

News

The Downfall of The Odyssey

Rachel Crawford, Staff Writer

Chances are, you've heard of The Odyssey Online. Without a doubt, you've seen one of their articles shared onto your Facebook feed at some point. The Odyssey is a news website with contributing teams from over 75 colleges and universities. There is a team of unpaid staff writers at each college, as well as an editing team with an editor in chief, a contributing editor, a social media director, and a photographer, who also receive little to no payment. Then, there are the salaried editors, who manage multiple campuses from a central office in Manhattan.

Junior Linda Sankat sparked something of a revolution when she announced on March 18 that she was stepping down from her Editor-in-Chief position at the Odyssey's Meredith branch. "On the surface, it may appear that I had no reason to resign, but behind the scenes, I've been to hell and back," she wrote on the Odyssey team's private Facebook page. "Over the past few months, I have been incessantly harassed to push you all to write tons of articles, and to recruit more writers, just so that the higher ups of The Odyssey could make a profit. I simply cannot stand for that. You all are much too talented to be exploited by this disgusting Ponzi

scheme of a company." Ever since this Facebook post, many staff writers have decided to step down from the Odyssey in solidarity with Sankat.

Later, Sankat said she decided to quit because the Odyssey staff treated her and her writers like commodities. Sankat said, "I knew that behind all of that there are just these people on top who are making a profit off of our work...It just didn't sit well with me...I don't like it when people are taken advantage of." Sankat also quit because her supervisors pressured her to put her Editor-in-Chief duties over schoolwork. She wrote about her boss, Liz Posner: "She would constantly harass me, blowing up my phone with texts and phone calls during class." The final straw for Sankat was when Posner told her that it was her "obligation" to answer her phone, even during class. Sankat quit almost immediately after that incident, and ever since, she says it has been a weight off her shoulders.

Sankat is not the only person who felt disrespected by the Odyssey staff. Damaris Griffith, a staff writer who joined the team in the fall, had a negative experience with managing editor Posner regarding one of her articles. Griffith wrote an article titled "Why Education Is The Most

Important Thing In Your Life" about how social change can only come through education and patience. The article's main focus was not on racism, but it did mention some examples of racial ignorance and it contained one sentence about a man who used blackface. Despite the fact that it was such a minor part of the article, Posner pressured Griffith to change the article's cover photo to an image of a man in blackface, which Griffith refused.

Griffith said about this incident: "Liz wanted to change the photo to a photo of blackface, which I WAS NOT okay with. That's clearly not what the article was about, and it was a clear drive to get more views... There were way more examples used in the article that were not nearly as controversial. When Liz asked to do that, it's pretty much when I realized that the Odyssey was all about views. I'm not entirely mad about that—everything is a business. Prisons, even non profits...but the fact that we (as writers) we're working to meet a 'requirement' every week, hosting ads on our articles, and no money came to us or as far as I know our editors, that made me angry."

Today, the majority of the Odyssey's writers have stopped

contributing due to disagreement with the company's values. Some writers, however, have decided to stay on the staff. Sarah Kincaid stands by her decision to continue writing for the Odyssey because she thinks her articles can reach a certain audience that other forms of media might not be able to. "I know I am the unpopular opinion here, but the reason I write for the Odyssey is not only for the experience, but also so maybe I can write something [that] helps a fellow college student get through a hard time they might be going through," Kincaid shared on the team's Facebook page.

Even though there are many positive aspects to writing for the Odyssey, Sankat urges writers to at least reconsider their contributions to the website: "With Meredith being such a close-knit sisterhood, the Odyssey is just too corporate for our community... If somebody really wants to write for the Odyssey, they shouldn't let my experience deter them necessarily, but I do urge those people who are still writing for the Odyssey to look a bit deeper into the inner workings of the company and then decide if they still want to continue."

Avenging Angels Sweep the Weekend

Julia Allsbrook, Contributing Writer

April fools weekend was no joke for Meredith tennis, softball, and lacrosse as all three teams came out with big wins on the weekend.

Meredith Tennis improved their record to 10-6 overall and 8-3 in conference with big wins on the road against Ferrum and Averett. The Angels shut down the Panthers of Ferrum 9-0, and the Cougars of Averett 8-1. Sophomore Ran Zhang continued her undefeated season winning her singles match 5-0 and her doubles match, alongside senior Catherine Bryant, 9-8. The tennis team plays at home this Saturday April 9 for Senior Day, against Maryville.

The Avenging Angel softball

team also did their fair share of swinging this weekend after defeating conference opponents Mary Baldwin and Ferrum. The Angels matched up against the Fighting Squirrels of Mary Baldwin on Saturday April 2, and recorded 17 runs with 24 hits between the two games. The double header on Sunday April 3 against Ferrum was defensively driven as the Angels won 3-1 in game one, followed by 1-0 in game two. The Angels are led offensively by senior Courtney Saunders with 34 hits on the season, and sophomores Brittany Bucklin and Maria Annunziata with a combined total of 54 RBIs. The Angels have improved their record to 19-13 overall and 9-7

in conference. The Angels will travel to Newport News VA, Wednesday April 6, to face non-conference opponent, Christopher Newport.

Meredith Athletics continued going strong on the weekend with a big non-conference win from Meredith lacrosse. The lacrosse team faced off against non-conference rivals, Rhodes, in Danville Kentucky on Saturday April 2. The Angels lost to Rhodes last year in the first round of the NCAA tournament; however, this weekend's storyline was altered. The Angels defeated the Lynx 19-9 with key scores from senior Katie Burnet and freshman Julie Capretti. These win keeps the Angels first in

conference with a 5-0 record and 13-1 overall. The Angels travel to Ferrum Saturday April 9 to match up against the panthers.

Finally, the Avenging Angels launched their very first track & field program this spring. The team is coached by Leslie Payne and has a roster size of 21. The Angels have competed in four meets on the season with a 6th overall finish meet one and an 8th overall finish in meet two. The Angels next meet will be the Aggie Invitational at North Carolina A&T University this Saturday April 9.

A New Addition to the Communications Department

Avery Dubuque, Contributing Writer

In the upcoming fall semester the communications department will be welcoming in a new faculty member. Alan Buck is currently a professor at Campbell University and has worked as an adjunct professor at St. Augustine's, Peace, and even here at Meredith. His work specializes in video production, social media, film, television, and interactive media. Before he was a professor, Mr. Buck got his B.A. from UNCG in Media Studies and his M.A. in Interactive Media from Elon University. He also has a freelance video and TV production company, was a promotions manager for WTWB, and was a videographer for WFLB, WRDW, and WHNS. Alan started off working in the field at a TV station and worked his way up through

several stations until he became the promotions manager for WTWB. However, during that time, he got tired of television and decided to go back to school for his degrees, and graduated with honors. He started teaching as an adjunct while also doing his freelance work and fell in love with it. He has been teaching ever since.

Alan Buck describes his teaching style as not being a teacher-but instead, he likes to impose his knowledge to help others apply it to the real world. He is looking forward to teaching at Meredith because he sees the leadership in our students as an important skill and the focus Meredith students have as a benefit to the classroom. He plans on bringing social media, digital media, and interactive

media coursework into the curriculum, and also wants to bring our students to Chapel Hill's TV station so they can have internships and experiences as part of a film crew. Mr. Buck is also looking forward to doing workshops with speakers for video classes and looking at organizing resume building clinics and events. He feels that any student in today's workforce needs to have a digital media background in order to be competitive when searching for a job. If he had an unlimited budget he would add a working TV studio to the communications department and start a media lab to allow campus and nonprofit organizations to come in for media help; like his Digital Media class did with Campus Kitchens last year at Meredith. He would also love

to have an international component either during spring break or in the summer that would enable students to travel abroad and be partnered with a non-profit of their choosing. They would have the task of producing all the media necessary to sustain their operations, such as producing a promotional video, building a website, taking all of their pictures, and setting up social media accounts. The students would get a great experience, and the organization, who may otherwise never be able to afford it, would get all the help they need to operate in a digital age. Lastly, Mr. Buck is looking forward to learning and helping out with all of the Meredith traditions, and is ready to "just experience" everything Meredith has to offer.