said that working for Tom is always a challenge.

"He expects too much and he expects us to do things that aren't possible," she said. "But at the same time he sets high expectations for himself, then lives up to them. He leads by example."

Detzel's leadership will be missed by Managing Editor Jim Godbold.

"He will be enormously difficult to replace," Godbold said. "[Detzel leaving] is fabulous for his career, but a blow to the news management team."

"One hundred percent of the staff is sad to see him go," he said. "Tom is the ideal city editor because he has an incredible range of talents. He has integrity coming out his ears."

Perhaps no one will miss Detzel more than Miller, who was hired with Detzel.

"Tom is one of the reasons I like working at *The Register-Guard*," Miller said. "He is really smart and dedicated to doing a good job. Tom is putting out good newspapers."

"The beauty [of being a city editor] is you get to put out a new newspaper the next day. But that's the agony, too."

Try on a pair of SKECHERS and receive a free pair of Hole-in-One socks.

With coupon • limit one per person



LAZAR'S

• 57 W. Broadway • 687-0139 • 957 Willamette

Expires 7/30/95

Expires 7/30/95

## Practical shoes for an impractical environment



LAZAR'S

• 57 W. Broadway • 957 Willamette  
• 687-0139

University of Oregon

### SCREEN SAVER COLLECTION

## UO Screen Saver

Let your computer display the proud, spirited colors and photos of the University of Oregon. Includes After Dark® 3.0 engine.

Will run all After Dark® 3.0 modules.

**\$17.00**

MAC OR PC

**Microcomputer Support Center**  
**202 Computing Center**  
**Monday - Friday 9am - 5pm**  
**346-4402**

e-mail: mpp@oregon.uoregon.edu  
URL: http://mpp.uoregon.edu

The ODE Classified section ... much more than a place for the crossword