

Just Everyday People

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"If I can do it, you can do it! I don't imagine myself as being some kind of genius who can understand all kinds of things. I figure myself to be a plain, old, everyday person. And that's what I try to get out of others."

This is only a portion of the Beverly Burke (WTVD-Durham's co-anchor for the six and eleven o'clock news) discovered in an inspiring interview as she discussed her life, how she got started, where she's headed and how she feels about her viewers.

"I feel that I have to take a viewer's posture in wanting to know the essential things of any incident; any situation. If I were a person who watched TV... what would I want to know about what I am viewing and what I am learning. I try to pick up these things by asking questions of whoever I consider to be the focus of that newscast."

In reporting the results of her findings, she has to present as many sides that are offered, doing battle against a speaker and time. Miss Burke finds that she and her colleagues must be "strangely precise" in their presentation and is quick to point out that "it takes a disciplined mind to remove yourself from a situation so that you can see all the things that are hanging on the outside."

Feeling a deep responsibility to the community, Miss Burke is "challenged to open her mind, to seek out resources for information, and to digest that information and inform the public."

She loves people and points out that one thing she really enjoys about this job is the continuing education which has never confined her to walls. "I have never really enjoyed going to school unless I was in a real experiencing situation," she remarked. "But schools do not lend themselves to giving experience and understanding."

Beverly is one of those learners by doing; learners by experiencing and finds that "when I have a question on something, I am in a prime situation where I can get on the phone and can say 'This is Beverly Burke at WTVD. I'd like to speak to... Dr. John Hope Franklin at the Humanities Center...'" A lot of people are not afforded the luxury of maybe having a little bit of an "in" in getting to that doctor as oppos-



Beverly discusses a story with news director, Ned Warwick.



ed to John Q. Public calling to speak to that person.

"Now, I may not always be able to speak with that person, but I have a little more leverage and that affords me, (which I have great respect for) an opportunity to speak with somebody who actually knows what they're talking about... someone who has credibility because they are the experienced."

She holds that reverent and doesn't care what it is they do. "I don't care if I'm speaking to a convict; if I'm speaking to a professor at North Carolina Central; if I'm speaking to a student; an unwed mother, a cop; the governor that person's experience is unique. And I think there's no better credibility than that... and that makes me feel a little more educated about the world."

Her education and work are very important to her, but when she finds time, Beverly also enjoys relaxing with her privacy.

Having varied interests including spectator sports, dancing, and entertaining with good friends, she also works on her own car, enjoys traveling, and painting (having also taken several art courses at NCCU).

One of her great developing loves is horseback riding. "I really felt one with the horse," she says of one of her first outings. "I stayed the whole day and ended up riding three different horses... I think I rode out three different horses. But I've gone back several times." Beverly enjoys the serenity of being out in the woods and says that part of the enjoyment comes from being able to relate "to something else that's alive that's not a person."

When asked how she perceived her effect on the community, Miss Burke said she sensed that people were proud to see a black person on the air who lends a positive image. She remembered "as a small child, if you saw a black person on



One of the things Miss Burke enjoys when at home is listening to albums she has collected over the years while enjoying the warmth of her fireplace.



Part of Beverly's responsibilities include doing "Newbreaks" of what will be covered later in the evening.

television, you ran and told somebody 'Somebody black is on television!' you'd get everybody from upstairs; you'd go outside and tell everybody to come in... if there was a neighbor sitting on the porch talking with my mother, they'd come in to see who was black and on TV."

Pointing to the need for many more positive images of everyday life, Miss Burke also pointed out that she needs the community very much. "I alone cannot be all good things for that image... and I should not be. That's why there are Shauna Singletarys, Deborah Longs, Ervin Hesters, Kathy Thompsons, Stan Saunders... I share with them the images of black professionalism that the community can relate to."

"You have to perform 200% to be seen as equal to the others," she says.

"More adults understand that than do the young, but the young are learning quickly."

Having begun her broadcasting career with a radio station in New York, Beverly notes that "WTVD has afforded me great opportunities to expand horizons. The station is a very necessary part of the community; the people's voice and would like people to perceive it as such. TV is their voice when they are ready to speak and they should let us hear it."

Her attitude is one of life and hope for the community, of giving, of caring, and of sharing. That makes her life (and ours) very special. So when she says, "For Stan, Skip, Steve and the entire Eyewitness Newsteam, this is Beverly Burke..." we'll know that she and her colleagues are doing the kind of job our communities need.

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While S. Carter edits footage for a story, Beverly follows along with script to make sure she has covered her needs.



As the deadline approaches, Miss Burke diligently wraps up a story as does co-anchor, Steve Laelou in background.