

Speech delivered by Judith G. Clabes on August 3, 2006 in San Francisco at the Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication (ASJMC) Convention and Sass Award presentation.

LOREN AND I GO BACK A LONG WAY – TO ONE OF OUR OTHER LIVES AS NEWSPAPER EDITORS, ASNE BOARD MEMBERS, AND FELLOW RUSSIA TRAVELERS. SO I WAS A LITTLE EDGY ABOUT HIS INTRODUCTION. I AM GRATEFUL FOR HIS LONG FRIENDSHIP, HIS KIND REGARD, HIS VALUABLE COUNSEL, AND HIS GENEROUS WORDS. I’M EVEN MORE GRATEFUL THAT HE DIDN’T REVEAL ALL HE KNOWS.

I THANK ASJMC FOR THIS MEANINGFUL HONOR. I AM HUMBLLED TO HAVE AN AWARD GIVEN IN GERALD SASS’ NAME. TO A PERSON, THOSE WHO HAVE EXTENDED THEIR GOOD WISHES TO ME HAVE SAID, ‘HE IS A GREAT GUY – MY MENTOR, WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE IN MY LIFE.’ YOU HAVE A LONG REACH, GERRY, AND AN ENVIOUS LEGACY. YOU SHOULD BE REMINDED AGAIN TONIGHT THAT YOU HAVE TOUCHED THE LIVES OF SO MANY WHO CONTINUE TO TOUCH THE LIVES OF OTHERS IN MEANINGFUL WAYS. NOW YOU HAVE TOUCHED MINE. YOURS HAS BEEN A GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING, AND YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT IT MATTERS.

EDUCATORS AND JOURNALISTS ARE AT THE TOP OF MY LIST OF MOST ADMIRERD PEOPLE (I NEVER GET ASKED IN THOSE PUBLIC OPINION SURVEYS) SO MY GRATITUDE IS DOUBLED FOR RECOGNITION FROM AN ORGANIZATION THAT REPRESENTS BOTH.

IT WAS A TEACHER WHO TURNED ME ONTO JOURNALISM IN HIGH SCHOOL, WHERE I WAS EDITOR OF THE SCHOOL PAPER. I WENT ON TO MAJOR IN JOURNALISM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY WHERE GENE AND I WERE MARRIED STUDENTS LIVING ON LOVE AND 3-POUNDS-FOR-A-DOLLAR HAMBURGER MEAT. CANNED GOODS WERE 10 CENTS EACH AND OUR WEEKLY GROCERY BUDGET WAS \$10. WE WERE LUCKY: WE MANAGED TO SPARE OURSELVES RAMEN NOODLES I HEAR SO MANY STUDENTS TALK ABOUT AS A STAPLE TODAY. WE HAD LOANS AND JOBS AND FULL CLASS LOADS. A SIX-YEAR PLAN, SOMETHING ELSE SO MANY STUDENTS TODAY TALK ABOUT, WAS ALSO NOT AN OPTION FOR US. WE NEEDED TO GET IN, GET OUT AND GET A JOB.

WE WERE BOTH FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE-GOING STUDENTS FROM HARD-WORKING FAMILIES WHO WANTED A BETTER LIFE FOR US. (IT AMAZES ME TO HEAR STILL TODAY THAT SO MANY STUDENTS ARE STILL FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE-GOING.) MY FATHER, LIKE OTHERS OF HIS TIME, FELT THAT A YOUNG WOMAN GOING TO COLLEGE SHOULD GO FOR NURSING OR TEACHING. IN FAIRNESS HE DIDN'T SEE THIS AS A GENDER ISSUE BUT AS A JOB AND SECURITY ISSUE. SO TO SATISFY MY FATHER – WHICH I TRULY WANTED TO DO – I PURSUED THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR A TEACHING CERTIFICATE WHICH MEANT I ALSO HAD TO QUALIFY FOR AN ENGLISH MAJOR. I FOLLOWED MY HEART TO THE JOURNALISM MAJOR, AND TO DO ALL THAT AND STILL FINISH IN FOUR YEARS MEANT HEAVY COURSE LOADS. I DID NOT THEN – AND DO NOT NOW – CONSIDER 12 HOURS A SEMESTER'S FULL COURSE LOAD. FOR ME, MY CHOICES MEANT FULL SUMMERS AND INTERCESSIONS, TOO – BUT THAT RIGOR FULLY PREPARED ME FOR THE REAL-LIFE DEMANDS OF BOTH THE CLASSROOM AND THE NEWSROOM. THE 40-HOUR WORK WEEK IS A MYTH IN EITHER PLACE.

AFTER GRADUATION GENE AND I WENT BACK HOME TO HENDERSON, KY. -- A TOWN WITH FEWER PEOPLE THAN WORK AT THE PENTAGON – AND I BECAME A CLASSROOM TEACHER AT MY OLD HIGH SCHOOL – AND ADVISOR TO THE STUDENT PAPER – SO I COULD HAVE SOME OF MY STUDENT LOANS FORGIVEN. I LOVED TEACHING AND I LOVED THE STUDENTS – I STILL HEAR FROM SOME OF THEM TODAY – AND I LEARNED TO APPRECIATE EVEN MORE THE IMPORTANCE OF WHAT TEACHERS DO AND ARE. MY TEACHING YEARS PROVIDED INVALUABLE LIFE LESSONS FOR ME. I AM CONVINCED THAT GOOD CLASSROOM TEACHERS COULD BE GOOD AT ANYTHING ELSE THEY MIGHT WANT TO DO, AND THAT WE'RE VERY LUCKY THAT SO MANY WANT TO DO THAT.

ON BEHALF OF SCRIPPS HOWARD FOUNDATION I'M HONORED TO BE ABLE TO WORK WITH YOU ON OUR COMMON OBJECTIVES, ALWAYS WITH OUR EYES ON THE PRIZE. AND THE PRIZE IS THE STUDENT. I GREATLY VALUE THE GOOD AND GREAT TEACHING I SEE TODAY IN JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION. I ADMIRE THOSE WILLING TO SHARE THEIR EXPERTISE, EXPERIENCE AND LIVES WITH THE NEXT WAVE OF EAGER YOUNG PEOPLE OUT TO SAVE THE WORLD. I KNOW THAT ISN'T EASY AS YOU STRIVE FOR RELEVANCE AND MOTIVATION AGAINST THE CHALLENGES OF THE CHANGING MEDIA LANDSCAPE. BUT YOU AREN'T ALONE IN TRYING TO FIGURE ALL THAT OUT.

LET'S JUST TAKE THE SCRIPPS COMPANY AS AN EXAMPLE. SCRIPPS IS AN ESTABLISHED MEDIA COMPANY WITH DEEP ROOTS IN NEWSPAPERS, THANKS TO FOUNDER E.W. SCRIPPS WHO STARTED HIS PENNY PRESS IN THE LATE 1800S. HIS COMPANY HAS HAD TO STAY COMPETITIVE IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD,

OVER MORE THAN A CENTURY. MEDIA HAS ALWAYS EVOLVED, OF COURSE. CONSIDER GUTENBERG AND HIS FAMOUS PRESS. BUT TODAY CHANGE IS ALL THERE IS. IT'S AT WARP SPEED – A KIND OF SPEED NOT INDIGENOUS TO ACADEME.

TODAY SCRIPPS IS A DIVERSIFIED MEDIA COMPANY WITH INTERESTS IN NEWSPAPER PUBLISHING, NATIONAL CABLE TELEVISION, NETWORKS, LOCAL BROADCAST TELEVISION STATIONS AND INTERACTIVE MEDIA. TODAY OUR COMPANY'S LEADERSHIP TALKS ABOUT MEDIA PLATFORMS AND THE SHIFTING OF CONTROL FROM COMPANIES TO CONSUMERS, ABOUT AN EXPLOSION OF OPPORTUNITIES THAT MEANS DIVORCING TRADITIONAL BUSINESS MODELS, DELIVERING INNOVATIVE ADVERTISING SOLUTIONS, AND REINVENTING OURSELVES. A DECADE AGO, THE COMPANY SET A COURSE THAT REFLECTED THE CONVICTION THAT 'CREATING CONTENT' WAS SCRIPPS' CORE STRENGTH. SO, GONE WAS THE CABLE SYSTEM BUSINESS AND IN ITS PLACE WERE HOME AND GARDEN TELEVISION, WHICH THE COMPANY BUILT FROM THE GROUND UP, ACQUISITIONS OF FOOD NETWORK AND GREAT AMERICAN COUNTRY AND START-UPS OF FINE LIVING AND DIY. NOT A BAD STRATEGY, IT SEEMS, GIVEN THE NETWORKS' \$1 BILLION REVENUE STREAM IS 40% OF THE COMPANY'S TOTAL.

BUT IT'S A WHAT-HAVE-YOU-DONE LATELY WORLD, AND THE COMPANY'S 'FUTURE TALK' ABOUT "INTERACTIVITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY" LED TO ACQUISITION OF SHOPZILLA AND USWITCH. BOTH ARE SPECIALIZED ONLINE SEARCH BUSINESSNESS THAT HELP CONSUMERS FIND PRODUCTS AND SERVICES, COMPARE PRICES AND COMPLETE TRANSACTIONS. EACH HOLDS THE PROMISE FOR OUTSIZED RETURNS ON THE COMPANY'S INVESTMENT. I'M CONFIDENT

THAT – RIGHT NOW – THE COMPANY IS SEEKING ITS NEXT CATALYST FOR GROWTH AND COMPETITIVENESS, ALL THE WHILE STAYING TRUE TO ITS CORE VALUES AND TO ITS LOCAL NEWSPAPERS AND BROADCAST STATIONS.

IT SURELY KEEPS SOMEBODY UP NIGHTS.

WHY BRING IT UP? BECAUSE THE SCRIPPS EXAMPLE IS A THUMBNAIL OF HOW UNRELENTING CHANGE IS IMPACTING AN INDUSTRY WE CARE ABOUT – AND HAVE TO PREPARE THE NEXT GENERATION FOR.

THAT KEEPS US UP NIGHTS, TOO, -- YOU AND ME -- AS WE TRY TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO RESPOND FROM OUR OWN POSTS ON THE FRONT LINES.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE AS HEAD OF THE COMPANY'S INDEPENDENT PHILANTHROPIC ARM, IT'S A DIZZYING TASK. AS MUCH AS HUMANLY POSSIBLE, WE LIKE TO STAY IN SYNC WITH OUR BELOVED PARENT. BUT THE ABILITY TO RESPOND – AS THE COMPANY MUST – TO EMERGING MARKET FORCES IS SOMETIMES BEYOND THE REACH OF OUR STATIC RESOURCES, BOTH MONETARY AND HUMAN. THE FICKLE MARKET ISN'T HELPING EITHER. AND WE MAKE LONG-TERM COMMITMENTS TO CORE PROGRAMS AND TO PARTNER INSTITUTIONS THAT CAN'T BE UNDONE BY THE SEDUCTION OF INSTANT EMERGING MEDIA MARKET FORCES.

SO I TAKE HEART IN THE COMMITTED SUPPORT OF AN UNDERSTANDING BOARD AND INSPIRATION FROM THESE WORDS OF THE COMPANY'S PRESIDENT AND CEO KEN LOWE WHEN HE ADDRESSES THE "UNRELENTING FORCES" OF THE MARKET:

“WHAT DOESN'T CHANGE (HE SAYS) IS FUNDAMENTALS. NO MATTER HOW OUR NEWS AND INFORMATION IS DELIVERED, THERE WILL ALWAYS BE GREAT DEMAND FOR EXCELLENCE, ACCURACY AND INTEGRITY. THE CHALLENGE FOR JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA PROFESSIONALS WILL BE TO ADHERE TO OUR STANDARDS IN AN AGE WHEN UNRELENTING DEMAND FOR INSTANT COMMUNICATION IS THE TASKMASTER. . .NEVER BE WILLING TO SACRIFICE THOSE FUNDAMENTAL CORE VALUES FOR THE SAKE OF IMMEDIACY.”

FUNDAMENTALS? PRINCIPLES? INTEGRITY? EXCELLENCE? ACCURACY? – THIS RESONATES. THIS IS STUFF WE CAN HANG OUR HATS ON. THIS STUFF EMBRACES WHAT WE HAVE ALWAYS DONE AND CAN CONTINUE TO DO WELL. SO IT'S BACK TO THE FUTURE WITH BACK-TO-BASICS FOR US – AND, I URGE, FOR YOU, TOO.

LUCKILY, OUR FOUNDATION'S BOARD AGREES; IT HAS REAFFIRMED COMMITMENT TO OUR CORE PROGRAMS AND RELATIONSHIPS AND IT HAS STRONGLY REAFFIRMED OUR COMMITMENT TO THE CORE VALUES THAT DRIVE OUR WORK. WE WILL CONTINUE TO KEEP OUR EYE ON THE PRIZE -- THE STUDENTS -- AND MINDS TRAINED ON THE END GAME -- DEMOCRACY. OUR LIMITED RESOURCES ARE FOCUSED AND STRATEGIC SO THAT EVERY PENNY COUNTS. WE INVEST IN STUDENTS; WE INVEST IN PROGRAMS THAT PUT STUDENTS FIRST; WE INVEST IN PROGRAMS THAT EXPECT STUDENTS TO MASTER FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES AND SKILLS.

AS EDUCATORS, YOU WILL NEVER HAVE ALL THE RESOURCES YOU NEED OR WANT. I HEAR YOUR PAIN. YOUR PROGRAMS ARE UNDERFUNDED, INVESTMENT LAGS IN THE PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE OF YOUR SCHOOLS, YOU NEED SPACE

AND TECHNOLOGY. PERSONALLY, YOU ARE TIME-STARVED AND OVER-SUBSCRIBED AND TOO OFTEN DISTRACTED BY THE BUREAUCRACY OF ACADEME. YOU WANT STEAK, AT LEAST HAMBURGER STEAK, WHICH YOU SHOULD HAVE, WHEN THE BUDGET STILL ALLOWS ONLY RAMEN NOODLES.

BUT NONE OF THESE 'LACKS' IS A GOOD EXCUSE FOR PUTTING STUDENTS WHO CAN'T WRITE A DECENT SENTENCE INTO THE JOB MARKET, FOR NOT BEING PART OF THE SOLUTION FOR A DIVERSE MEDIA WORKFORCE, FOR NOT MENTORING OR TRAINING YOUR SUCCESSORS IN ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP, FOR NOT ASSURING THAT ALL JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATIONS STUDENTS UNDERSTAND THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES TO DEMOCRACY AND CITIZENSHIP AND A FREE SOCIETY. FUNDAMENTALS!

YOU WORRY ABOUT BEING COMPETITIVE FOR STUDENTS IN THE ACADEMIC MARKETPLACE. YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT ATTRACTING TODAY'S STUDENTS WHO ARE CYBERSPACE SAVVY AND TECHNOLOGICALLY WIRED OR WIRELESS. YOU WANT ALL THE STUFF THAT SAYS TO THEM THAT YOU ARE ON THE CUTTING EDGE, THAT YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHERE THE EMERGING MEDIA IS GOING TO EMERGE NEXT.

AND I HOPE YOU GET EVERYTHING YOU WANT. TO A POINT.

WHAT I REALLY HOPE IS THAT WHETHER OR NOT YOU HAVE ALL THE SEXY DO-DADS, THE HIGH TECH WHATCHAMADOODLES AND THE FANCY FOLDEROBBLERES THAT YOU NEVER LOSE SIGHT OF THE FACT THAT YOU ARE STILL THE MOST

VALUABLE, THE MOST IMPORTANT, THE ABSOLUTE INDISPENSABLE WEAPON IN THE ARSENAL.

ONE INDIVIDUAL. YOU. AN EDUCATOR. A REAL HUMAN BEING.

THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR ANY STUDENT. YOUR ABILITY TO TEACH, YOUR ABILITY TO INCULCATE THE SKILLS, PROVIDE THE TOOLS, AWAKEN YOUNG MINDS TO CONCEPTS AND POSSIBILITIES. YOUR WILLINGNESS TO SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE.

TECHNOLOGY IS GREAT. IT'S FASCINATING AND REAL, SOMETIMES EVEN USEFUL. BUT WHAT'S AN IPOD WITHOUT A RAY CHARLES TO GIVE IT LIFE? WHAT'S A BLOG WITHOUT A BLOGGER WHO HAS SOMETHING WORTH OUR TIME? WHAT IS ANYTHING WITHOUT SUBSTANCE?

ONLY THE QUALITY OF THE CONTENT GIVES VALUE TO THE MOST SOPHISTICATED MEDIA TECHNOLOGY.

AND, GUESS WHAT, THE BALL IS BACK TO YOUR COURT – AND BACK TO BASICS. YOUR SPECIALTY. YOUR EXPERTISE. YOUR ABILITY TO NURTURE THE STUDENT WHO WILL BECOME THE PROFESSIONAL WHO DELIVERS THE CONTENT. NO SUBSTITUTE.

YOUR TEACHING ISN'T JUST ABOUT THE NUTS AND BOLTS, EITHER. THE BASICS OF TEACHING EMBRACE A HUMAN ELEMENT AT THE HEART OF WHAT MAKES A GREAT TEACHER GREAT. YOU MAY NEVER KNOW WHAT IT IS YOU DO THAT

PROVIDES THE SPARK TO THE TENDER. MAYBE IT'S A KIND WORD, A WELL-PLACED INQUIRY, A CHEERFUL DEMEANOR, A POINTED SUGGESTION, AN OPEN DOOR AT JUST THE RIGHT MOMENT.

EVERY YOUNG PERSON NEEDS AN ENGAGED ADULT IN HIS OR HER LIFE. THEY NEED TEACHERS BEYOND KNOWLEDGE OF SUBJECT AND SKILL IN A CLASSROOM. THEY NEED UNDERSTANDING AND COMPASSION AND CARING OF THEM AS INDIVIDUALS – SO THAT THEY CAN ALSO BECOME THE KIND OF PEOPLE – JOURNALISTS AND COMMUNICATORS -- WHO WILL PUT THEIR KNOWLEDGE TO WORK IN ONLY THE MOST EXEMPLARY WAY. FOLLOWING YOUR MODEL, OF COURSE.

WHEN MY HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER BACK IN THAT SMALLER-THAN-THE-PENTAGON TOWN PRINTED THE STORY OF THIS AWARD, I RECEIVED THIS EMAIL:

Hi, Miss Clabes. Jerry PXXXX here. Just wanted to say it looks like you have made it big. If you forgot, I am from city high and I had a big crush on you. I have been married 37 years to the same girl, my old sweetheart from county high. We have two adopted children one is 27 and one special little girl who is 18. She just a sophomore making A's and B's with help from teacher aides. I also have one grand-daughter two years old.

Well, thank you for being my teacher. You did help me come out of my shell.
CONGRATULATIONS DO NOT GET LOST IN THE BIG CITY

YOUR OLD STUDENT, JERRY Pxxxxx

I SHARE THIS ONLY TO EMPHASIZE YOUR IMPORTANCE AS EDUCATORS. YOUR STUDENTS WILL NOT FORGET YOU WHEN YOU HAVE TRULY TOUCHED THEIR LIVES.

LET ME SHARE ONE LAST STORY:

“WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?” SAID BABY TIGER TO MAMA TIGER IN THE JUNGLE. “HERE COMES A HUNTER, AND HE HAS FIVE RIFLES, THREE SPECIAL SIGHTING SCOPES, AND DEVICES TO ALLOW HIM TO SEE IN THE DARK?”

“HUSH!” ANSWERED MAMA TIGER, AND SHE TAUGHT HER CUB HOW TO SNEAK UP FROM BEHIND AND POUNCE.

THE HUNTER WAS NEVER HEARD OF AGAIN.

TECHNOLOGY IS FINE AND MAYBE WONDERFUL AND WE’RE NOT EVER GOING TO LIVE IN A WORLD WITHOUT IT. BUT IT WILL NEVER BE A SUBSTITUTE FOR A GOOD BASIC EDUCATION -- DELIVERED BY CARING ADULTS WITH A STUDENT’S BEST INTERESTS AT HEART – OR FOR KNOWING HOW TO USE IT.

YOU ARE THE HIGH TOUCH IN A HIGH TECH WORLD. NO MACHINE WILL EVER REPLACE YOU. NO STUDENT WILL EVER LEARN MORE FROM A MACHINE THAN FROM YOU. FOR YOU, THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE.

THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU DO, AND THAT YOU FOR THIS REALLY TOUCHING AWARD.