

ShopTalk

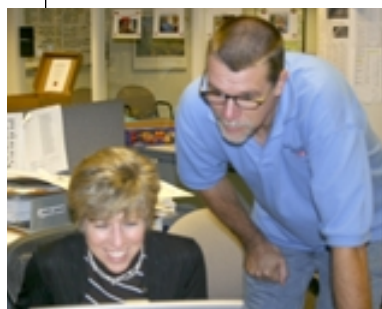
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Editor, Mario I. Oña, x4-6803

Election Night at The Post

On Nov. 7, The Post had one of its “most successful” election nights, according to Executive Editor **Len Downie**.

Downie, who acknowledged being “challenged locally by slow counting due to long voter lines in Maryland,” explained, “We’re the newspaper of the nation’s capital. Politics is a franchise subject for us.”



*Election night omniscient and omnipresent figure **Ed Holzinger**, News IT, answers a few questions for Metro “Elections Coordinator” **Melissa McCullough**.*

In an age where speed and accuracy of information are paramount, a key figure in The Post’s success was **Ed Holzinger**, News IT.

Holzinger is the chief architect of BallotBoxer, a tabulating system he describes as a “web interface with a database behind it to store the (election) results and then retrieve the numbers and send them anywhere.”

He credits “smart guys” **Ed Rossi**, News IT, and **Andy Boltax**, formerly of News IT, with finding “the key to make this work.” According to Holzinger, by linking up BallotBoxer directly to The Post’s publishing system, Rossi and Boltax ensured that election results poured in without anyone in the news desk having to do anything.

Holzinger, who also asserted that things went “smooth” on Tuesday, credited Metro Administrator **Melissa McCullough** and recent retiree **Bridget Roeber** with being on “top of everything.”

With the help of Publisher **Bo Jones’s** executive assistant, **Lisa Heidemann**, who previously held McCullough’s job,



The newsroom staff awaits results from a local station.

McCullough and Roeber oversaw the local vote count.

Though McCullough’s heavy lifting began months earlier, she assembled a cadre of Post volunteers including 12 tabulators to help out on

the hectic election night.

The tabulators entered and updated the vote counts into BallotBoxer as Post employees—mostly from the local county bureaus—called in results directly from the various counties’ board of election offices. The tabulators cross-referenced their results with each county’s Web site, while McCullough, Roeber and Heidemann provided a second set of eyes.

Roeber recalled a time before cell phones and the Internet: “I would quickly scribble vote counts from a board at the board of elec-

*Political blogger **Chris Cilliza**, WPNI, reenacts the well-deserved high-five he gave **Jennifer Ford**, News, who stepped up to get him on the air on election night.*



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Promotions

TONY BRISCOE, Production, was recently promoted to maintenance foreman at the Springfield Plant. He was previously an electrician and he's worked at The Post for two years and four months. He has a BS in leadership and management from University of Mary Washington, a BA in biblical studies from Faith Bible College and Seminary and an AS in avionic systems technology from the Community College of the Air Force. Tony enjoys being with his family and working on his vehicles and radio control cars.



PHOTO - MELISSA FORD

Peter Mascarenhas

PETER MASCARENHAS, Production, went from assistant team leader to team leader of Team 1 on the night-shift at the Springfield Pressroom. He's been at The Post over 17 years. He considers his new position reaching a milestone for himself and is very proud to have been honored with the promotion.



COURTESY OF TONY BRISCOE

Tony Briscoe

JACKIE CONRAD, Advertising, has been at The Post one year and three months and was recently promoted from sales representative and account manager in real estate to marketing manager for the Specialized Industry Unit. She holds a BS from Northwestern University (Ill.) and an MBA from New York

University's Stern School of Business. In her short time at The Post, she's earned sales excellence, sales achievement and pre-call planning awards. Jackie's moved around a bit having lived in five different states and is

now "hooked" on knitting!

JOHN T. AUSTIN, Advertising, was recently promoted from Business Development Unit service manager to Associate Sales Manager (Consumer to Consumer). He's worked at

The Post for three years and earned a BS in marketing education from Old Dominion University. He loves sports, traveling and spending time with family and friends. He hopes to pursue a master's degree in the near future.



John T. Austin

LIZ SPAYD, News (National), will become the new *washingtonpost.com* editor.

She joined The Post in April 1988 as an assistant editor overseeing coverage of national business news. She was also a Metro reporter and an Outlook opinion writer. She eventually worked her way up the National staff to become the National assistant managing editor. Before The Post, Liz was The Detroit News's business editor. She earned her degree from Colorado State University.

In her new position, Liz hopes to take her nearly two decades of Post newsroom, reporting and editing experience "across the river." She's also excited about the "incredibly dynamic and fast-paced culture" of her new job. She feels her objective at *washingtonpost.com* will be "to figure out how to keep as many people as we can consuming Washington Post journalism, whether it's through their computer, their iPod, their phone or whatever the new cool thing is going to be."



Liz Spayd

On the notion that *washingtonpost.com* might somehow cannibalize the printed newspaper, she said, "The Post smartly figured out a long time ago that it's foolish to avoid an aggressive foray into online journalism for fear of cannibalizing newspaper readers. If you do that, you risk giving the online market away to someone else. Instead, we do our best to do both well—constantly sharpen and improve the print edition, and simultaneously pour our energy into creating a smart online strategy."

tions, run to the staircase and literally throw the results down to someone who would run to a payphone and call it in."

Heidemann later added, "Thanks to programs like BallotBoxer, what we can now do with 12 tabulators required over 50 extra people to do." Then she concluded, "This process used to be much louder with much more people running around."

A big reason for the rela-



*McCullough gets a reliable second set of eyes from Post retiree **Bridget Roeber** on her numbers.*

tive silence in the newsroom was its Intranet, The Source, which prevented the news writers from having to run around from tabulator to tabulator pulling results. By setting up The Source weeks in advance to provide election-specific information and links, and then ensuring it worked properly during election night,

Jacqueline

Dupree, News IT,

was also instrumental.

For the National elections—everything outside D.C. and the immediate Virginia and Maryland counties—BallotBoxer also played a critical role. But instead of tabulators providing raw elec-



*(Left to right): Metro Assistant Managing Editor **Bob McCartney**, **Lynn Medford** (News-Metro), Executive Editor **Len Downie**, **Terry Neal** (News-Metro), **Phyllis Jordan** (News-Metro) and **Matt Mosk** (News-Metro) discuss strategy.*

tion data, The Post received its feed from the Associated Press (AP).

"I've got processes that download the files from AP's servers into a database," explained Holzinger. "From there, BallotBoxer creates charts just like the local ones."

The newsroom, however, wasn't the only Post department working 12-plus-hour shifts and bringing on extra people. Once the information was gathered, the laws of supply and demand were observed and the information disseminated as efficiently as it was collected.

Circulation and Production stepped up to meet the demands of printing the



***Jacqueline Dupree**, News IT, standing by to support the newsroom staff on election night.*

regional edition earlier and the suburban and metro editions later, to ensure that the newsroom gets as many results into the home delivery papers.

Circulation determined that a total of 60,000 more

copies needed to be printed and ensured enough distributors would be available.

Production held several meetings and declared election night an "All Hands on Deck" night at the College Park and Springfield plants, which meant that "the plant senior management and other key personnel are expected to work" in order to have "the strongest possible team on the field," explained College Park Plant Manager **Sherry Gryder**.

Assistant Springfield Plant Manager **Roddy MacPherson** added that Springfield, which currently runs three printing presses, "hired an overtime press team (8 operators) to run the fourth press."

After explaining that a moratorium was imposed on "system changes and major equipment overhauls before the election," Gryder concluded, "A number of managers that normally work days came in unexpectedly on their own, purely out of dedication to this fine paper and organization."

Finally, The Post Company's Web subsidiary, WPNI, also answered the call by keeping *washingtonpost.com* updated with election news.

Russ Walker, WPNI's Nation and World editor, said, "Normally, we have a total of about 10 people working throughout the night to update *washingtonpost.com*, but on election night we had about 40 people plus six from IT to ensure our systems were up and running."

Walker, who also said that early preparation lead to a nearly seamless night, explained that WPNI "liaised with the continuous news desk and folks like **Rajiv Chandrasekaran** (continuous news editor) in The Post newsroom."

Also noteworthy was Copy Aide **Jennifer Ford** taking the initiative to help out by using her TV production skills to



*Volunteer tabulator **Aruna Jain**, News (Metro-Montgomery Bureau), taking election results by phone, as McCullough second-checks Jain's tallies.*

get well-known political columnist and "The Fix" blogger Chris Cillizza from *washingtonpost.com* on the air from the newsroom. Cillizza discussed the election and poll results live on PBS's NewsHour with Jim Lehrer. ■

In Memoriam

Honoring Helen Dewar

1936-2006



PHOTO - HARRY NATCHAVAN

ShopTalk 1987 caption: "Washington Post Company chairman Katharine Graham poses with award winners Helen Dewar, L.C. Turner, Lou Limber and publisher Donald Graham (left to right)." (Editor's note: Dewar receiving the Eugene Meyer Award.)

In an email to the newsroom dated Nov.4:

*After a long and gallant fight with breast cancer, **Helen Dewar**, the retired dean of the congressional press corps and one of the most respected reporters of her generation, died this morning at the Fountains at Washington House in her beloved Alexandria. She was once the leading political and government reporter in Virginia and then the definitive U. S. Senate correspondent from 1979 until her retirement from The Post at the end of 2004. In my more than four decades here (Helen preceded me in the newsroom by three years), no reporter worked harder, was more of a recognized expert in her field or was more accurate and fair. Helen won the Everett McKinley Dirksen Award for congressional reporting in 1984, the Eugene Meyer Award in 1987 and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Washington Press Club Foundation earlier this*



PHOTO - SHOPTALK ARCHIVES 1961

ShopTalk-New Faces 1961: "Helen Dewar came to the newsroom from two year's experience with the Northern Virginia Sun. A Californian, Helen graduated from Stanford U. and was granted a public affairs scholarship the next year by the Coro Foundation in San Francisco."

year. She combined integrity, modesty, dignity, and toughness in a way that was as impressive as it was rare. Helen, who had no immediate survivors, will be cremated and buried in California.

— Executive Editor
Len Downie

Note: a memorial service will be held on Nov. 30 at 10 a.m. in the Northwest Building Auditorium.

PostScripts

ShopTalk Editor's Notes:

- ShopTalk archives: Two issues from 1961 and 1987 will be available on *Intranet* to honor Helen Dewar.
- Suggestion Boxes Now Available at the cafeteria in the Northwest Building and at both plants!
- If you or a fellow Post employee will be participating in any community service project during Thanksgiving, let us know.
- Gobble-Gobble! No ShopTalk next week. Happy Thanksgiving. Will return on Nov. 30.

Annual Cookie and Book Sale Around the Corner!

The Annual Cookie and Book Sale will take place on Dec. 4, but the program coordinators need your help to donate

baked goods (made by your own hands or purchased). The event benefits N Street Village, a complex of living quarters for homeless women. If you can help or donate something contact **Aimee Sanders** at x4-6748 or sandersa@washpost.com

United Way 2006 Campaign

The annual United Way drive is underway. Contact your chairperson or campaign chair and Vice President **Lionel Neptune**, Affiliates, with any questions or concerns at x4-4228 or neptunel@washpost.com. The deadline for contributions is Dec. 1.

Marketplace

FOR SALE: Legs too tired to walk? Rascal Scooter. Double batteries. Good Condition. Retail \$3200; asking \$1600. Contact Ellen at 703-743-5890 or x4-7762.

FOR HIRE: IT Project Manager. IT Department seeking experienced project manager to lead technology projects. Experience in software deployment and business process management necessary. BA or equivalent and experience in "full system lifecycle" implementation required. Project Management Institute certification strongly preferred. Contact Jeanne Koch, Manager IT HR Development at kochj@washpost.com or x4-6217. NOTE: Position eligible for enhanced employee referral bonus of \$5000. For more details on referral program, contact Nellie Goddard at x4-7941 or goddardn@washpost.com. Email resumes for consideration to seresumes@washpost.com (Subject: Employee Referral - Project Manager). Deadline: 5:00 pm on Nov. 17.

HOUSE FOR SALE: Appraised at \$505K, selling for \$449K. \$5000 closing help. \$2000 agent bonus! Charming 2BR/1.5 BA/2-level brick end unit. Capitol Hill location. Total renovation. Huge kitchen w/ limestone counters, dishwasher. Separate laundry, storage shed, deck, front porch w/ front yard. Near Metro, Eastern Market, stadium, restaurants, grocery stores, shopping, etc. Adjacent lot available for \$350K. Both properties: \$740K. Virtual tour at www.spicer-realestate.com/prop_detail.aspx?property_id=173. Contact Mildred at x4-4512 or Rob Spicer or Chester Valasco at 301-770-1301.

NEW MARKETPLACE DEADLINE: **Noon THURSDAYS.** Please include your name, extension and phone number. Ads are for Post employees only. Send ads to ShopTalk, seventh floor, or call x4-6803. To send ads via fax dial x4-4963 or to email send to shoptalk@washpost.com or onam@washpost.com. Ads run for two issues unless otherwise requested. One ad per employee. ShopTalk reserves the right to publish and edit all ads.