



CAREERS IN JOURNALISM



Chronicle Photographer Finds Contentment Through Photo-Journalism



James Parker, (photo by Robin Adams).

By Sam Davis

Becoming a photo-journalist was not what James Parker had in mind when he enrolled at the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill. Although he enjoyed taking pictures his main goal was to become a T.V. personality.

I went there to study Mass media because eventually I would be on camera as a star," says Parker. "I majored in Television Production under the guise that

I would end up in front of the camera. When I think about it, I was stepping into the ego seeking position that a lot of people fall prey to."

An experience that Parker (or J.P. as he like to be called) had during his college days altered his plans. "I worked as an intern for WTVD Television station in Durham for two semesters," says J.P. "I was a commercial photography intern for the station and I saw what went on behind the scenes."

"I found out that an on-camera person such as a news anchor or reporter had to claw his way to success because of the competitiveness in the profession. That cured me of all the beliefs I had of wanting to work in front of the camera," he says.

"Don't get me wrong" says J.P. "I'm competitive and I have the desire and drive to be successful, but I saw that the people who are in those positions don't really have any friends because they're always trying to get an advantage over their co-workers," he explains. "They have to be that way in order to make it to the top."

"I was ego-tripping and I'm glad I came down," he says. "But in the process I was almost turned off by television."

J.P. says that when his college career was over, he expected to be offered jobs because he had earned his degree from

Chapel Hill. "I thought my degree would open doors for me," say J.P. I thought that when I graduated, people would contact me. I had friends in the business who I sent resume's but I didn't hear anything from them," he says. "I guess I was approaching job hunting too passively."

J.P. decided to accept a position at a department store until he could find a job in T.V. "I started working at Montgomery Ward in Durham in a 'blue collar' job. I thought it would be for a short while but I ended up staying there for more than a year," J.P. says. He remained there until the Winston-Salem Chronicle decided to hire a full-time photographer.

"I had worked with Allen (Johnson, Chronicle editor) at Chapel Hill," says J.P. "I was photographic editor of the black student paper, Black Ink, while enrolled at Carolina and Allen was the Editor-in-chief." When Johnson offered J.P. the job he decided to join the chronicle staff.

Luckily J.P. had experience outside his major, or he might be still working at Montgomery Ward. "I've been taking pictures for a long time," J.P. says. "I stated when I was in the eleventh grade of high school. The offered a course in photography called "Basics of 35 millimeter camera. It was good dark-room photography course," he says.

"I had a very good teacher," J.P. admits. "He taught us at the levels we were at, if you wanted to learn more than the other students he would help you. I was hungry for knowledge and he really helped me to become a better photographer," says J.P.

"I dream about pictures, both pictures I've taken and others I would like to take in the future," he says. "I visualize about images I can capture with the camera, and that keeps me on edge. When I know I'm about to capture the essence of a moment through my camera, it makes me tremble inside. That's what really keeps me looking for good shots, it's an ecstatic feeling."

J.P. says that he's not disappointed about not finding a job in television because of the tremendous amount of knowledge he's learned since leaving college. "Right now I want to make the best of my present situation," he says. "I'm still working hard at being a good photographer, and I'm having a lot of fun working, at the Chronicle."

J.P. says that there are certain advantages to be reaped from being a photographer. "If you have a camera around your neck you can get into almost anyplace," he admits. "You'd be amazed at the number of places you can get into."

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