

**The Scholar and The Feminist XIX  
Women as Change Makers:  
Building and Using Political Power  
Saturday, April 24, 1993**

**Afternoon Panel:**

**15. The Power of Women in the Media**

**Prof. Marcia Rock, NYU Graduate School of Journalism:** I'm Marcia Rock. I'm a professor of Journalism at New York University. I am also an independent producer and, if I can promote my own product, I have three documentaries on WNYC this Wednesday evening. ~~And~~ <sup>From</sup> 9:00 to 10:00 is a documentary I produced on Northern Ireland, called "Sons of Dairy," and there are only two women in that program. I sort of laugh at that, being a feminist, but sometimes that's the way stories work out. I am also the co-author of a book called Waiting for Primetime: The Women of Television News that I co-authored with Marlene Sanders, who was a correspondent for CBS and ABC for many years. I'm now fortunate enough to team teach with her down at NYU.

~~And~~ <sup>It</sup> was interesting for me to prepare a few notes as introduction to this topic because having done all that research in 1988 I'm sort of curious as to where things stand today and that's how I would like to begin.

Today's panel is titled, "The Power of Women in the Media." Before I introduce our other two panelists from CBS and *Newsweek* I would like to give you some background and pose some questions that might help focus today's discussion. For me there are three main questions about this topic. First, have we reached the critical mass where women in the newsroom affect the coverage of the news? Second, does it make a difference whether a woman or a man covers a story? And third, are the major road blocks to women having power in the media still the glass ceiling rising to management positions and the whole issue of child care and family?

The Women, Men, and Media Project has been analyzing the coverage of women and women covering the news over a one-month period for each of the past 5 years. In its 1993 report it found that women are still significantly under-represented in newspapers around the country and on network nightly news. In print member solicited for comment 85 percent of the time and men wrote 66 percent of the front page stories. Women appeared on the front page mainly in negative stories such as the Zoe Baird saga. Television was no better. Men reported 86 percent of the stories and 75 percent of the people interviewed were men. And that represents progress. The number of

women interviewed by network news programs has doubled since 1985. The percentage of women correspondents on the air though has dropped.

The small to middle sized papers had more female by-lines than the big papers, with 40 to 50 percent of the front and local pages, which I think is actually rather impressive. On television though only 14 percent of the stories were reported by women. NBC had the highest percentage with 20 percent, followed by CBS with 14 percent, and ABC had the worst record with only 9 percent of the stories covered by women.

Of course, television has its news stars. We all know Barbara Walters and Diane Sawyer and Connie Chung, but what about the other women correspondents in network news? Susan Zirinsky's organization, CBS, has the best record. In a 1990 study of network correspondent visibility done by Vanderbilt University, Rita Braver, Susan Spencer, and Leslie Stahl were in the top 20. Except for Andrea Mitchell at NBC no other women placed in the top 50.

In my research for today I found one item about local news that I would like to share with you. The Christine Crapps case brought to light the problems of sexism and sex discrimination in local television. That was 1981. Although it took 5 years to reverse the jury decision that was in favor of Crapps, we had hoped she had provided a consciousness raising for the industry. Apparently that is not the case. Last June Diane Allen, a 44-year-old anchor in Philadelphia, was demoted and her salary cut because she had to make room for a 31-year-old woman who would make her 49-year-old co-anchor look better. The president of the radio and Television News Directors Association, which is an association of news directors across the country, a very large organization, responded to this and said, "It would be the same as saying it was discriminatory if the Washington Redskins cut an older lineman because a new younger guy is coming up. That physical criteria are the true test of a local anchor."

Now my colleague, Marlene Sanders, has always said that local news wants the woman anchor to look like the male anchor's second wife. And when Kaity Tong was let go from WABC it was supposedly because they couldn't sustain her large salary and she was over 40. An insider from the station said, though, "It was a change in philosophy. It was a return to the 'Father Knows Best' model of one dominant male with a lot of lower paid satellites rotating in his orbit."

Of course, the story is not only for the women on the air and we all know that television is a producer's medium and Susan will tell us how it looks from behind the front line. If we turn to print we see an interesting phenomenon: The revival of the special women's section. The question is, is this a sign of the future or a return of the past? *The Chicago Tribune* and a handful of other papers are reviving this special



section in order to attract female readers. Female readership of daily papers has declined over the past 20 years by 18 percent. The papers are anxious to get the women and the advertisers back. So about 60 papers have signed up for a syndicated Woman News, which offers articles on issues that were identified by a focus group. I love focus groups. The focus groups that women wanted: Health and fitness, child-rearing, putting themselves together -- I'm not quite sure what that means -- entrepreneurship, and the balance of career and family. Woman News expanded this list to include sexual harassment, women's rights, health, pornography, and women's depiction in the popular media. Women have most of the by-lines in this section, but 80 percent of those women are free-lance. The question remains, is this a special opportunity or a dumping ground? Susan Chrieton of *Newsweek* will address the issues concerning women in print.

I would like to address women in the content of the news a moment before I hand the panel over. In the January 1993 [findings] by Women, Men, and Media there were quite a few prominent women in the news, especially Hillary Clinton and Zoe Baird. It also had issues such as lifting the gay ban in the military and abortion. News organizations also had more women to turn to for quotes than ever before: Four new senators, including Barbara Boxer and Diane Feinstein from California, Carrie Mosley-Braun from Illinois, and Patty Murray from Washington. We also had a senior member of the House Armed Forces and Judiciary Committee, Pat Schroeder, and an influential member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Nancy Kassenbaum. Hillary Rodham Clinton moved from the back to the front pages when she was given an office in the West Wing, but an Op-Ed piece in *The Chicago Tribune* by Eugene Kennedy -- I just can't resist reading it to you -- stated that, "Besides making Chelsea into a latch-key child, this unprecedented move dilutes, disperses, and weakens the authority, political and moral, of the elected Chief Executive. This has every promise of being Samson and Delilah and may bring down the temple."

In terms of seeking comment on the other news items, the Baird, the abortion, the gay ban, very few women were sought out. Schroeder's name rarely appears. Of 768 stories reported on the evening news in January, Kassenbaum and Feinstein were each interviewed once about the Baird story, and Mosley-Braun was interviewed about the story criticizing her handling of a sexual harassment claim against one of her staff. In all, interviews of 88 senators and representatives during that month, 82 were men and 6 were women.

I will conclude where I began: Have we reached a critical mass in the news room? Do women reporting the news make a difference in the way a story is covered or who is interviewed? And is there still a glass ceiling? Three last statistics: Only 10 percent of the members of the American Society of Newspaper Editors are women; 34 percent of journalists are women, which is unchanged from a decade ago; and 80 percent of graduate journalism students at New York University are women. Are they a sign of

change or a set up for frustration?

So to answer some of these questions I am very honored to first introduce you to Susan Zirinsky, who has probably done more to bring women into broadcast journalism than any other person I know because she was Holly Hunter's role model for *Broadcast News*. She has covered every kind of story and was instrumental to organizing the coverage of the liberation of Kuwait. Many men sought help from her, including my friend Neil Hickey from *TV Guide*. He needed to get out of Kuwait and she had the only functioning car because she had the petrol. Of course, Neil had to drive the car when they crossed into Saudi Arabia.

**Zirinsky:** It's the only reason why we let him come along.

**Rock:** She's currently senior producer of the news magazine show *Eye to Eye with Connie Chung*, which debuts in June and she was the director of political coverage for CBS last year for the elections. Susan?

**Susan Zirinsky, Producer, CBS:** Thank you, Marcia.

I really, I say this from the bottom of my heart, not wanting to belittle the importance of this get together, but I hope that we can stop having these conferences pretty soon and that some day that it won't be news that there are 6 women elected to the U.S. Senate and 47 to the House of Representatives. And it won't look like we won the Kentucky Derby when they announce that a woman has been named to the Attorney General's post and that two other women occupy Cabinet level positions. I also have a secret fantasy that at some point the expression "first woman to hold this job" will be blocked from all of our respective computers. But that's then and this is now.

And I would like to tell you something: If there's any doubt that there is resentment out there from our fellow males about women in power, just close your eyes a little bit and think about the last 5 Hillary Clinton jokes you've heard, think about Zoe Baird and Kimba Wood and if they had been men would the issue of who's taking care of the kids ever been raised at confirmation hearings? I don't think so.

Today's women's leaders come in many shapes and sizes, from CEOs to single-parent mothers, and while I spoke of resentment about 15 seconds ago, I do think the media -- and I speak here for CBS since I've worked there most of my adult life -- is on the right track or at least at the starting gate. But it took time. What kind of power do we really talk about women exercising in the media? I think women at CBS, at least, exercise a fair amount of power and I use myself as an example.

Before I get into some hardcore specifics I want to give you a sort of short story about the illusion of power. In 1987 CBS did a documentary called *Seven Days in May* about the Soviet Union and the changing face of Communism and a major element in this interview was going to be an interview with Boris Yeltsin. He was then the Moscow City Party chief, a very important guy, a guy who was really yelling about change way before anybody else. So I was the producer and I was sent in to negotiate this interview and I thought, "It's finally arrived. CBS really takes me seriously, they think I have power. I may be 5'1" or so on a good day if I've slept," but, you know. I had a reputation of feisty, kind of taking no prisoners, and so I'm sent in.

But before I left New York they gave me an envelope that sort of looked like this and it said, "This is your last resort if you get into trouble." So I had no idea what it was. I thought maybe it's a bribe. I didn't even think about it, I dumped it in my bag, and I went off on my merry way. And I had this certain meeting with Yeltsin and several translators and it was in this huge hall sort of right next to the Kremlin and I'm in there for about two and a half hours and if you think I'm short now, man, you should have seen me at this meeting. I'm sweating and I'm not getting anywhere. And I'm using my charm, my power, my journalistic skills of why he should do CBS, being the first western interview that he's ever done, and I'm about to give up. And I know this whole documentary is centered on this as the key element and I'd never really failed before at CBS. And I remembered, "Aha, the secret weapon!" So I go in my bag and I say, "Excuse me a second," and I turn around and pull it out of my backpack -- very professional of me --and pull out this brown envelope, and I open it up, and I look, and I sort of laugh to myself, and I pulled out this 8" by 10" glossy of Diane Sawyer because that's who the correspondent I was working with was. And I said to Mr. Yeltsin in my best Russian, "This is who you'll be doing the interview with." And suddenly this big enormous guy, who I had really met now two or three times in this negotiating series, looks at this picture, and his jaw slack, and he says in his best English, "Da, I think we can arrange it." And I say to myself, "Hm, okay. Powerful? Maybe not."

Let me be serious for a second. CBS really does have a great reputation. A person sitting in this audience who was an intern of mine over the summer and I had lunch, and I said, "You know, I really think that part of the reason I am where I am is because starting as a woman in the early '70s CBS was so anxious to promote women that I got promoted way faster than I might have ordinarily." I spent a lot of time throwing up in back hallways because I thought, "Oh my God, I'm not ready for this," but I couldn't disappoint everybody and myself so I kept going forward. But at CBS News at this time the Washington bureau chief is a woman. The senior producer for the morning news in Washington is a woman, the senior producer for the magazine show that I'm working on, most of them are women. The executive producer of all the weekend programs, the Saturday shows, the Sunday shows, *Sunday Morning*, is a woman. We have women at every level. The national editor is a woman. On Mahogany Row,



that's formerly the male power structure, there is now a woman. There was one before who had left of her own free will.

But I believe at CBS women are in positions of power. The kind of power they wield always depends on the kind of person they are themselves, but I use this expression and I hope you're not offended, but I believe the CBS women at the present time are mostly ball-busters. And I use that in a very kind, fond way. I don't use it in a negative way. My husband when he read my speech this morning, he said, "You can't use the expression `ball-busters,'" and I said, "You bet I can."

I've had advantage at CBS, some might think I was given the shaft, but I prefer to think otherwise. I was the first woman White House producer for CBS and I did that job for about close to 10 years. I've been sent to every troubled spot for CBS to run the operation. Those of you who are younger in this audience may go, "What war?" The Falkland War, the War of the Malvinas. It was a small war. The U.S. invasion in Panama. I went to set up the coverage for Gorbachev's visit to China, which we intended to take and look at the country because we hadn't been there in so many years, which turned into Tieneman Square and a massacre and a movement unlike anything I'd ever seen in my life. And then most recently the war against Iraq. Spending time in the Middle East was quite another experience. There running the CBS operation is tough in it's own sense, but we're talking about a country that thinks exposing your arm is a crime.

I am speaking for myself and I've worked at CBS my entire adult life, which [means] since I'm 19 years old and I turned 41 in March. I have worked as a researcher on the assignment desk, a producer for the morning news, evening news, I've been a senior producer for both evening news in Washington and New York, and last year -- as Marcia said -- I was the director of political coverage. I even had a stint for CBS Sports where I was on loan in a position at the Winter Olympics. And if you don't think being a woman in that boy's club, man, I'll tell you it was easier than being in Iraq, or Iraq rather was easier.

I have been able to exercise what I consider ultimate power in deciding what we cover, who covered it, how it came together, decisions that were editorial, logistical, and in many cases dealt with matters of life and death. In China and Kuwait I was making decisions, not just on what pieces we would do and pitch to each broadcast within CBS, but how should we push into Kuwait? Who should go? How many people? Are these vehicles that we're building safe? I'm going outside the pentagon, am I going to get somebody killed? CBS, at the time I was in there, already had Bob Simon and a crew missing, we didn't even know where they were, and the man that I went in to replace at CBS felt very responsible and felt virtually paralyzed. So they said, "Well, will send Zirinsky in. She'll beat everybody up."

New York, of course, can overrule you. I'm not under the...but it doesn't matter if New York is a man or a woman and you understand this, it's New York. The people in New York have the ultimate power to overrule you, but I must tell you that I made most of those decisions and nobody ever came back and questioned me. You know, if they thought I had too much sand between my years, I think they would have told me.

You know, the experiences that you have as a woman really depend on how forceful you are. I think in general, you know, we've seen the glass ceiling in industry, but in the media especially in television, there are more women in positions of authority, there are more women out there in the field. I'll tell you a short story which Marcia made me laugh [about] and I remember that even Kuwait, when we went in there we were running out of fuel. I liked to say that the national pastime seem to be burning it instead of using it as petrol and I had a great idea. I called our office in Daron on our satellite phone and I said, "You know, Aramco's based there. Can't you call there and see if we can rent one of those giant fuel truck?" And the guy said, "What do you mean, like the trucks you see on the highway that go fill up the local gas station?" I said, "Yes, yes, it's Aramco. We're based in the center where they're pulling the stuff out of the ground." And he said, "Okay, call back in a half hour." So I called back in a half hour and he said, "Yes, we can get one, but it's \$32,000." This was over a weekend. He said, "We can't do this without New York approval." And I had words that I won't repeat here, and I said, "Here's my Amex card number, give them my Amex card, I'm authorizing it, we need the petrol, send it in." So about 20 hours later my field truck comes, drives up and it was like the Pied Piper; there were thousands of people following this truck. I had no idea how long they had followed this truck, but they were screaming because, you know, you're in a city that every two hours this thing comes over, you can't breath, it's like day to night because all these fires are burning, but nobody had any gas. And we had these little jerry cans that would last our generators about 20 minutes. So the truck comes up, pulls up, thousands of people whooping and screaming, you would think it was the Americans who had come to liberate them, and I had a British reporter friend of mine that works for ITN and I'd been at war with him in almost every disgusting hole in the world, and he's sitting on the corner watching this scene unfold and he's laughing. And in his best English accent says, "Only a woman would have done this," and he said, "And by the way, dear, could I borrow some petrol?" And I said, "Yes, yes."

I don't want to give you an illusion that it was always like this at CBS. You know, CBS went through its growing pains as well as everybody else. I guess the best example where women really sort of took it in the rear was during Watergate. And my friend and close colleague, Leslie Sathl, was a very aggressive reporter during Watergate. She was really out there, but it was really a boys' club. Every night CBS would have these specials and it was Dan Shore, Roger Mudd, Marvin Kalb, sometimes George Herman, Bob Sheefer, and Leslie. And for maybe two weeks running, Leslie never said a word. They had panel discussions, you know, she just

never got in there. So finally one night she decided, "No matter what, I'm going to participate in this discussion, come Hell or high water." So at some point the discussion turns to gossip and Dan Shore, as God be my judge, "Well, if it's gossip you want... Leslie?" Leslie stood there -- I'd say, there's nothing...if any of you have done on-air on work, the expression "dead air" gets its expression because it's dead. So it seemed like an hour. I think it was only like 30 or 40 seconds, she didn't say anything. And she said, "Well," finally she said and she talked and it was awful. It was awful. She didn't know anything about that gossip, it was embarrassing, it was hideous.

So I'm in the control room and I'm sitting there looking like the Edward Monk painting, before *Home Alone*, and she comes out and says, "How bad was it?" Of course, you know, you don't want to say, "That was the worst thing you have ever done in your professional career." I said, "Oh, it wasn't so bad." So she of course goes to call her parents who'll give the truth. So I go up in the news room and I'm sort of standing by her, seeing if she's going to implode. And she calls her father and she's obviously on the phone with her father and I only hear Leslie's end of the conversation and she said, "I was terrible. I ruined women in journalism. I have done everything to kill what progress people have made." And obviously he's saying to her, "Oh, it wasn't so bad," and she's saying, "Really? Really?" I'm hearing her, right? And she finally says, "Well, let me talk to mother. She'll be honest with me." And Leslie tells me later that her father said, "I'm sorry she can't come to the phone right now. She's too upset." So Leslie hangs up and so...

It took a long time to get there, but today women really are making decisions at every level. Even the chief engineer at CBS in our building is a woman, which I consider a great feat because I look at her drawings and I don't know what she's doing. There was an attitude on the part of CBS's president, Harry Stringer, even to Larry Tisch and the president of the CBS news division, but they don't make decisions on the basis of sex.

I must tell you though you do have to be prepared as a woman to face different things. Can you stand one more story? I'll try not to take too long. We all think we're powerful and, you know, you work as a journalist and you travel kind of like a cone, [in] some kind of bubble that protects you. In Japan I remember that most of the women I met were serving tea, in the Mid-East nobody wanted to touch me, but I think one of the strangest experiences happened once when I was on a Secretary of State Shultz trip. And it was one of these thousand city trips and we didn't really send producers for the most part on this, but I got to go. And we were in Saudi Arabia and we're going to the palace and I was told by the embassy that I would not be allowed in the palace. And I said, "Excuse me? You're telling me that I've been on this trip for 17 cities and I'm going to have to wait in the bus outside the gate?" They said, "No, we thought we would take you to the embassy." And I said, "I don't think so. I'm



going in. We could create a scene or you're going to let me in."

So we go in there and it's mostly reporters like Don Oberdorfer from *The Washington Post* and Shieler then of *The New York Times* and it was the boys, Jack McCluky from ABC. And we're standing there, and I'm first on line to go through a security check, and there are the Saudi guards in their beautifully sewn robes that are quite elegant looking and they, you could tell, that they are a.) horrified that I'm a woman and I'm standing in what is sacred ground and b.) that they don't quite know what to do for the security check. So I step up to the mat as it were and I assume they'll do a sort of gentle side feel. This guy gives me a full frontal feel. I mean, full. And I think, you know, "I'm a woman journalist. You know, it's in the 1980s. How is this possible?" And of course my gentleman colleagues are hysterical behind me.

And Shultz coming back on the plane to the next stop was very embarrassed and he came back and he was fumbling and he couldn't look at me and he said, "I understand...uh...you were...um..." And I said, "Felt up?" He said, "Well, yeah. I'm really sorry," and he said, "And the government has apologized." And I said, "Look, I don't mind giving a sexual favor, but I want to get into the event." It's true, this is life outside this country.

In this country at this point I do think women and the numbers of women have had an effect on the nature of the coverage and particularly the coverage of women. *USA Today* had a piece, it was their lead item a couple of days ago, and it said more than a third of Americans have seen a man hit his wife or his girlfriend according to the latest survey on domestic violence. And I was at an awards ceremony the other day. It was called the Matrix Awards and Donna Shallel who was the keynote said an amazing statistic that I had never heard before; she said 10 women die every day at the hands of domestic violence. Now I really believe that women have brought these stories to the front pages of the paper, to the evening news shows, and to the primetime arena. I'm not saying it wouldn't have appeared; I don't believe that. But I think the proliferation of women in high editorial positions has made their prominence dramatically different. I think that our level of awareness has been raised on family issues, on health issues. I think it's our interest. Chances are the men would have come around to do it at some point because of the famous focus groups and that's what people would have told them, but I think it's important that women are on senior editorial positions.

There are still places where power is lacking. There are holes in the universe where they're struggling to climb and hang on. I'm lucky; it's not at CBS, it's in other industries. Stahl once told me that she had two reasons why there were still these black holes of power. She said -- on one trip one night on some charter -- she said, "I have this theory, there are two reasons why women are still scraping." I said, "What?" She said, "Well, first of all women are better than men and men know it and they're afraid.

And two," which was really kind of interesting when I thought about it, she said, "Men always set goals for themselves. You know? They say, 'At this point in my life I want to be here and at this point I'm going to be there.' They have certain expectations." And I think for the most part -- I mean, I'm 41 and in my era and many of you are my peers here, thankfully -- I really believe that we didn't set these sort of ultimate goals. I mean, quite frankly, I'm amazed to be where I am right now. I mean, I sort of turn around and I'm afraid somebody'll figure out I'm not as smart as they think I am. That's why I get up at 5 in the morning everyday; so I can out-smart them.

I really believe that women don't have the same expectations or set the same goals. I hope my friend Sarah Newman sitting in this audience who I've known since she was 11 years old and a first-year student at Barnard, has those goals. I hope she sets those goals and I believe our daughters will be different.

What do you do to expand the power? I'm not quite sure. I used to love the Jessie Jackson expression, "Keep our eyes on the prize," and "Grab the bag, the power bag," but I think we've got to keep pushing. We've got to try to convince the world that we're really no different intellectually. We're different physically, we're different emotionally, but quite frankly I think that's a good thing. There will be a natural expansion of the power base, I believe that. But let me tell you something, in my career when I've been offered a management job and I have been offered several, I've turned it down. And even for the greater good of a woman in a management position, I'm somebody who always prefers to have a hands on. I like to be producing a show, I like to be producing pieces, I like to be in the field. So I guess what I'm saying to you guys is that it's up to you. I'm looking at you people to take the management positions, to be women in powerful places, so that I can be producing programs. Thank you.

**Rock:** Are there any questions specifically for Susan that you'd like to ask and then we'll move on to Sarah?

**Q:** I was interested in your comment that you've been working for CBS since 19 and because I write about careers and planning careers for both young men and young women. You, I'm sure, know that journalism, communications, and broadcasting is a really trendy thing to the point that our colleges have so-called Communications majors. How do you see young women especially getting the kinds of jobs to begin a career? I do think that they are going \*\*\* in their 20s now in the ways that we weren't 20 years ago. But, you know, they know about the internships and so forth, but did you start at 19 part-time, you mean, or did you...?

**Zirinsky:** I started in my second year in college and I was working up on Capitol Hill and I got a part-time job at CBS and I was a Political Science major. And I happened to like film and I actually thought I was going to be a film editor. I was shooting and editing films and small documentaries on the side. And I got to CBS and I was spoiled to a certain extent because it was a network, it was a local...you know, I wasn't covering school board issues, or fires, or murders. I was watching people I had watched as a child. This was the intelligentsia within the broadcast medium and it was an amazingly intoxicating, seductive thing to be around. And I remember calling my parents like the second weekend I had worked there, and I said, "Hey, good news. I figured out what I want to do. I want to work here. I'm going to be a producer." And so...

**Q:** Did you stay in Political Science or...

**Zirinsky:** Yeah.

**Q:** So you kept your discipline.

**Zirinsky:** Yes, to be honest, and I tell people this. To this day when people say, "Should I be a Communications major?" I always say, "Be a History major, be a Political Science major, take those as a minor." Because it's the basis that is invaluable.

**Rock:** Okay, let's take on more question here.

**Zirinsky:** You want to just do them afterwards, get them all?

**Rock:** Okay. I would like to introduce Sarah Chrieton who is the assistant managing editor of *Newsweek* responsible for *The Back of the Book*. Before joining *Newsweek* she was editor of *Seventeen Magazine* and before that wrote free-lance for such publications as *Esquire*, *Mademoiselle*, *Harper's*, *Ms.*, and *The Village Voice*.

**Sarah Chrieton, Assistant Managing Editor, Newsweek:** One thing I wanted to say is that in the early 1970s my mother became the first producer of CBS and it's because...

**Zirinsky:** June \*\*\*?



**Chrieton:** Yeah, and it's because, basically because at *Newsweek*, the women at *Newsweek*, have brought a class action suit against *Newsweek* which threw every media group, especially in New York, in a total panic because all the organizations have been so sexist in the past, they're about to get screwed.

So CBS went looking all through CBS to see if there was anybody there who had enough experience that they could promote her and they had never given any women the opportunities. So there wasn't anybody there. They looked all through NBC, there was nobody there. They looked at ABC, nobody there. And my mother was an independent producer who had started on game shows. I've got a *Secret* and *To tell the Truth* and she did great specials like *Johnny Carson Goes to Cypress Gardens*, but at least she knew how to work with both film and tape so she had the basic skills and there was nobody at CBS. So she got hired and they stuck her...they had a *60 Minutes*-like women's show in the daytime and they thought, "Okay, we've got a woman producer, we can stick her in here, she can do those nice women's issues."

And she kept doing the stories. The first story that she did wound up on the front page of The New York Times and the Washington Post and the second one that she did broke news and wound up on the front page. And they went, "God, this is great. We not only have a woman, but we have one we can put on on the night time." So she was the first one. She had a pretty miserable time, but she did great work.

But it was that law suit at *Newsweek*... *Newsweek* was the type of place where they turned down Francis Fitzgerald in the '60s just before she went off to Vietnam to do *Fire \*\*\** because *Newsweek* could not have women writers. Susan Brownmiller was a researcher, she couldn't get promoted. Nora Ephron was a researcher, she couldn't get promoted. The list of women who weren't good enough to become *Newsweek* writers is really a phenomenal group. So in 1970 it occurred to the -- there were 43 women there -- it occurred to them that they could bring a class action suit against *Newsweek* for job discrimination. And they hired Eleanor Holmes Norton, who was a young ACLU lawyer at the time, and it was obvious that they were going to win. So Osborne Elliot was then editor of *Newsweek* and he decided that he would negotiate and after 5 months of striking a negotiation, finally they cut this deal. He said that they would make women writers and that they would hire male researchers which they had never done in the past, only women were researchers and only men were writers. And that this would happen in the next couple of years, but that no women could be senior editors because the place was not ready for senior editors.

And after two years not a single woman had been promoted as a writer. They couldn't find any writers within *Newsweek* or outside *Newsweek*, they could not find a single woman writer to hire. So these women went back to the courts and *Newsweek* had to cave in again. And this time they said, "Okay, and we promise that by 1975 we'll

have a senior editor." They also started something that they then called the Famous Writers' School, which was probably preposterous. I wasn't around at the time, but they took the two top writers at *Newsweek* and they trained women 5 days a week, 8 hours a day, they sent them to school. And lo and behold after, you know, a 12-week course they had a whole bunch of writers they could produce. Of course, they had done the hard work.

So that was back in the mid-70s, that was only 15 or so years ago. Right now the place is completely changed. You have of the 5 top editors, there are two of us who are women, the chief of correspondence is a woman, the chief White House correspondent is a woman, the Moscow bureau chief is a woman, the deputy Moscow bureau chief is also a woman. They both have small children and they have a day care center in the bureau.

**Zirinsky:** I've seen it. It's great.

**Chretien:** Have you? It's great.

When Tieneman Square happened we had more women correspondents there than we had male correspondents. Our art director is a woman, our graphics director is a woman, of the senior editors who edit the various sections of the magazine more than half are women. And I meant to bring a magazine and to count outside before I got here to figure out what percentage of the writers are women, but there are a lot of them. I forgot to bring my sheet.

And the fact is the magazine is doing great. This last week we won the award, the Azme Award, which is sort of like the Oscars for magazines, for general excellence and we've been winning awards all over the place. The magazine is basically livelier and healthier and more creative and changing up like it's never done before. And also the atmosphere is hugely different and it's even different now than it was 5 years ago when I got to *Newsweek*. I mean, a number of these promotions have happened just in the last 5 years although it's been steadily increasing throughout the '80s. It's still increasing.

Part of it is because the old place -- and a lot of institutions and a lot of other magazines that I know that were like *Newsweek* back in the '70s and which remain like *Newsweek* -- are stuck to a very hierarchical model. They regard their management style in terms of the military, they use the military as a model. Bullies are rewarded, bull-shiters are rewarded, muscle flexers are rewarded. And when I got to *Newsweek* there were still a couple of these guys who had come up through that tradition and that system, but the fact is they're basically all gone. And one of the reasons they're all

gone is because once women started getting into the system because the hierarchical model has always rejected them, they rejected the hierarchical model. They were consensus builders rather than bullies. Because they had been treated with a lack of respect for so long, the last thing they were going to do was turn around and dump on the people underneath them. If you had been stuck as a researcher for years when you should have been promoted, when you finally were promoted, these women didn't turn around and start being disrespectful to the people below them.

And the truth was it was more effective. It was better management. Morale worked up better. The senior editors who actually treated their writers with respect and didn't bully them and were consensus builders, got better writing out of those writers. And they also basically saved money for the magazine because the magazine started to close better, and the reporting was better, and the whole atmosphere was better. So basically in terms of pure what is effective, what works, where do you save money, and everything else, and hardship, this new model was the one that suddenly became the preferred one. And it wasn't any great sort of major philosophical discussion that made it happen. It just was simply this infusion of people with different values and a different approach.

It also has made the magazine better because you have many different perspectives. And one of the things that you see with magazines or with news organizations that haven't changed in the last number of years, is they still have this very homogeneous approach. I mean, if you have a non-diversified group working with you, you're not going to get diversified perspectives, which means you're going to start failing to capture an audience. the reality that is in the magazine is not going to reflect anybody else's reality or else it's going to reflect a very small sub-sect.

One example which -- when you tape this where does this go?

**Rock:** I don't know. I always ask that question because you never know.

**Chrieton:** Well, let's put it this way. There's a magazine that's very like *Newsweek* and in fact often said in the same breath. This is a magazine that's been having...it's been having a hard time the last couple of years because it's been losing readers steadily. And it is not, as *Newsweek* has been becoming stronger, this magazine has been growing weaker. Readership is down, circulation is down. They're not winning the awards, we are. And there's a very basic reason for that. They have no women in top positions there. They have, well, few...

**Q:** \*\*\*



**Chrieton:** Yes, who else? How many?

**Q:** That's about it.

**Chrieton:** Yeah. The numbers of...there are far fewer writers. They have had in recent years some absolutely fabulous women writers there. There was a time when the national affairs department there boasted Maureen Dowd, Alice Saunders Stanley, a number of other terrific writers, but because the magazine was still operating on a very traditional trajectory, those women weren't allowed...their voices didn't emerge in the same way that...the magazine muted those voices and obscured those voices. Once both of those women went on to *The New York Times* where they were freed up to start using...taking a more creative approach to what they were doing, they both turned into stars. They're one of the reasons why we all pick up *The New York Times*.

That also is an effect that the organizations that have a lot of women are finding, which is that the old traditions don't mean anything to us because the old traditions didn't help us get to where we are so we don't feel any loyalty to them. And also we're where we are because of changes and so we wind up being proponents of change in organizations where the people who are loyal to the old traditions aren't interested in change. And the fact is if you don't change up a magazine or if you don't change up a news organization, if you don't look at the world in new ways, you're going to lose your audience. And basically, it's your audience that keeps you alive. It's a dialogue between you and your audience. Smart publishers realize it, dumb ones don't.

One of the reasons why at *Newsweek* the old boy network has died is not because there are so many women there, but it's basically because it can't stay alive with the old boys network working very solidly because you don't wind up with a diverse group of people working for you and various perspectives.

How does it affect our coverage? It affects your coverage in small ways, in small and not so obvious ways. One of my favorite pieces that the magazine ran in the last couple of weeks was a small story that's now beginning to get a lot of attention from local news stations and shows across the country. It was just a one-page story about girls' clothes, clothes for little girls, which really came out of the fact that I tried to buy my 3 year old daughter a bathing suit and was wandering past Bloomingdale's and went up there. And the only things they had were little hooker outfits. They made her look like either a dominatrix or a hooker. You can't believe what those things look like. They're all gold lame this year, it's thongs, it's...you know, it's just obscene. These black things with zippers all over and cut-outs and, you know, it was appalling. And then if you look through all the racks, it's all these crop tops and everything else. Well, I don't want a 3-year-old hooker in my house. So I got somebody to report on

it. You can't believe the clothes. The biggest problem that we had...one of the things that was sort of sad was we couldn't really show all the clothes because we dressed up all these little kids in these clothes and they were so obscene that like we weren't going to publish them. But that's one of those little stories that actually resonates in a quite large way because it's just one page and it's just a couple of pictures, but it really reflects what's going on out there and informs us, and allows us to have maybe some kind of impact, maybe just sort of raise a number of issues.

On a larger scale I think Susan's right that having all these women in the organization have brought a lot of family issues, women's issues, to the forefront and that we cover them, but in terms of what Marcia was talking about the fact is no matter how many women you have in these news organizations the roles of news organizations is not an advocacy role and shouldn't be expected to advocates in one way or another. We are there to chart and to follow shifts in society, not necessarily to initiate shifts in society, but what we are, what you can have with a lot of women in these organizations is these women are picking up on these changes. There are a lot of changes going on that all the male organizations weren't picking up on or they weren't reporting and they weren't recording. So there's a very valuable role that the women in these organizations play, but you have to put it in perspective.

How do you change organizations that have not promoted a lot of women? I think basically in some cases you just let them die because the ones that don't change and the ones that don't bring in women are first of all shutting off such a large and valuable talent pool that they're depriving themselves of just huge numbers. I mean, basically they're dealing with a limited pool. The ones that are open to women and minorities in a way that they haven't been in the past are going to lose out. And the organizations that don't take advantage of the people who come their way are going to be presenting a very narrow view point and have a very narrow perspective and they're going to fail to appeal to an increasingly fractured audience, I mean, an audience that is not a monolithic group.

And in terms of what we do -- the last question that Marcia wanted us to answer -- the one thing I think holding women back today is not sort of massive organizations, it still is lack of self-confidence. I think that women knock themselves much more than men do. I think that women when they open their mouths and say something stupid, as we all do sometimes, we tend to beat ourselves up in a way that our male colleagues don't. And quite frankly it's sort of a waste of time to beat up on yourself too much. I mean, it's never helped. You know, the fact that they didn't knock themselves has never held them back.

And lastly, there are more women. Basically, if you're in a position of hiring more women, good women, smart women, loud-mouthed women, it keeps the place more

lively, and it keeps it moving forward, and then you're going to beat your competitors and you're going to live happily ever after. That's it.

**Rock:** Thank you. And now we'll take questions. Yes?

**Q:** I want to say a couple things. First of all, I wondered what Kay Mills and Anne Robertson said about when the women's movement came. The fact that there were some key women at the time, even though they were under-paid and so on, they knew that it was a story that the male reporters didn't know. So that's, I think, it's the piece that needs to be told. And also when you say about, you know, "we're not advocacy" and you're just [there] to report the news, well it seems to me that \*\*\* documented through backlash that it was a male advocacy seen that was taking place. Whether the men were out there advocating anything, they were putting a spin on the story that was kind of cutting to the women's movement. And I don't know whether you call that male advocacy, but I think it certainly was not objective reporting.

**Zirinsky:** But I think that was the men reflecting the times in society as opposed to being advocates.

**Q:** I'm not sure. I would argue about that. And I also think that we've seen very recently the rape story. The *New York Magazine* did the thing about the Barnard Women's Center. That was a story that was a real distortion about what was going on and when you talk about domestic violence and how wonderful they're now reporting it, for years domestic violence was either ignored or -- and we just had the story about the Super Bowl and what happened with FAIR -- and you had them writing stories about the Super Bowl and domestic violence as if it was also women's fiction. So I'm just saying that there's \*\*\* needs to be done. I'm delighted the women are there, but I think we ought to be careful and just because we have women it doesn't mean they're going to do it right. To do it right they've got to be the right women.

**Zirinsky:** I have to say that I agree with Sarah that you really have to walk a very fine line and you're a journalist first. Your sex is irrelevant and I think that in any situation to go in as a woman first is going to hurt you in the long run. You're just not going to get the reporting done that you need to get done. I do think sensitivity has been raised, but I can't help but think asexual really as a reporter.

**Rock:** Yeah?

**Q:** I have a theory that \*\*\* my question to Susan Zirinsky. The question is really about the content of violence in broadcast \*\*\* on two issues. One is \*\*\* and this is not

just the news but across all programs. Violence as solutions to problems and violence as what constitutes news primarily. The other issue being a woman's physical appearance perpetuated as a very powerful and desirable attribute in our culture. Do you feel that the presence of women in the media, in powerful positions, is duly able to accrue both those situations?

And my theory to it: I think that women that I see older than myself are more like men in a lot of ways than I am. I see that I behave more like men in the workplace than the women that I hire who are 10 and 15 years younger than I am. Do you think that a.) are those things currently impacted by the presence of women in power, and b.) will it improve as young women who, you know, in numbers and in competence now changing the agenda if you will, do you think that will improve in 20 years?

**Zirinsky:** You've only given me about an hour's worth of things we can talk about.

I think that women in senior editorial positions are conscious, at least I am, of the increasing violence that we put on the air. Part of that is a sensationalism that it's almost hard to walk away from. Partially because things in the media like the Waco disaster are so technologically feasible that it's there in an instant and it's so seductive that you can't help but be drawn into it.

I don't think that as a woman that I'm going to say, "We're not going to do more violence or less violence." I think that you try to look for solution stories. There's a fairly big push within some of the programs and even the one that I'm currently working on to sort of say, "Are there solutions?" That if your story is a violent story there's got to be a second half to it.

There is an increasing amount of violence on television. I can't speak to the entertainment division's philosophy because I know that that has to do with what makes money. That's not what I'm about, that's not what journalism's about. You bet they're going to put on more violence because the numbers are there. If people were disgusted and didn't watch, those things wouldn't be on there. And that's in a funny way why we end up doing so many violent stories on the evening news and on these primetime shows, especially in these primetime shows. The human drama that we are recording ends up being so interesting to people, they're so drawn into, that it's a little sick, but it is that people are out there. And I would be lying to you if I didn't tell you that I looked at our story grid the other day and it scared me to death because at some point I said, "If the word rape, crime, abuse isn't in...if I can't find that in one of the slugs, I can't find a story." I'm not quite sure what to do about it. It's part of our society. We're chronicling the times. We don't invent them, we're watchers of it.

I'm sorry, your second of half of your...

**Q:** The other issue was the woman's physical appearance as being so powerful and desirable. And the Diane Sawyer story is very destructive...

**Zirinsky:** Do you not think that Diane is an incredibly feminine looking woman?

**Q:** I'm not talking about whether she's attractive or not. I'm talking about the emphasis on physical attraction as being such an important aspect of our society.

**Zirinsky:** In broadcast journalism that is a problem that will plague us until we die. If you -- and there's no way around it -- if you're an ugly person, whether you're a man or a woman, you're not going to be on the air. Chances are, if you look in the mirror, you're not going to apply to be a correspondent if you're not...

**Q:** \*\*\* I think that's changed already \*\*\*

**Zirinsky:** Well, let me look at Irving R. Levine. I look at...I saw him on the air the other night and we all looked up and we laughed and then we caught ourselves. I used to be proud of the fact that Dan Shore was on the air because Dan Shore is not the kind of guy that you get on a blind date and say, "Boy, am I lucky." But intellectually he's a fantastic guy. I think as much as I would like to say things are changing, I'm going to be honest. I'm going to tell you that when we look at audition tapes, if a person doesn't give a sort of -- I'm not saying they have to be gorgeous and seductive like Diane Sawyer, who I think is an amazingly attractive woman -- but they have to have a certain sense of appeal. I don't think, I'm going to be honest, I don't think we would hire somebody that's ugly. I don't think that CBS would hire Irving R. Levine.

**Q:** But he's boring.

**Zirinsky:** Well, yeah, that's not the issue.

**Rock:** In the red dress.

**Q:** I want to take off on a couple of things that each of you said. One of them is selling ourselves through our appearance. And I'm not using the term "selling" in a pejorative way. We do that each of us everyday in our contacts with other people. \*\*\* our use of certain words, certain vocabulary, which is particular importance for the



media whether visual or verbal and it was very gratifying to hear the word "just" used just once in all of those morning presentations. It ties in with putting ourselves together, how we sell ourselves, how we package ourselves, and that ties in for me with the whole issue of setting goals for ourselves, which you Susan say women don't do as much as men.

**Zirinsky:** Didn't. Didn't used to.

**Q:** Right, but that ties in with what I would call strategic career planning. And I keep coming back to what the media could do and what it ought to be doing in terms of selling something other than violence and whether that power... Couldn't we harness to somehow do something better and something for us?

**Zirinsky:** We're not selling something. We're chroniclers of our times. You know, you're observers of society. We take note of things we think are interesting. I read that story, as a matter of fact, in *Newsweek* and I thought, you know, maybe we'll do something when we go on the air about these kids, you know, who I call the "prostitots."

**Chrieton:** Oh, that's very good.

**Zirinsky:** You know, and I said, "What the hell is happening here?" It isn't our job to invent, it's our job to reflect and therefore let you as a people change. It's our job to point out something terrible or peculiar and then have you react rather than for us to invent a new form of behavior. I may not be hitting your point.

**Chrieton:** .No, absolutely.

**Q:** Why?

**Zirinsky:** Why? Because we're journalists. I mean, we're news, we're not, I'm not commentary. You know, if this was a documentary on PBS on sort of the future of women or to take something some place else that's fine. We're news. We are chroniclers of our time. You want to take a stab here?

**Chrieton:** You know, I'm totally with Susan on this. The thing is, but being chroniclers what you can do and what you have to do and if you're doing it well you do, is a lot of news organizations have not recognized the fact that the world has changed. So for instance the family norm that they will present, that they start with,

the basic role model, is still in many cases Ozzie and Harriet with two kids. So then every story that they report on families suddenly goes, "Oh my God! Look at this dysfunctional world." You know, this family here is dysfunctional, that person there is dysfunctional. You know, if you don't have this core nuclear family you are dysfunctional. Labeling the vast majority of people in this country as dysfunctional and the vast majority of women in this country as dysfunctional because they're working and they have children and they're leaving, God forbid, their kid with who know's who, there you are doing a tremendous disservice. What women like us can do is to say, "Wait a minute. You know, this has never been the norm. This is a fantasy model that you're basing all of your reporting on. Let's get a realistic model of what a family is. And then take it from there. Let's reinterpret all of the fictions and start with a kind of reality and then start analyzing our society." And that's a very subtle thing. You can't pick up a newspaper, or a magazine, or turn the news and go, "Ah ha, I see \*\*\*\*"

How we're going to cover abortion or the battle of abortion rights, no way.

**Zirinsky:** Can't. can't.

**Rock:** Yes, in the back.

**Q:** I just thought some of this though is a trifle ungentle. You say you're asexual and you refer to \*\*\* you're simply chronicling, but it depends on what focus you're using in terms of your chronicles and your asexuality. For example, it's an interesting story your being felt up from the front when you were going in to do your news story, but that wasn't reported.

**Zirinsky:** Well, because I don't think that's news. If I called my editors in New York...

**Q:** But that's what I mean. How do you frame what you think is news? I think many people might have thought that was news.

**Q:** We thought it was news.

**Zirinsky:** Well, it is news to this group of special interest, but it's not news in terms of the Mid-East peace talks that I am attending.

**Q:** Probably that attitude has affected Mid-East peace talks and is affecting the entire

Mid-East situation.

**Q:** Actually, it might have had it been publicized.

**Zirinsky:** An AP reporter wanted to do a story on it and I asked him not to for fear that I would never get to go on another Secretary Shultz \*\*\*.

But I still have to disagree with you. I don't think that's news. I think it's a moment in my own life and maybe it will affect something that I write at some point in some deep recess, but I wouldn't even report it to my editors in New York when I called in to tell them. I just say, "Great..."

**Q:** You think the "prosti-tots" is news, but that's not news?

**Chrieton:** Course it is.

**Zirinsky:** "Prosti-tots" was a look at something, a trend in society, it's a way we're treating, and if we want to understand a certain behavior you look at how children are being dressed and then you understand that maybe that's why children don't feel like children anymore and they're being forced into situations which lead to early sexuality. I mean, that's not news, that's a trend. But, you know, hard news or soft news, we can get into a discussion of what's news, but that's a trend. Is trend news? Yeah.

**Rock:** Can I ask a question? When the Zoe Baird saga was in the news, do you think certain decisions on coverage were different at *Newsweek* than at other magazines and can you talk about that?

**Chrieton:** Sure, one of the biggest stories that we did at the time was one of the writers on staff, a woman, decided that she wanted to go out and she didn't feel that the baby-sitter's view was being taken into account well enough. And so we ran a quite long story. She went out and interviewed and we had reporters across the country interview both illegal immigrants and, you know, women with citizenship papers but who were being treated badly or being treated well. So it was nanny-gate from the eyes of the nanny. But, I mean, that was a very interesting perspective and I think that's one that, you know, no man on my staff would have thought of. And those were voices that you wouldn't instantly think that you would be hearing.

**Zirinsky:** CBS also. Those are the days when a woman comes up or a woman producer and says, "What if we did this?" And you suddenly say, "That's a great

idea." No man would have thought of that. That's where it's an advantage, that's where it changes what the coverage is like. It's a sensitivity. But I still maintain that... On occasion what we've done at CBS to sort of sensitize people is that sometimes if a woman has a great idea and it's kind of a woman's take on something we have a male producer go out and do it. We sort of play with that a little bit. Sometimes it's for a couple of guys we think are assholes and we want to sort of open their minds. But it's a story they never would have thought of but we make them do it. And we hope they go at it asexually.

**Q:** What do you mean asexually? That's what's confusing everybody and also is it nonsexually...?

**Zirinsky:** Nonsexual as opposed to asexual, thank you.

**Q:** That sounds a lot better because as you have spoken to the group saying, "I think you should go in as reporter not from a sexual bias," is what you're saying to us, but we had that woman's experiences, it's not to do with do we have that bias or building up or advocates. That's why we want women in *Newsweek* and that's they see the story differently. Not that they go planning that, but that's their experience.

**Zirinsky:** \*\*\* That's true.

**Q:** That's why we want women in government and so forth, not because you're feminists necessarily, but because that's their experience.

**Zirinsky:** It's a different take.

**Rock:** I also think that in journalism you're fighting the example about, you know, is this a very special project or a dumping ground? You know, women always dealt with women's issues and were put on those stories, the "women's stories." So I think also you want to show that you can report anything, you bring a woman's sensitivity to it, but you're not to be locked into women's issues.

**Zirinsky:** I don't think anybody does what... I think everyone's very sensitive that a woman's story be assigned to a woman, or if it's a Black that you put a Black on it. I think there is sensitivity in the management of assigning stories that you don't do that. I know it is at CBS.

**Chrieton:** I wanted to address actually what you were saying before which are the

numbers that you gave which is something that we hadn't discussed. And I think one thing as we're talking...we're all, I'm 39, Susan is 41, the women who I work with who are both the writers and the editors and everything else, they're all...it takes time for these changes to happen. And, you know, we're all of a certain age group. And I think that those numbers that you're seeing don't generally reflect the changes that are already in process. I think that it's just a matter of time. I mean, if you realized that *Newsweek* and CBS and all these organizations were back in the dark ages just 15 years ago...

**Zirinsky:** I agree with you. You know, you can't walk through the newsroom... In a funny way when we were staffing this new Connie Chung show we had to go out of our way to look for some men. Almost everybody that applied that we thought was really good was a woman. And at one point the executive producer said to me, he said, "You know, you're going to get a funny reputation if everybody you hire is a woman." I mean, you know, we've gone the other way because the women have risen so fast and are so well thought of in this field and as producers, their auditions were better. Their tapes about pieces were better. Nine out of 10 women, I mean, our staff is predominantly women, not because I had that in my mind and I had to go out of my way to look for some decent men.

**Rock:** Let me just interpret the numbers. They were looking at correspondents. I mean, for by-lines they should include producers because as we know producers practically write the scripts for the correspondents. And I think that is in television where it is extremely fuzzy. They didn't do magazines, but they did find that in the small and medium sized papers, where there's probably more room for growth rather than in the major papers, women were writing 50 percent of the by-lines.

**Chrieton:** Right, and you give those women 10 years, I mean, that's the staging grounds for the major papers.

**Zirinsky:** Right, they'll be the editors.

**Q:** I just came to this conversation kind of late so I don't know what statistics you were quoting. However, recently I heard on NPR that within the newspaper industry women haven't risen above managing editor statistically for the past 20 years in any great numbers at all. And I'm of the mind [that] until we do get into positions like that stories aren't going to change, the direction of the newspapers aren't going to change...

**Zirinsky:** I disagree, though. I think that you write sense of -- and I can't talk to newspapers because I don't work for one -- but look at *The New York Times* and that male power structure is...it definitely seems impenetrable at the time, but they're



smart enough. Look at the women on the front page of *The New York Times*. Look at Maureen Dowd.

**Chrieton:** Jane Perlez.

**Zirinsky:** Jane Perlez. And there are people who have been in foreign countries who have been at war. Donatella Lorch, you know, I ran into her in Kuwait and she looked like she was 12. But you're right, The New York Times management racket's predominantly male, but at least they're starting to rise up on the reporter level.

**Chrieton:** You can't become a managing editor of a major newspaper before a certain age. They're not going to give it to a man at the age of 30, they're not going to give it to a woman at the age of 30.

**Zirinsky:** One should have a certain amount of road miles.

**Chrieton:** Yeah, and if you figure that we are all just heading into our 40s, you know, give us 10 years.

**Q:** But you're not 41 over there. It's the same exact \*\*\*

**Chrieton:** Oh no, it didn't start with us.

**Rock:** There was a big bulk in the '70s, there was a big bulk.

**Zirinsky:** But there were so few at that point. But if you look at a newsroom now...

**Chrieton:** It's a whole other ball game. And also it's not just that but there is, you know, before Anna Quindlen there was Flora Lewis. Flora Lewis wrote, I mean, she was so a part...there was no way for her to write in any way other than...I mean, it was indistinguishable from the other columns. For a woman to be writing on the Op-Ed page of *The Times* and be a columnist she had to conform to a certain tradition. Anna Quindlen is part of an entirely different breed where she talks in a voice that would have been unrecognizable there just a number of years ago.

**Zirinsky:** She wouldn't have been allowed to speak.

**Rock:** There's a question over here.

**Q:** Well, I had a question and I was just thinking, you know, during all the Gulf War coverage I was getting very curious about women in the Middle East and what it's like there. But you know there was only one piece I can remember which was that long article by Judith Miller. I forget what it was titled, but it was women in Saudi Arabia. I even sent it to my mother. And I was thinking why wasn't anything like that on t.v.? Why wasn't anything in *Newsweek*? Or...

**Zirinsky:** On women? We actually we did do several pieces. For the most part we were very busy. We did. We did several pieces because there was a fascinating occurrence while we were there which was a demonstration by women who wanted to drive. And I had been put under a house arrest because I took one of the CBS vehicles in to town because I had to pick somebody up, and I said, "Screw this I'm just going to go." But we did several pieces about women. Now it didn't dominate the coverage. It couldn't, but we did pieces. *The New York Times* did pieces. Almost everybody touched that subject, but we were there to cover a war.

**Q:** But she was the only person who seemed to write about that one particular...

**Chrieton:** Yeah, but that's space what you're talking about. That was the Sunday *Times* magazine, right? So you just have columns and columns and columns of space. In a daily paper you have daily coverage, plus you have things like the Sunday *Times* magazine. What you're talking about when you talk about the evening news, you're talking about 30 minutes.

**Zirinsky:** Twenty-two minutes is what you have on the evening news.

**Chrieton:** To capture, to do all the world's, and if you're in the middle of a war that doesn't leave you a whole lot. And then you toss in, you know, evening, late night sum-ups and stuff. In *Newsweek* we have 52 pages, but 52 small pages, they're not like newspaper pages. We did cover, you know, and we did too do stuff about women, but obviously it was a small portion of the coverage.

**Zirinsky:** It wasn't why we were there to cover it. It did get noticed, but it wasn't why we there.

**Rock:** In the yellow shirt in the back.

**Q:** I have worked for a number of financial magazines, three or 4 financial magazines over the course of 12 years on the business side. And one thing I see very consistently is that there is a majority \*\*\* and when it comes to the \*\*\* publisher, it's almost entirely dominated by men. And I was curious if that was consistent in an organization like *Newsweek* and if you had, Marcia, if you had come across those kinds of numbers in your [surveys]?

**Rock:** No, I didn't.

**Q:** Because I think that has an impact in how the media is marketing, how advertising is sold, what's happening to \*\*\*

**Chrieton:** Definitely, but that is something that's been changing radically in the last couple of years. The woman who is head of circulation is a woman, which is always traditionally a man's field. The marketing director is a woman. Again, these are all women who are sort of mid-30s, you know, basically 35 to 40 years old. It is still, the publishing side and all these organizations, I mean, newspapers and magazines, is very conservative and it's going to be the last to go. And women are definitely needed there, but it's also definitely changing.

**Zirinsky:** Now that you mention that, I ended up, we were speaking after the Gulf War to an organization within CBS, the sellers of *Time*, and I noticed that there were very few women there. And I asked about it just because I was curious and they said it's just one of those last bastions where women are just... There were some women there, but I was sort of struck by it.

**Q:** Well, also they earn way more than \*\*\*

**Zirinsky:** That's a very different part of what I do, what we do. It's in the corporate end.

**Chrieton:** I'll tell you one thing that the women on the business side of *Newsweek* did last year. There were about 10 of them and they went off on a retreat together and took golfing lessons for 5 straight days because the fact is you cannot be on the business side of a magazine and not play golf. Ninety percent of business is done on a golf course. And there were all of these women who were suddenly turning around and they were locked out of all this business. And they all become just as big golf pros as all the rest of them. If that's how you go on with your life, you know... But that's what they had to do.

**Rock:** The woman in the \*\*\*

**Q:** We all know that men traditionally \*\*\*

**Chrieton:** Definitely, I mean, yes, it's not going backwards at all. And especially when you get those of us who suddenly are sitting in a budget meeting, we sure as hell are not rolling back anything.

**Zirinsky:** We're the loudest ones in the budget meeting and we're the loudest ones to get the male equal pay as well. Because CBS happens to be -- I hope this tape doesn't get played for Larry Tisch -- CBS is one of the cheapest networks in terms of what it pays people and producers. And there's never a, "Oh, we're going to pay her less because she's a woman," they just pay less.

**Q:** Can I just respond to that \*\*\*. Wasn't there just recently a problem \*\*\* there was a bunch of women producers who had been there, who started out as researchers or secretary jobs and they were held...there were caps on their contracts \*\*\*. They found that they were being paid a lot less than men who were \*\*\*

**Zirinsky:** I don't know this. I did find something interesting when I was interviewing. That there were a bunch of women at *60 Minutes* who when you called the guys who ran -- I won't mention names, but some of the people over there -- for recommendations, they say, "Oh, she's great, she's great." And I said, "Well, how come they haven't been promoted within *60 Minutes*?" And they said, "Well, it just didn't work." It was interesting to me and I thought, "Oh, here's one of those bastions. Here's one of those little bubbles that you need to burst." And I took one woman, a young woman from *60 Minutes*, who was literally labeled a production secretary. She had been doing associate producer work, I brought her in as a broadcast associate, and she's, I mean, this woman could walk on water as far as I'm concerned. I mean, you can tell she's been doing the work.

I'm not familiar so it's hard for me to speak about that.

**Q:** But the question I wanted to ask you was, in the opinion of your end of the business, not the news \*\*\*, but the Sunday morning public affairs programs, there is some representation of women \*\*\*, how long do you think it's going to take before there are more women sitting in those chairs?

**Zirinsky:** Leslie Stahl. Eleanor Clift.

**Q: \*\*\***

**Chrieton:** Margaret Warner?

**Zirinsky:** Margaret Warner who does CNN?

**Q: \*\*\*** Cokie Robertson in the last 5 years.

**Q: \*\*\***

**Zirinsky:** On NBC. Well, I mean, CBS has their anchor as a woman. I don't think you can get much better than that.

**Q: \*\*\***

**Zirinsky:** Yeah, she anchored the show, but that was her decision to move to *60 Minutes*.

**Q:** Right. I'm not impugning CBS, it's great that Leslie did that, but of the programs that are on at this point when are there going to be more regulars?

**Chrieton:** Probably when... There ought to be.

**Q:** And do you think it makes a difference?

**Chrieton:** Yea.

**Zirinsky:** Yes, but our... Bob Schieffer now anchors *Face The Nation* and the key replacement is Susan Spencer. And I once said to Spencer, "Would you ever want to do *Face The Nation*?" And she said, "Uh...I don't know..." You know, a lot of it... I think that there should be more women in these shows. Because CBS has Leslie... The whole *Face The Nation* staff is women and we used to have an expression for them, which I won't say publicly, among the women at CBS and so I'm not...my consciousness sort of is that we've always had women, but ABC definitely looks like the boys' club and that's just a question of pushing. ABC has had a tough record. Carol Simpson has done a lot for ABC pushing in terms of women, more women reporters. They do have fewer women reporters, fewer women in senior positions.



They're better now with senior editorial positions, but they've not been as forward as some of the organizations.

**Chrieton:** I think there's also one other point to make which again goes into all these news organizations. The men who are our age have a very different -- most of them, not all of them -- but have a very different take on things than the guys who came before. And it just doesn't occur to them, it wouldn't occur to them, if, you know, a lot of the guys I work with, if somebody said to Jonathan Alter, "Okay Jon, you know, you're the new John McLaughlin, put together your \*\*\* paper." It wouldn't occur to him to just pick 5 men. It just wouldn't occur to him. Or to have 6 men on a regular basis and a rotating woman. So I think that in the cases of a lot of these shows, the next generation of these shows, it's not that these shows are going to get integrated more, it's that you're going to have a new crop come along and...

**Zirinsky:** The next producers will just have, you know, their mind set will be different.

**Rock:** There's a question.

**Q:** Yeah, Susan you had mentioned covering the \*\*\* than covering the movements, and I was wondering \*\*\*

**Zirinsky:** I would love to because when I went in...I was asked by CBS News to run part of the CBS Olympics and I went in there and I was told that it would be very difficult for me, that I was supposed to be in a position of power and that nobody was going to listen to me and it was going to be miserable. And so I went in there and it was a sort of very boys' club type of atmosphere. But part of the initiation, because they knew I had been in some dangerous situations and most of them the most danger they had ever seen was a football game in overtime, that they were...they treated me with a little more respect. You definitely had to -- and this is sort of terrible to say -- but a very sort of prissy feminine kind of person who went in there would have felt very uncomfortable. You know, if you've been in a newsroom -- and I don't say this... -- you know, a girl is one of the boys. It's a sort of familial family feel. So I really found that once I got in there and once I...and I treated them with respect... It was almost sometimes less gender than it was news versus sports. They thought all news people think that sports people are intellectually mutant. Once I went in there and treated them with respect, knowing that what I was really covering was almost like a summit of accolade and I worked as hard as I did at any project, it was fine. But I definitely had to prove myself. People definitely came up and said, you know, "You've covered a war? Have you seen anybody die? Did you see dead people?" I mean, it was like okay, now I can join Spanky's club. I should have brought my

rocket-propelled grenade launcher that I brought back from Kuwait, but... it was a little bit of a test.

I was sort of kidding; it was very tough working in the Mid-East, especially in Saudi. It took me a long time to gain any kind of foot hold with the Saudi government, with the Saudi military. The American military learned pretty fast that I was a no nonsense person and they were fine.

**Q:** But you worked a lot with good people, didn't you \*\*\*?

**Zirinsky:** Fabulous. Fabulous and they have become my best friends. And I was offered a job in the CBS Olympic unit when I came back.

**Q:** I guess what my question is do you think the coverage of sports is any different with more women involved or whether women \*\*\*?

**Zirinsky:** There were a lot of women producers within the Olympic unit and the men producers were doing profiles of the women athletes. I think that...because they're our age -- and these guys were actually younger, they were in their late 20s, early 30s -- I think that the men and the women have a different mind set. It's this group that's coming up now, it's our family of reporters that just don't treat people differently, which is advantageous to coverage as a whole. I think that the older guys still have this kind of tunnel vision of t.v.

**Chrieton:** I mean, *Newsweek* covered the Olympics in a big way and it was mostly appalling this past year. I mean, it was just hideous. And one of the happiest days of the past year -- and this I don't mind having on tape -- was the day that our much-heralded sports writer Frank DeFord was lured away by *Vanity Fair*. I did a jig like I've never performed in front of a lot of people because he's an old time sports writer and he would turn, and he would be covering Summer Sanders or somebody, and he would write, turn in a whole piece which was all about "our girl Summer." And we would say, "Frank, we don't do profiles like this anymore. We don't refer to Olympic athletes as `our girl.'" And he would throw a fit and he would say, you know, "You hired me to dah, dah, dah..." And the truth was a lot of people loved these pieces. They were just so embarrassing. The magazine would come out and I would like walk down the street, just cringing. I did not want to be associated with this garbage.

**Zirinsky:** Was that you pulling out those pages at the newsstand on Broadway?

**Chrieton:** But you know, every piece. Especially dealing with young gymnasts. I mean, you know, salivating over 14-year-old gymnasts, "Oh, that Kim Zimescal. She's so adorable!" It was agony, but he's gone and I did not have a say in his hiring, but I do have a say in the hiring of his replacement. And whoever is our writer next time for the Olympics is not going to be somebody to whom it ever occurred to write a sentence or a whole piece about "our girl Summer." So...

**Rock:** There's a question over there.

**Q:** \*\*\*

**Zirinsky:** I think that there are certain stories that men wouldn't...I think that everybody would have come to domestic violence and odd divorce cases and women's stories because I think that CBS is very conscious and if this tape does get out I'll probably get fired. We do look at research on what people are interested in and what issues people care about, but I think women in senior positions, editorially... You know, I read something in a magazine and I say, "What if we did this as a feature?" It wouldn't have occurred to men maybe for another two years because it wasn't hot enough, it wasn't an issue on the front burner for them whereas it is for me. So I think editorially we bring stories forward that are of interest, the health stories, the family stories, the nanny problems, that I think we're ahead of our time because we're thinking about these things.

**Q:** Just, we've been talking on about, you know, whether \*\*\* journalist about asexuality. Over the last couple of days that what gay journalists can do has been very prominent. Were *Newsweek* and *The Post* the ones that said their journalists couldn't march?

**Chrieton:** *The Washington Post* policy has always been that nobody at *The Washington Post* can march in political marches. The policy at *Newsweek* is different. We've got writers and editors who are marching but they are not ones who...they're not involved in political coverage per se. I mean, a movie critic, you know, that's cool, that's fine.

**Q:** Well, obviously women cover women's issues and men cover men's issues \*\*\*. When you have someone who is openly gay in the newsroom what kind of criteria do you use for assigning stories?

**Zirinsky:** It's a very good question. An associate producer for us and we're trying to think about what we can do when the gay ban is lifted in the military and he was doing

some research and he admitted to me and he's a new employee for the most part, he said, "I would like you to know I'm gay." And I said, "That's fine." But he asked in this meeting and he came up afterwards and he said, "I would really like to do the research for that story. I've got great contacts." And I said, "Great," I said, "I'm never going to come to you because you are gay to do a gay story, but if you have specific interests and certain contacts, that's fine."

The interesting thing is he came to me the next day and he said, "I was really thinking of going to Washington because a lot of people are going to be in this one city and I can do a lot of business, but I was also going to march." And he said, "How do you feel about that?" And I said, "You know, CBS doesn't have a policy per se," or if they do I didn't exactly know what it was. I said, "But on this broadcast I think I feel that if you're going down to do work that you should go down to do work, that you shouldn't march in the parade. If you have a problem with that then I'll reassign the story and I'll let you go march. But if you're working you should work." And he said, "No," he found it fine and that he was physically there and spiritually he would be with people and he wasn't going to march. But I think that when somebody is openly gay...I think it was *The Washington Post* or *The New York Times* today did a piece about it. You know, I'm a journalist and if somebody's got great contacts I'm going to use them, but I'm not going to say, "Because you're gay you should do that story."

**Rock:** Over here.

**Q:** I want to get back to the topic of violence in the media. There was an article a couple of days ago about violence on the news and the \*\*\* competition for the public and so that the news channels had to come up with increasingly violent stories and sensationalist stories. And I wonder what the women reporters, journalists, editor people can do about it because there is an increasing amount of violence at a younger and younger age. There's no doubt about it; there's increasing violence in this country. We are the most violent country in the nation and women really are not by nature violent. So I'd like to know what we can do?

**Zirinsky:** In the sense of what we can do in terms of...?

**Q:** Whatever. Selectivity of news, maybe stories about how to cope with the violence or how not to propagate violence because the media is propagating violence now.

**Zirinsky:** Except you don't want your media to be censors. You don't want us to not report things because they're offensive or because they're troubling. I think that...

**Q:** But there's a way of doing it, isn't there? There's a selectivity. It's not that you're simply reporting it, you have to select in order \*\*\* there's a certain amount of invention too. \*\*\*

**Zirinsky:** As a television journalist there are certain scenes that we're not going to put on television. You know, that's a selective editorial judgement. We may do a story about a child murdering somebody else because of the nature and how the child slipped through the cracks of the social welfare system. I think that we're sensitive to increased violence and the criticism of pushing violence in an effort to get viewers. I don't think you'll ever eliminate it because we shouldn't. I think that the more stories that we can do to get at the root cause, to get at the solutions are important, but I think that we must keep reporting what's happening and that selectivity has to be very carefully editorially based, not just because it's violent; we're going to not put it on because that's going to promote more violence. I don't think that we can get into that business.

**Chrieton:** But it is tricky. I mean, it's tricky knowing exactly what to do and I don't even really know what I think about the issue. But I do know this, that this week I was all alone flipping on the t.v. and there was *Rescue 911*. And in *Rescue 911* they simulated a teenage girl who is in a car crash, she's all alone in her thing, and she begins to like burn alive in her car, and these people keep pulling up in their cars, trying to let this girl out. And this girl is there and now, you know, 35 percent of her body is covered with flames, "Help! Help!"

**Zirinsky:** But you didn't turn it off.

**Chrieton:** I loved it. I thought about that program all week and it was like two days after Waco and everything else. I think it was a Wednesday night and I kept thinking, "Turn it off, Sarah, for Chrissake, turn this stuff off." But I just...of all the entertainment -- I mean, I'll just say it flat out -- of all the entertainment that I experienced this week that and seeing the screening of *Much Ado About Nothing*, those were the high points of my week. So what do you do? I mean, all of us...there's a huge audience out there that is riveted to stuff like this.

**Zirinsky:** One thing I thought of: Do you remember? There was a story recently a local television station went with a woman -- and I can't remember why they were doing this -- but the woman was in a situation where her husband had been stalking her and the television station went along and the woman was visiting a grave -- I don't even remember the circumstances -- but her husband shot her in front of the crew. And there was a fairly big debate, not long, but large, a number of people, on whether CBS would buy this footage and whether we would put it on the air. And we all looked at



each other and we said, "What? We shouldn't even be discussing this. No." I don't believe any other network did.

**Q:** NBC.

**Chrieton:** NBC did.

**Zirinsky:** We had a discussion, it was like should we hire Simon Legree. I mean it was that quick. Nobody at the table said that we should buy that stuff. I know that *Inside Edition* was in a bidding war for it, but that's selective decision. We're not going to put that on the air. that's gratuitous violence.

**Rock:** Let me just... From my perspective I think television is a story telling medium. I think Susan's under a lot more pressure than Sarah to tell the story to make it exciting. And I know that she's struggling with it now with the stories for the news magazine and the other news magazine, *News One*, is struggling with it to try to use the medium creatively which lends itself to violence and excitement and that kind of story telling.

**Zirinsky:** One of the reasons why magazine shows are so successful is because they're doing stories of a human drama. It's actually replacing entertainment drama because for the most part what you're looking at is real. It's one of the reasons why all these television movies are in this race. Like these producers can't get to the scene fast enough. Sometime when we're in places like Waco we're tripping over these Hollywood producers who are trying ahead of us to get in and secure people's right for these really violent tales. You know, any movie you see on television now is for the most part a real story.

**Q:** You inadvertently used the word a little while back talking about this, but I think it's part of the key. The word was "seduction." And violence is a thrill.

**Zirinsky:** It wasn't inadvertent.

**Q:** So are drugs. You can chose to see that and step back from it a little bit. In some of my work I have seen people chose...they don't want to just hear the bad news, they want to see that there's some hope, they want to make the connection between the problem of... People are going to get burnt on it. You may not see it in what comes back to you, but maybe it's why people walk away from the network programs.

**Zirinsky:** One of the problems we face and we do face this when some of these people who come in and analyze what we do and they track sort of stories, you know, a violent story versus a solution story -- I call them, I have a file on my desk and it's called "Breaking Through" and they're positive stories. People turn off. So as much as I argue and I do advocate some of these "breaking through" stories, the audience isn't there. For the entertainment division, they can't sell it. So until society comes around and is as drawn in by the person who has really made it, who's really making a difference, who's changing a kid's life, it's really hard. It's a battle that everyday I face and especially now on this magazine show. It may kill me.

**Rock:** We'll just take a few more questions and then you'll stay for perhaps 5 minutes to answer questions. Okay, one and two.

**Q:** I just wanted to say something to Susan. \*\*\* when somebody said, "Why didn't you tell the story about your feel up?" And you said we're interested. And you said, "But you're a special interest." And, you know, women keep being told special interest and we're not. We are not a special interest group.

**Zirinsky:** I have to tell you I don't think that was news.

**Q:** That's not the point. The point that I'm making is that our take on something is not special interest. We're \*\*\*, that's what I'm saying, not that story, but...

**Zirinsky:** Do you think that most people would be interested in that story other than women?

**Q:** Other than women? We're the majority. What is this conference about?

**Zirinsky:** I don't think it's news. I just didn't think it was news.

**Q:** I'm not saying...It's not that.

**Zirinsky:** I understand what you're saying.

**Q:** All I'm saying is we're not a special interest group. We're women.

**Zirinsky:** You are the public to me, but I don't think the public would have been

interested. Okay, let me ask this room. Would you have cared about that story on a...?

**Audience:** Yes!

**Rock:** Okay, we have one last question over here.

**Q:** I have a question for Sarah and this is on the subject of \*\*\*. You were an editor at *Seventeen* \*\*\*. Based on your experience editing *Seventeen* do you have any sense of what young women, the readers of *Seventeen*, are interested in? Because I've looked at it over the years and it's certainly different than the *Seventeen* that I read when I was \*\*\*. What [are] the kinds of things that those young women and girls are interested in?

**Chrieton:** Yeah, and unfortunately... Well, I'll tell you what happened to me. I was a free-lance writer married to a free-lance writer and after 8 years of free-lance \*\*\*, it was time for somebody to get the hell out of the house and get a job. So I got the only job that I could get because I'm much better at doing things like getting jobs than he is and I got the articles editor job at *Seventeen*. And I like teenagers a lot, I like teenage girls a lot. I think they're just a great...I like that age. And the first thing that I did, I realized that I thought the magazine was appalling. And all the articles that were being written for it were being written in the same way that it was written when I was a kid, which was basically they were all frauds. It was made-up anecdotes. It was women's magazines at their very worst, where the articles weren't backed by good reporting, it was anecdotal stuff, but most of the time you could tell that it was made-up, and it was written down in a voice that was, you know, another sort of fantasy voice. You know, who talks like that? Very sort of patronizing in a way. And also insisting in all cases that all problems could be sort of tied up with red ribbons, you know, pink ribbons. You know, "Oh, there's a problem, but don't worry everything will be okay," which was a crock.

So what I did was I basically got rid of all the writers who had ever written there and I began hiring my friends, especially newspaper reporters who hadn't even written for women's magazines and didn't even understand that like a lot of writing there is sort of made up. And so you would give them an assignment and they would actually go out and report the pieces. And they would actually give real reporting and they would write in a very serious fashion. We were the first magazine to do... We did a piece I love, which was "Are Asian Kids really Smarter?" This was in 1984 or 1985 when suddenly the scores, you know... And that brought out just huge, you know, race, culture, genetic inheritance, all sorts of things. We did the first... Actually before I got to *Seventeen*, the way that I got to know *Seventeen* was I did a piece on date rape in

like 1980 which had gotten a huge response. But we did a lot about violence, we did a lot about inter-racial dating that was a big topic, we did a lot of abortion sound-offs, we did all sorts of topical stuff.

And what we began to discover was the more serious the topics and richer the presentation of the topics, the more these girls loved it. They loved it. And we began giving them instead of like, you know, boyfriend pieces, we began giving them serious issues to deal with and they ate it up because we were the only place that was, you know, talking to them like human beings. And they're out there trying to sift through all this stuff and figure it out and finally somebody was taking them seriously. And we began with different.. You know, we would publish these pieces, we would get 5000 letters back about very difficult political or social issues. And also we would flip things. We were reflecting. One piece that we ran was... Actually, one of the most interesting things that we began doing was we were starting with the assumption that teenage girls are at war with their mothers a lot of the time. And we began to get all these letters from girls going, "Wait a minute, I'm not at war with my mother." Why does everybody think that teenagers hate their mother? And I began realizing, "Oh I get it."

You know, somehow we're told that the only healthy relationship between girls and their mothers is the dysfunctional at-each-other's-throats one and a healthy supportive relationship is somehow sick because you're not breaking the bond. We began to feedback articles to them. I start talking about *Seventeen* and I get excited.

**Rock:** How did the advertisers respond to...?

**Chrieton:** Well, they loved it because what happened was the first year that I was there the circulation went up 500,000 in one year. And my bosses loved me because...

**Zirinsky:** What year was that?

**Chrieton:** 1984. Because clearly I had like some special gift. It's really amazing; you start giving people good stuff and they start responding. It's a remarkable thing.

**Q:** Didn't *Sassy* get a tremendous backlash from the same kind of market?

**Chrieton:** *Sassy*...no. It's sort of different. It's really sort of different, but they had...wait. Let me finish this one thing and then I'll explain that.

So they promoted me. The next year we kept doing it, we won all of these awards, in two years the circulation went up 850,000. And so I kept getting promoted. And unfortunately by 1988 I was promoted to editor at which point I suddenly had to start dealing with the owner, who was Walter Anenberg, who he and I did not really see eye to eye on a lot of issues. And I also had to start having conversations with the fashion side of the magazine about, you know, "Well, you say that green is the color this spring, but what kind of green?" And also furthermore, the truth is, for me to get to be editor they had kicked out the person who was editor before and put her into a special orbit up here, but she managed in 4 months to make my life so miserable that I got the hell out of there. And the first thing that she did was she got rid of all those articles and that whole approach and that first issue after me was one that was called, "Boys, Boys, Boys, Boys, Boys, Boys, Boys, Boys, Boys!" And it really hasn't changed.

But just around that time *Sassy* started. And *Sassy* did get into trouble, but *Sassy* at the time when they were getting started it was an Australian bunch starting it up and they did not understand -- and this actually ties into the whole issue of advocacy -- they did not understand how fundamentally puritanical this country is. And so what they did because they thought it was really hip and really cool they put on the cover -- *Seventeen* was dealing with all the same things, you know, sex information, promiscuity, birth control. We would do one where we would slip in phrases like, you know, "blue balls," because you realize that like these girls are being told this stuff; you've got to use these phrases or else they're not going to know what you're talking about. So we'd slip these things in. You know, "Don't worry, you know, the guy is not going to die of blue balls if you don't..."

But *Sassy* did that, but they advertised it in a big way and they promoted it in a big way. And their first issue came out saying, you know, basically, how to lose your virginity and how to give a blow job. And they sent it across the country and, big surprise, their advertisers dropped them like hot potatoes and they were banned from schools across the country and everything else. And it nearly killed the magazine which was too bad because actually they were trying some interesting things. But they didn't understand that this is a very, you know, what works in 116th and Broadway does not necessarily work across the country.

**Rock:** I think we'll close and you can come up and ask the guests individually. Thank you very much for attending.