GLORIA STEINEM: A LIFETIME OF ACHIEVEMENT

By Betsy Wade

In October, Gloria Steinem flew west to keep a long-postponed date. She had been on the campaign trail nonstop most of the month, arguing for women’s issues, most recently in Florida for a week.

It was now 10 days before Election Day, and Steinem, who lives in New York, was due in Albuquerque, N.M., to speak to more than 200 at the annual convention of the Journalism & Women Symposium.

Everyone was geared up. I was sitting next to Mary Thom, one of Steinem’s inner circle and an original staff member at Ms. and now editor at the Women’s Media Center. She looked at her watch, abandoned her chowder and mustered courage.

“I’ve driven you a lot back home,” the cabby said. “I know you, Gloria Steinem.”

Steinem reported she grabbed a cab and asked to go to the Hyatt Tamaya Resort.

“Lots of women going out there,” the cabby said.

“Journalists,” Steinem said. “Women who are journalists.”

“Well, I’m from New York,” the cabby said. “I know you, Gloria Steinem. I’ve driven you a lot back home.”

Just one more proof that Gloria Steinem, recipient this year of the Silurians’ Lifetime Achievement Award, is one of the most recognizable people in the world. Like Eleanor Roosevelt, who popped up everywhere, Steinem is driven by the same hopes and has likewise become iconic. For 40 years she has materialized regularly in the center of news photos as she travels the globe with a message of equal rights, equal treatment.

And 40 years is no random number; she and her colleagues published the first issue of Ms. magazine in 1972, which makes this the perfect year to add Steinem to the short list of journalists honored by one of the oldest press clubs in the United States.

But as Silurians get to learn again at the Award dinner, Steinem is a major voice on big issues not just because she is recognizable. She is brainy and thoughtful. She is tenacious. She musters her journalism and speaking skills— with dozens of one-liners — and her leadership and her determination, for issues that matter: women should be safeguarded in childhood, be educated in youth and get equal access to good tools for accomplishment.

She leans forward, always. Don’t forget she backed the Brooklyn Represe...
How to Write Your Boss’s Obit

By Joseph Berger

When a newspaper or magazine asked to write the advance obituary of Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, Clyde Haberman decided he needed to interview Punch, the Times’s obituary editor, before beginning the piece. But Punch pointed out you can’t interview obituary subjects after they’re dead. So he arranged a meeting with Punch the day before the Times put out and opened by saying: “I just want to say how uncomfortable this makes me feel.”

That glimpse into Punch’s puckish wit and affability was one of the back-story vignettes that Clyde, with characteristic verve, included in a luncheon of the Silurians on October 18 at the Players Club as he spoke of how he went about writing the elegant and respectful notice of his former boss that appeared Sept. 29 and 30. Clyde began by recalling that the Sulzberger send-off was the second advance obit he had ever done. He wrote the first as a reporter at The New York Post and it was of the popular Post columnist Leonard Lyons (this was before the Post was turned into a tabloid, and Clyde was sworn to secrecy by Paul Samuelson, the Post’s circulation manager, after he completed it, Clyde was in the bathroom and, looking in the mirror, glimpsed Lyons passing behind him. He had been sitting too close.) The inspiration was that writing an advance obit can feel like presiding at a funeral. Clyde said that he had written the first draft of the Sulzberger obituary 14 years ago, after Punch’s retirement as chairman of The Times board was announced. Joe Connelly, then dcutive editor, assigned, “I confess to having a New York Times sensibility,” Clyde said, by way of explaining why he had written about the people was chosen. He said he interviewed Punch two or three times but also spoke to two of Punch’s sisters and several editors and business-side executives who had worked for Punch and read several books about Punch’s era like “The Trust” by Alex Jones and Susan Tripp. (Alex happened to be sitting at a front table.)

After the advance obituary was completed, it was occasionally reviewed over the years by various editors but, Clyde said, lightly dealt with. It was also looked over by the paper’s current publisher, Arthur Ochs Jr., who ordered Punch to write the obit at City Hall while apprenticing in the newspaper business—one of what Clyde called Arthur Jr.’s “14 Stations of the Cross.” And Punch later asked that the obit have a greater emphasis on Punch’s business decisions. Clyde agreed to meet with Punch and draw up an advance obit to submit to his paper and his father.” Clyde explained. But Clyde said doing so did not weaken the emphasis of Punch’s role in boldly publishing the Pentagon Papers and keeping the paper thriving with new lifestyle, science and weekend sections while other New York papers folded.

All the while, he said, “My biggest concern was that this was old news—I was still writing, and my second biggest concern was that he would die after me.”

Punch, ill with Parkinson’s disease and other ailments, lived on until September, so the advance obituary weighed on Clyde for a long time. One day, Clyde went on vacation without alerting the obits desk of his whereabouts in case some last-minute changes were needed. Clyde said he was pleased with the reception the obit received even if one blog commentator described it as “nauseating.” Sometime later, Clyde said, he felt it was “a fair portrait of the guy,” a sentiment more than shared by the Silurians and long-time Observer readers. He was a hero of his warts—Sulzberger’s lack of business preparedness for taking over the publisher’s job, his battles with unions and, most unusually, his personal, “satisfaction,” his “hopelessness” as reporter. Clyde even included Sulzberger’s visit to the Observer building in 1964, when the Observer was challenging a virtual horse race at LeMans, France, in which he failed to notify The Times that 82 spectators had been killed during a horrific crash.

“Sulzberger was a great leader of organizations using that line with Rupert Murdoch,” Clyde said.

Do you know the backgrounds of all the people who are officers and governors of the Society of Silurians? It is essential information that we have. Linda Amstott is director of News Research for The New York Times, overseeing the library, magzine, photo library and all electronic materials for The New York Times and New York Times Books. She served as a copy boy on the Boston Globe; a reporter for the American Heart Association, then became a syndicated columnist and writer for The New York Daily News; The New York Times; ABC News; CNN and Bloomberg news. Former president of the American Society of American Photographers; and is currently a copy editor for The New York Times and New York Times Books.

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I t was years after I took her memo-
able course that I finally figured
out how it was that Judith Crist, who
died in August at 90, was as great a
teacher as she was a film critic.
The answer is that she cared passion-
ately — and in equal measure — about
both.

Whether in her classroom at
Columbia’s Graduate School of Journal-
ism (where she taught continuously for
over 50 years, alone and occasionally with
other instructors), she always had high expectations
that the films she watched and the stu-
dents she taught would live up to their full
potential, come what might.

“I am of the Agee-an school of criti-
cism,” Crist wrote of her hero, James
Agee, the consummate screenwriter, nov-
elist, poet and journalist who began re-
viewing films in the early 1940s.

“I have subscribed to the James Agee
premise that film criticism is a conversa-
tion between movie-goers,” Crist declared
in her volume of collected reviews, “The
Private Eye, the Cowboy and the Very
Naked Girl.”

“If,” she said, “I can prod a person or
two into just thinking for himself, let alone
organizing his thought into opinion form,
and two into just thinking for himself, let alone
the preacher at heart,” she wrote. “I speak
no more precise description of the inter-
vention between movie-goers,” Crist declared
viewing films in the early 1940s.

“But,” was Crist’s characteristic
answer to the question of what could be,
true of her work. “An interview. I thought I had a shot. I loved
movies, worshipped James Agee, and had
written movie reviews over two summers for The Baltimore Eagle – but the com-
petition was formidable.

Somehow I got in. I figured I
was golden un-
less Professor
Crist – who as a
child routinely cut
classes to go to
the movies
s o m e h o w
learned that my
first movie expe-
rience, at the age
of 5, was being
whisked out of
Radio City Music
Hall by my father after I became unhinged
on honesty.

Both had a special place in their
hearts for comedy, especially if it embodied the
techniques and routines of the classic
silents like Chaplin’s 1925 masterpiece,
“The Gold Rush,” the first film Crist
members seeing as a child.

Agee devised an original way to mea-
sure comic moxie. “In the language of
screen comedians four of the main grades
of laugh are the titter, the belly
laugh and the boffo,” Agee wrote in
“Comedy’s Greatest Era,” a dazzling ar-
ticle in the Sept. 3, 1949 issue of Life
magazine. “The titter is just a titter. The
yowl is a runaway titter. Anyone who has
ever had the pleasure knows all about a
boffo laugh. The titter is the laugh that
kills.”

But whatever category of film was on
the screen, there was always one con-
stant: “The joy of criticism is in wanting
to share discovered pleasures,” Crist ex-
plained in “Take 22,” her anthology of
conversations with moviemakers.

For half a century, Judith Crist taught at the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism.

For those who wanted to share in dis-
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A Woman Correspondent in Vietnam: Fictionalized Truth

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tative Shirley Chisholm in her run for president in 1972 when no one took seriously the campaign of the first black woman to be elected to Congress. This collaboration led to the creation of the National Women’s Political Caucus.

When she looks back — which is not often — Steinem speaks of her “long memory” but doesn’t force anyone to do so. “I’m only 78 years old, she says, then, “It’s a form of coming out to tell your age, isn’t it?”

Right now, Steinem is finishing yet another book, this one called “Road to the Heart: America as if Everyone Mat- tered.” It’s an account of Steinem’s travels to get the equality message out, a con- tinuation of more than 50 years of jour- nalism and activism.

A 1956 honors graduate from Smith, Steinem burst on the national scene in 1963 the same way Nellie Bly did in The New York World 76 years earlier: she went undercover. Bly got herself com- missioned to an asylum on Blackwell’s Is- land; Steinem got a job as a Playboy bunny for Show magazine. No need to belabor the parallels, but in both cases, the ac- counts reflected changes in the lives of women in the places they investigated. In 1968, Steinem helped founded New York magazine, holding a job as political correspondent and also writing features. Be- yond that, as Prof. Carolyn G. Heilbrun shows in her biography, “The Education of a Woman,” Steinem was a fountain of ideas: assignments, names for depart- ments, covers — the works. When Ms. began, she held the job of editor for 15 years. “These innovations are too many to list, “Take Our Daughters to Work Day” is one example.

Her current journalism “home” is the Woman Correspondent, which she cre- ated in 2005 with Jane Fonda and Robin Morgan. It has a web site and dozens of continuing projects. “She Source,” for example, is an electronic Rolodex.

Julie Burton, the center’s president, says the organization’s far-flung leaders are steadily hands-on, with weekly Skype meetings to discuss everything. “It’s very much a volunteer project,” she says. In 2010, Burton says, Steinem, gripped by a book she had read, “Sexual Violence Against Jewish Women During the Ho- locause,” organized the center’s “Women Under Siege,” to assess this type of warfare. In an article about whether wartime rape was increasing or decreas- ing, Steinem is quoted as saying that when it comes to suffering in wartime, “we do not need a competition of tears.”

In her campaigning this year, Steinem gave top priority to equal pay for equiva- lent work. The “greatest stimulus our economy could ever get,” she said, would be to raise the pay of women to match men’s pay for jobs of comparable worth. Those bumps in women’s paychecks would not go to a bank in the Bahamas, she says, but for groceries, medical care and tuition. Building families, building jobs. When she is asked where will the money come from, she says, “Companies’ out- rageous profits.”

She grows blunt and angry when she hears the welfare of “the female half” of the United States described as a social issue; it is a prime economic issue, she says.

When she got to Albuquerque in Octo- ber and stood before a room full of jour- nalists texting, taking photos, writing notes on laptops and notebooks, she opened her arms and proclaimed, “Life is just one big editorial meeting!”

The meeting she was addressing, the Journalism & Women Symposium, or JAWS, was organized in 1983 and is near- ing its 30th anniversary. Some of its mem- bers, like me, go back a way. But the meeting brought an upsurge of young women clamoring to learn and find mentors and connections among experienced generations of journalists. Steinem thrives in this youthful grove, urging older women to ask questions of the young — for example, “What’s unfair in your life?” — and then listen. Her description of results brought some material that might stirle editors.

For example, Linda Deutsch, the long- time court reporter for the AP in Los An- geles, asked from the floor: “Why do these young Hollywood women dress like sluts?”

“It’s all right to look like sluts if we like,” Steinem replied, referring to the “slutwalk” in the movie “Legally Blonde.” She said she herself had some- times been labeled a slut. Her tombstone, she said, would read: “Here lies a slut from East Toledo.”

Media, Steinem said, described a con- fference on halting the trafficking of women, it “our right to put every single person in the loop to open up questions and find solu- tions. She reported on a conversation with a small group of young women who complained of having to give blow jobs to boyfriends who considered this a form of contraception. Steinem said that she asked the young women if they had thought of asking their companions to re- turn the favor.

“They said, ‘Ugh, gross!’ then they thought and said, ‘hummm.,”’ At meetings of women in journalism, the contention “there are two sides to every issue” does not usually pass unchallenged. It frequently sends discussion into the matter of the “war con- struct” in telling a story: black vs. white, left vs. right — a paragraph for the truth, a paragraph for the lie. Steinem will not let the road to fairness be boxed down to male vs. female. She said the time would come when we understand “there are not two sides to every issue — there may be 3 – 10, 12.”

At an informal evening session, Katherine Lanphier, a broadcast journal- ist now living in Brooklyn, assumed the role of a “Jewish mother,” ask if Steinem was “seeing anybody” lately. Steinem laughed, pausing to interject that her mother was not Jewish though her father was. (Steinem married David Bale in 2000. He died three years later.) Her response was perfect Steinem: “All of those brain cells that were occupied with sex are suddenly free for other things.”

She added: “I am healthy. I am doing what I love. I am struggling with trying not to think that I am immoral.” Asked to whom she would pass the torch, she said: “I am not giving up my torch. I am using my torch to light everyone else’s.”

For which, many thanks, Ms. Steinem.

Continued from Page 1

the AP, and privy to how that large and grand organization operates and how in- credibly different a second-to-second deadline is from a daily one. This insight was critical to comprehending 1968 Saigon.

Ultimately, I didn’t end up changing much of the structure of the novel or my idea of what the story was. It was really more a question of bringing things back around, ref- erencing the signposts that keep the reader in familiar territory. And after all these years, I’ve finally gotten the hang of it. I’ve re- cently completed another novel and begin- ning a third. It’s wonderful to have a second career, and to be able to use to great ad- vantage all the skills I learned in the first — to get it right, be accurate and vivid with details, and tell the truth as best one can.

Hemingway, in a 1934 piece in Esquire titled “Old Newsman Writes,” said: “All good books are alike in that they are true than if they had really happened ... the people and the places and how the weather was.”

A Lifetime of Achievement
Shepard and Povich: Two for the Show

Appearing at times like one of those couples on an old-time radio show - trading bits of dialog, reminiscing and taking questions from the audience - the husband-and-wife team of Steve Shepard and Lynn Povich entertained a crowd of almost 80 Silurians and their guests at The Players as the featured attraction at the Nov. 15 lunch.

They talked about their careers and their new books, touching on such topics as the current state of journalism, the future of print media, and the decades-old struggle for gender equality in news organizations, as well as about their 33 years of marriage.

Shepard, the founding dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY and the editor-in-chief of Business Week for two decades, is the author of “Deadlines and Disruption: My Turbulent Path From Print to Digital.” Povich, who rose from a secretarial position at Newsweek to become the magazine’s first female senior editor, has chronicled that story in “The Good Girls Revolt: How the Women of Newsweek Sued Their Bosses and Changed the Workplace.”

In 1962, Ralph Blumenthal was editor-in-chief of the City College newspaper, The Campus. In 1970, the author was a correspondent for The New York Times in its Saigon bureau.

The Education of a Timesman

By Ralph Blumenthal

The New York Times’s wise and jovial Richard F. Shepard – he who never ate lunch at his desk – caught me one morning tearing across Broadway at 43rd Street. I was late for work. Dick stopped me and shook his head disapprovingly. “Ralph, why are you running?” he chided. “It’s not your own business.”

But when I answered yes, and there was an awkward pause, I realized the caller and shouted if anyone knew where Ralph Blumenthal was an awkward pause, I realized the caller and shouted if anyone knew where Ralph was, some guy named Punch was looking for him.

“The Campus” was a quirky place, the old New York Times. One of my first jobs, it was carelessly capitalized on the misfortune of others to publish bits of my own daily New York Times.

It was during the ruinous 114-day newsroom strike of 1962-3. With the paper shut down, management was reduced to putting carbon copies [note to self: explain to younger generation] of correspondents’ raw dispatches in wire baskets in the lobby of the City College Campus, the school’s proud paper of record since 1907, I edited and cut the stories for space and ran them in The Campus. They took quite a bit of trimming, too, as our pages were considerably smaller than The Times’s. Ooops, worry about your kicker, Scotty.

But now as I started as a clerk in the newsroom, I was just a minion. How green could get the byline – and no credit line for the other, either. Until, one day, those strictures were suddenly lifted. The Times had to go on the Q-hed. If two copies, they might no longer put in a trash bin.

I wanted to make sure I had heard that right. Scoop up the copies that other people kept putting there, take them out of sight and dump them?

Exactly, I was told.

But why? I asked.

Ah, I was informed, if anyone saw you dump the copies, they might no longer put them there.

Of course. This, after all, was the paper of innumerable unflattering stories. No matter how many stories you wrote for that day’s paper, you could get only one byline. If you wrote a Page One story and an analysis piece, known as a Q-hed, as much as you wanted the front page glory, the byline had to go on the Q-hed. If two reporters collaborated on a story, only one could get the byline – and no credit line for the other, either. Until, one day, those strictures were suddenly lifted. The Times was, indeed, the paper of permanent, inflexible, ever-changing rules.

Our harsh taskmaster was the sassy, dwarfish Sammy Solovitz, a one-time West- ern Union delivery boy who had showed up at The Times during the war with a tele- gram, and with the shortage of manpower, was quickly hired for the newsroom. He corralled us copy boys with tyrannical glee, fastening on one particular preppy recruit.

In 1970, the author was a correspondent for The New York Times in its Saigon bureau.
Harry Gilmer was then a scout for the Cardinals, but that wasn't the 'Who'! I hesitated for a moment or so. But when one of the sportswriters mentioned something about growing up with two sisters, I said, "Well, I grew up with a Harry Gilmer, one who autographed the sports present the night before. He didn’t look so good as it was early and Bobby, then in his 20's, Christmas – perhaps in honor of a song. It was December 9, 1949 (probably Hanukkah, but I’d sometimes get a bonus at the football make you ill?"

The idea was, said Gilmer, "that if I kicked it, played touch football with friends nearby Independence Park and on the street. One afternoon, when a number of cars toled by suspending the game momentarily, one of our players shouted, "What is this, a boulevard?" At some point, the hide began to tear and the bladder to pep through, and it was soon curtains for my beloved Harry Gilmer football.

When Gilmer came out of the Univer- sity of Alabama as an all-America quar- terback and a Rose Bowl MVP and the first-round draft choice of the Washing- ton Redskins in 1948, George Marshall, the owner of the team, made a deal with Dubow, a sports equipment company based in Chicago, for a line of football paraphernalia with Gilmer's signature.

"But," said Gilmer, "Sammy played five more years.

Meanwhile, Gilmer played some in the defensive backfield, and in 1952, when Charlie (Choo Choo) Justice broke his arm and all." Buddy Parker said to Gilmer: "I want you to play in Jack's place against the 49ers. But you can’t wear those old pads.

Gilmer reluctantly put on new pads, and it happened that Carroll Hardy, a 49er re- ceiver, got behind him and caught a touchdown pass. "Parker yanked me," said Gilmer, "and I was sort of shootin’ through, brown arm and all."

"When I mentioned to Gilmer that maybe the new pads had been too heavy for him, he met the pads manager up there," said "Gee, hadn't thought of that ex- cuse."

It was a lot of fast backpedaling. I did a lot of fast backpedaling. I received 35 years before. ..."