

KeyOpinion

Looking Back; Projecting Forward

Longboat Key News Editor Rebecca Blue recently accepted a reporting position at The Bradenton Herald. This is her last issue with Longboat Key News.

I still remember my first day at Longboat Key News. I spent part of my day wondering what I had gotten myself into and the rest of the day telling my boyfriend I just wanted to go home. I'm not sure if it was the first sign I encountered, but it didn't help that access to my work computer's hard drive was called "slave driver." How fitting! Boy, was I in for it. I was fresh out of college, had worked at a television station in Jacksonville and recently returned to my hometown — Bradenton.

I was overwhelmed, anxious, scared - you name it. In short, I was downright emotional.

Somewhere between then and a month or two into the job, something happened. Without even noticing, I had become comfortable and was carrying a very heavy workload. I'm talking writing seven to 10 stories a week, capturing those award-winning photos, taking classified ad orders, sending out subscriptions, maintaining a community calendar and anything else I wouldn't have ever expected to be doing as a staff writer. I had become capable of doing my job and then some.

Now, as I attempt to predict my future, I find myself in the same place I was just over a year ago.

For those of you who haven't already heard through the grapevine, I've accepted a Community Reporter position at The Bradenton Herald, my hometown newspaper. I grew up reading this newspaper and actually wrote a series of stories for its teen section, "Our Ink," when I was a senior in high school. Fulfilling this childhood dream is just the first of many exciting possibilities. A part of me couldn't be more excited to have the chance to enter more than 60,000 homes a day, while another part of me is wondering if I can really pull this off. But I know I can

By Rebecca Blue
News Editor



do it. It's just going to take some time. In a few months, it will be like clockwork, and I'll once again look back and realize I did it.

There are plenty of people who have assisted in my suc-

cess at Longboat Key News. My boss, Longboat Key News Editor and Publisher Steve Reid has helped me evolve from someone who had a million questions to someone who doesn't need any direction - well, a small amount is still welcome. He's taught me to ask questions until I get the answer I'm looking for, push the envelope further than I ever would have attempted to on my own, and that in the end, I will finish every story I've been assigned, come hell or high water. Thank you, Steve. Without your guidance, I might not have had the chance to even score an interview at The Herald.

To my hardworking, relentless, optimistic, comedic, and sometimes-overstressed co-workers: I will miss all three of you. And to the columnists, the interns and the contributing writers: thank you. You've dealt with my persistent prodding - acquired from Steve of course - for more than a year.

Pretty much anyone I've encountered on Longboat Key has furthered my knowledge. Who would have ever known how important it is to do background checks on so-called contractors? I've learned that if I write an incriminating story, I must contact the defendant and get his or her side, and hold the mug shot - it's just not worth it. I've learned that just about everybody has a story idea to pitch. I've learned that the best time of year to attend a Commission meeting is during football season - you're almost guaranteed to walk out of the Town Hall Commission Chambers by 9 p.m.

And lastly, I have learned that the residents of this Key are some of the brightest people I probably will ever come in contact with. Thank all of you for letting me into your homes, for all of your trust, your compliments, your complaints, your story ideas, your persistence... everything. You are what a community newspaper is all about, and I thoroughly enjoyed your company and getting to know you.

LongboatLetters

Longboat Key News encourages Letters to the Editor. Please mail, e-mail or fax to one of the following: 5370 Gulf of Mexico Drive, Ste. 210, Longboat Key, FL 34228; e-mail: sreid@lbknews.com; fax: 941-387-8288. We also print letters sent to Town Hall that address Key issues.

Jet Ski Noise and Safety Complaint

Dear Councilwoman Webster:

As president of the Westchester Condominium Association I am writing on behalf of the Board of

Directors and owners of our condominium.

We protest the incessant, unnerving annoyance of the water Ski Doo crafts that are plaguing our shores in Longboat Key. These craft are not only noisy, but a potential safety hazard. They appear to be in violation of marine law. We hope that some action is taken by the council to stop this terrible nuisance. Although my wife and I are in Ohio, we have had calls from people who are in residence at the Westchester. They have asked me to help solve this unnecessary problem. Thank you for your help in this matter.

Richard P. Baribault

President of Westchester Board of Directors

Boats are the Real Danger - Not Jet Skis

Dear Editor:

My family and I recently visited Longboat Key for a week and thoroughly enjoyed it. What caught my attention were the derogatory articles about jet skis. My wife and I (45 and 38 years old, respectively), along with our seven- and eight-year-old children used them everyday, except one. We saw no one on jet skis making a nuisance of themselves. I wish I could say the same for boaters. We (my seven-year-old girl and I) were in a zone where the boats and myself should have been traveling around 7 to 10 miles per hour maximum. We had not one, but three boats come toward us at a minimum of 30 miles per hour. It terrified my seven-year-old. Where was the water patrol? This isn't about jet ski versus boats. This is about responsible behavior no matter what watercraft you're in. You cannot legislate decency! By the way, here at home we also own and operate a boat virtually every weekend.

Stephen Allen

Clarksville, Tennessee

Correction

An article in the July 8 edition of Longboat Key News incorrectly stated that Mounir Consul owned a home located at 3318 Bayou Road. The correct address is 3318 Bayou Sound.

Well Done, Rebecca Blue

The old adage "Newspapers should not make the news" is a smart adage, but in rare instances rules are meant to be broken. Sending Rebecca Blue off to her long-time dream of writing for her hometown paper is a perfect excuse.

First, let me tell you why I hired Rebecca.

She was irresistible. Anyone who meets her is taken with her charm, her sense of humor, confidence and ability to win over even the most cynical curmudgeon. She had little experience other than journalism school, yet a willingness and fortitude to go anywhere and tackle anything. I immediately tossed her into the battles at Town Hall: ferocious budget sessions, hurricane coverage and the bru-ha-has with Bob Dawson. And that was just in her first month.

By the end of a year, Rebecca had grown as fluent about writing of Town Hall as she was in adding finesse to a fluffy feature. But what is best about Rebecca is her "bring-it-on" attitude. Longboat Key News had just opened doors when she arrived, and she did whatever needed to be done - all with a smiling, smart-alecky attitude. She answered phones and sold classifieds as needed; she took in subscriptions; she helped with the layout, and most of all she wrote an abundance of news. Oh yeah, there is one thing she also did. She put up with my high-energy, workaholic lunacy - and that made her priceless.

It was fun watching all the male senior citizens recapture a moment of their youth and flirt with Rebecca - it happened daily. It was fun watching her grow articulate as I sought to diminish years of country music expressions from her everyday talk. So as she "heads out and is fixin' to leave" after an intense year, she has fine-tuned her chops and is ready to take on the growth and development and crime issues facing East Manatee County with the Bradenton Herald. Good luck Rebecca - job well done!

Stephen Reid, editor and publisher

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