

Ombudsman critiques The 'New' Oregonian

✓ From the farm to the big city, Bob Caldwell has seen it all

by John Rumler
Contributing Writer

It's cold in eastern Oregon in the dead of winter, especially in the early morning. The wind rips down from the still-darkened sky, stinging exposed flesh like a whip.

Bob Caldwell remembers walking sleepy-eyed out to the barn to start his before-school chores. He remembers the barn doors shaking and rattling as he sat crouched on a stool squeezing milk from the bellowing dairy cows.

Farm boys grow up fast, especially oldest sons like Caldwell who had four younger brothers to set an example for. But he didn't plan on staying on the farm any longer than he had to.

"I never liked doing chores very much," he says. "I guess I figured out early I wasn't cut out for farming."

Caldwell's passion was carrying a football, not a milk bucket. As a halfback

and quarterback, he captained the LaGrande football team. He also lettered in basketball, baseball, and track.

No typical jock, Caldwell enjoyed writing about the big games almost as much as playing in them and was bitten by the journalism bug as a ninth grader.

Before he knew it, he was editor of the high school newspaper, then it was on to Eastern Oregon College and the University of Oregon where he graduated with a degree in journalism.

It's a long road from the little farm outside of LaGrande, to the executive offices of *The Oregonian*.

Caldwell stopped at eight different newspapers on the way working as a sports reporter, pounding the streets on the crime beat and wearing the editor and publisher's hats. Twelve years ago, Caldwell joined *The Oregonian* working as a copy editor, before being promoted to regional editor, and later metro editor.

After Sandra Rowe became top editor in 1993, taking the

knowledge and competence.

According to Peter Bhatia, managing editor of *The Oregonian*, it's no illusion.

"Bob's an accomplished journalist who's been successful here and elsewhere. His position is very important because he's an entry point for readers who otherwise wouldn't have access."

Bhatia describes Caldwell, who he's known for 14 months,

about all these changes taking place in the state's biggest newspaper? Has the public benefited from the restructuring of the news bureaus? Has Joe Reader benefited from the new staff hirings and *The Oregonian's* hard-nosed policy towards free-lance writers? Caldwell thinks, for the most part, yes.

"*The Oregonian* was almost like a fortress before Sandra arrived. Internally,

we hadn't challenged many of our assumptions in a long time. Having an ombudsman was a step forward in breaking down walls and it was a recommitment to our goals of fairness and accuracy," he says.

Portland's alternative newspapers have charged *The Oregonian* with making only cosmetic changes, shuffling bodies around and becoming more bureaucratic, while cranking out the

same basic product, with more charts and graphics. But Caldwell doesn't buy it.

"Yes, there's criticism. For the incredible amount of changes taking place, it's too early to judge. We're still in a new process, so it's only fair to give the paper some time to see results," he says.

Caldwell thinks because of Rowe's new team approach (public life team, health team, living in the 90's team, etc.) *The Oregonian* is more flexible, less hierarchical, and duplicates less news coverage. Of all the recent new stories *The Oregonian* has cov-

ered, Caldwell says the Tonya Harding incident generated the most criticism. But he doesn't apologize for the massive amount of space and coverage dedicated to the story.

"Tonya held first place in a nationwide interest poll for a long time," he told the class. "There were excesses, but it was real drama and people wanted to read about it. On top of everything else, it was local."

The senior statesman for *The Oregonian* shows no signs of slowing down. Having recently undergone an angioplasty, Caldwell appears robust, speaks with energy, and still puts in over 50 hours a week on the job.

Last Sunday he spoke on Town Hall in a segment dealing with *The Oregonian's* investigation of Dr. Phillip Alberts who pleaded innocent last month to 29 counts of sexually abusing 18 of his former patients. Caldwell staunchly defended the public's right to know about physicians like Albert, who have been disciplined by the state medical board.

Caldwell makes it clear he finds time for fun, especially attending football games, and says he's learning to appreciate a healthier diet. "I'm getting some new favorite foods," he laughs.

His advice to aspiring journalist was succinct. "Get on a weekly as soon as you can, and keep working hard. *The Oregonian* looks for solid people who are hard workers."

"Bob's aggressive but with an integrity that's uncommon," says Leslie Zaitz. Now the president and publisher of the Salem Times, Zaitz, worked with Caldwell for six years at *The Oregonian*. He says Caldwell's role as an ombudsman is an intriguing one.

"Bob is a bulldog for the public's rights. He is no in-house shill, maybe to the discomfort of some of his colleagues. He's a helluva guy," Zaitz says.



Photo by John Rumler

Bob Caldwell, public editor of *The Oregonian*, talks to members of the Mass Media and Society class.

reigns from William Hilliard, a big shake-up ensued and Caldwell emerged as the public editor, a new position at *The Oregonian*.

"I'm basically an in-house journalism critic and a reader advocate," Caldwell explains. "I work on big issues as well as chasing nickel and dime stuff."

Central casting from Hollywood would be hard-pressed to find a more likely looking senior editor than Caldwell. With a tuft of white tousled hair, dark-rimmed aviator-shaped glasses, and a deep blue suit accentuated by a maroon tie with geometric designs, he radiates integrity,

as a good advocate for readers, a man who can respond in a balanced way, and a good family man. "Bob's real solid," he says.

A staffer who asked not to be identified, says Caldwell is widely liked as well as respected. "Bob's great at dealing with the public because he's so even-tempered. Although he's very nice, he's also been known to take people to task," she adds.

Caldwell told John Knowlton's Mass Media class that things are very different at *The Oregonian* from what they were several years ago. Curious students wanted to know -- what

The Clackamas Print Staff

Editor-in-Chief: Tina Guinn (Ext. 2576)
News Editor: Anjanette Booth (Ext. 2576)
Feature Editor: Jocelyn Gauthier (Ext. 2577)
Sports Editor: Jason Hunter (Ext. 2577)
Photography Editor: Chad Patteson (Ext. 2578)
Copy Editor: Cori Kargel (Ext. 2578)
Business Manager: Zach Kreinheder (Ext. 2578)
Editing and Design Editor: Jeff Kemp (Ext. 2578)
Opinion Editor: Chrisi Snavelly (Ext. 2576)

Staff Writers/Photographers:

Eric Eatherton,
Donny Kemp,
Jesse Sowa,
Delores Ward

Secretary: Cheryl Willemse (Ext. 2309)
Advisor: John Knowlton (Ext. 2310)

The Clackamas Print aims to report the news in an honest, unbiased, professional manner. The opinions expressed in *The Clackamas Print* do not necessarily reflect those of the student body, college administration, its faculty or *The Clackamas Print's* advertisers. Products and services advertised in *The Clackamas Print* are not necessarily endorsed by anyone associated with *The Clackamas Print*. *The Clackamas Print* is a weekly publication distributed every Wednesday except for finals week. The advertising rate is \$4.50 per column inch.

All letters to the editor will be considered for publication and must be submitted by 1 p.m. the Friday prior to the next issue.

Clackamas Community College, 19600 S. Molalla Avenue, Oregon City, Oregon, 97045; Barlow 104; (503) 657-6958, ext. 2309.

Writer's Club sponsors annual contest

by Donny Kemp
Staff Writer

The Clackamas Community College Writers Club is sponsoring its annual Writers Club Contest. The contest rewards student writers and allows them to share their work with others.

Dianne Averill, the Writers

Club advisor, is expecting a large number of responses.

"The response has been good in the past, and it should be good this year."

Those who are interested in participating in the contest can submit fiction or essay up to 2,000 words. While there is no word limit for poetry, each per-

son should submit no more than three poems.

Cash prizes are \$50, \$40, and \$30 for first, second and third places, respectively.

Contest entries need to be submitted to Averill, in Streeter 125 by Feb. 3. Be sure to include your name and phone number with each submission.



GET PAID TO WORK OUT !!
EXCELLENT PART-TIME OPPORTUNITY

Roadway Package System is looking for individuals to help load packages into trucks.

APPLY IN PERSON AT:

6447 N. Cutter Circle
Mocks Landing Industrial Park
off Basin Ave.-Swan Island.
or call 650-7227

JOB DETAILS

- * Work PT 3-5 hr. shifts
- * Pays \$8.00-\$8.50/hr.
- * .50 cent raise after 90 adys
- * (includes \$1.00/hr towards tuition)
- * Varied shifts
- * 5 days/week
- * Be part of a team

RPS

RPS
ROADWAY PACKAGE SYSTEM