



NEWS ARGUS EXTRA



Young Editor Reaching Top

by Sam Davis

At the young age of 27, Allen Johnson is already viewed by his peers as approaching the upper echelon in his chosen profession.

In the short time since he came to this city to assume the position of Managing Editor of the Winston-Salem Chronicle, he has been a major cog in transferring the paper from a good black newspaper into the "best" weekly newspaper in the state. This past winter he and publisher Ernest Pitt accepted this honor from the North Carolina Press Association.

Johnson, a Greensboro native, has been involved in newspaper publishing since his teenage years. "I have always been interested in newspapers," says Johnson. "As a kid I used to make my own little newspapers. I was intrigued by the newspaper industry because it has a certain amount of mystique," he says.

Mr. Johnson has accumulated a vast amount of experience over the years since he developed his interest, and taken advantage of every available opportunity to refine his journalistic ability. "I worked with the newspaper staff when I got to high school and eventually became the editor," Johnson says. "The teachers at Dudley High School really helped me because they saw that I was really interested in writing."

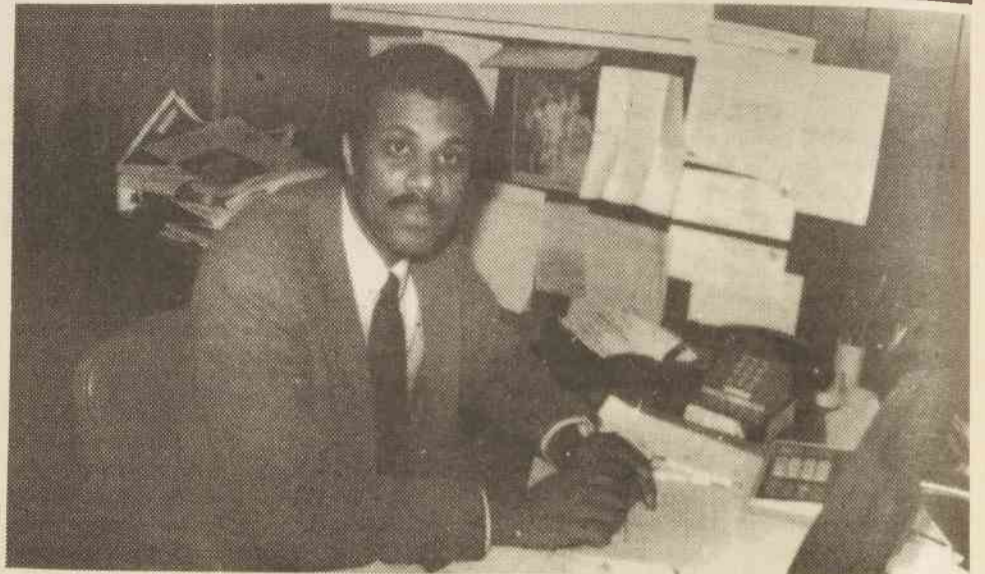
After his high school days were over,

Johnson decided to enroll at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill because of the excellent reputation of the school's journalism program. "At Chapel Hill, I wrote for the campus publications," he says. Although he eventually became editor of the black campus newspaper and associate editor of the Daily Tarheel, the most prestigious student newspaper in the state, Johnson says his major interest is writing.

"My first love is writing," he says. However, after receiving his B.A. and masters from UNC-Chapel Hill he decided to teach. "I taught at UNC and North Carolina Central and after awhile I realized that I wanted to be a working journalist. There is a certain amount of euphoria you get when you finally see your work in print," says Johnson. "That's what really made me go back into the working world."

While teaching at North Carolina Central, Johnson received a faculty sabbatical to work on the staff of the Denver Post as a copy editor. "I learned a lot in Denver," he says.

"The Post and the Rocky Mountain News were having an old-fashioned war," says Johnson. "The competition for readers in the Denver area was very keen at that time and I got caught up in all the excitement. It really made me become motivated in terms of working in the business," he explains. "I just had to pursue it when the time came for me to leave



Allen Johnson, Managing Editor of the Winston-Salem Chronicle (Photo by Keith Hilliard).

the Post."

Johnson says a relationship that developed between himself and Chronicle publisher Ernie Pitt doing their college days at Chapel Hill led to him accepting a job with the paper. "Ernie and I went to school together and kept in touch," says Johnson. "I had always been interested in the black press, but I thought I would pursue a career as a teacher. After my experience with the Post, I knew that I could only become content by working on a paper." So Johnson came to Winston-Salem to try his hand with the Chronicle.

"The press is a wide open field for blacks," says Johnson. "There's a lot to be accomplished in the black press and a lot of money to be made as well," he says. "There are still not enough of us (blacks) on daily newspapers in this country and even fewer in a position to make any major decisions." Johnson says that major daily newspapers are looking for qualified blacks to add to their staffs, but there are not very many blacks who have the skills to assume these positions.

continued page 11

The perils of Investigative Reporting

by Sam Davis

Would you enjoy a job that required you to do such bizarre things as drive around in a car with a policeman for eight hours? Or would you like to uncover graft and corruptions in politics?

Those are the type of things Athelia Knight, an investigative reporter for the Washington Post does for a living. Ms. Knight, who recently lectured to WSSU students during a Mass Communications symposium, talked in depth to the News Argus in an interview while she was in Winston-Salem.

Ms. Knight says that many people don't really understand what investigative reporting is all about. "It's not always snooping in crime," she says. "What we do in investigative reporting is deal with issues that affect lots and lots of people, and try to get people to be honest with us about it."

For instance, Ms. Knight just finished an in-depth story which was entitled "super cops". The story centered around a Washington, D.C. police precinct that required each officer to make a certain amount of arrests per month. "What it amounted to was a quota system," says Ms. Knight. "If a particular policeman didn't make his required number of arrests, his captain would reprimand him. This caused some officers to go out and arbitrarily make arrests," she says.

"I didn't really come across any really sticky situations while I was working on the story," she says. "We worked on the story, for about 6 months and after awhile the officers got used to us being there. Usually people get very suspicious of us, but in this situation the officers acted pretty naturally."

"You have a lot of people that say they've been misquoted," says Ms. Knight. "Especially public officials and politicians, so you have to get it all on tape. As a reporter you're supposed to identify yourself before you start asking questions. That's the ethical way to get stories done," she adds.

"A good journalist is a person who likes people," Ms. Knight says in explaining what it takes to be successful in her line of work. "In order to get a good story you have to interview people and ask a lot of questions without turning the interviewee off. You have to be aggressive and inquisitive to do well at reporting," she says. "You should also like to write and read."

"Regardless of your major in college a career in journalism is attainable," says Ms. Knight. "I attended Norfolk State University and we didn't have a journalism program," she says. "However I knew I was interested in journalism and I wrote everytime I had the chance. We had a student paper that was very sporadic in terms of publication so I had to look for other sources to have my work printed."

"Newspapers are always looking for talented people," she says. "There is a great need for people with well-rounded backgrounds in journalism. Journalists have to cover a lot of different stories, so there is a need for reporters to be well-versed," Ms. Knight says. As a journalist you need to be well-read and aware of what's going on in the world."

In describing a typical work day for a reporter, Ms. Knight says "my work day is supposed to start at 10 a.m. and end at 6:30 p.m. But I'm usually there after 7 everyday. Being on an investigative reporting team, I might have interviews all day, the next I might be doing research all day

continued page 12

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