

# YOUNG PEOPLE AND JOURNALISM IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC ISLANDS

By J. Brock (FINN)

## INTRODUCTION



*Don't drop the dead donkey! These on Tristan are alive and well and remind us that the best news stories are not complicated. Photo © J. Brock (SARTMA)*

Interested people should realise what is going to happen to them when they enter into journalism as a career. Today's it is quite different than it was when "The Young Man and Journalism" was written. For one thing, journalism is no longer for 'men only'. A lot has happened since 1922 and it is necessary to update this vital book to reflect changes. Updates are not complicated and they are penned to help the general public - not editors - understand the craft, with a view to recruiting people for the profession and to regain the respect that the craft once had. Hopefully this update will help people to understand what journalism has become over the past 85 years since "The Young Man and Journalism" was published.

Educational requirements, writing standards, ethical considerations, newspaper lay-out, printing equipment and newsgathering have all changed since then. Most technical changes are welcome but there are changes in educational requirements, ethical considerations and writing standards that are not so welcome.

Though the internet has replaced libraries to do research, study is still necessary to produce well written articles that inform as well as entertain. Thanks to the internet my publication of "The Young Man and Journalism" contained photographs and graphics that my uncle mentioned in 1922 but for one reason or another weren't add to his book.



*Sarah Glass, Left, and Laurian Rogers, Right - Sarah is the Tristan Bureau Chief of SARTMA and edits the Tristan Times Online Newspaper. Laurian heads Atlantic – FM – a radio station serving Tristan da Cunha as well as those at sea in their area of the South Atlantic.*

The decision to re-publish “The Young Man and Journalism” and to update it came when I was on my way to the Patches on Tristan da Cunha with my apprentice and ‘adopted’ granddaughter, Sarah Glass and long time friend, Laurian Rogers. I hadn’t seen Sarah for 18 months and Laurian for three years, so it was helpful to touch bases face to face and talk about the craft of journalism. But all was not well.

In the 85 years since “The Young Man and Journalism” was published the craft had become a dirty word – and two years after granting Tristan da Cunha its own online newspaper with a Tristanian running it – the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Granted £6,000.00 to the Government of Tristan da Cunha to set up an alternative website that included news. Though Sarah had been promised news at the same time the other website got it, that promise had not been kept and we were discussing the way forward when it came to me that something needed to be done to bring back integrity to the craft of journalism. My main concern was to find out what had happened to that integrity over the 85 years since “The Young Man and Journalism” had been published and how to put it right.





*Tristan's potato patches are an area on the Island where people get together and socialize as well as grow crops.*

At first I realised that I wasn't to blame for all of journalism's woes. In the United Kingdom and in the United States as well as other parts of the world, there are enough people working in the craft and they support each other. Added to that, the populations where they work run into the billions. Here, on the South Atlantic Islands the population base is very small (10,000) and by nature the newspapers we publish must have integrity, or soon we would run out of people to write about and readers as well.

Rather than write ex-cathedra I took the decision to write about the basics of good journalism and show how those basics in practice can make a successful newspaper with lots of readers.

But everything has a beginning and there is where I will start. Except for a few short years in the United States my journalistic career took place in the Falkland Islands where I began the Teaberry Express in July 1989, after five years of working other jobs ranging from a Personal Assistant to Communications Officer for the newly formed Fisheries Department.



*Me just out of university*

It is said that the Devil is in the detail, so, like my Uncle Chester, I want to keep this update simple. It is meant for people to see some changes to the craft of journalism between 1922, when the original was published and now. We begin with basic reporting and at the start of my career.

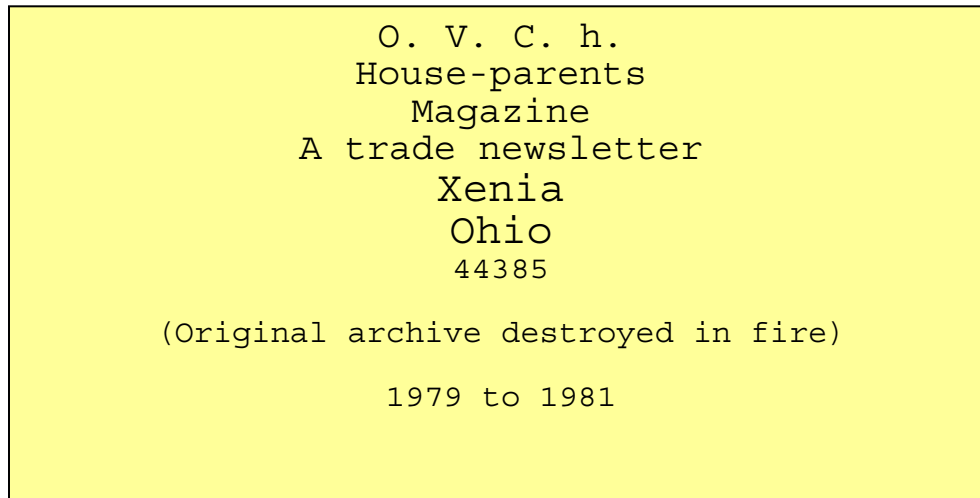
Charlie's  
House  
Neighbourhood Newsletter  
Xenia  
Ohio  
44385

(Original Archive destroyed in fire)  
1977 to 1978

*I did a wide variety of jobs to earn my way through university. Though I had the GI Bill, there were books and other things to pay for so I looked after a sprightly 89 year-old to help keep the wolf from the door. While I looked after him I met the neighbours and, to keep my hand in, I produced a neighbourhood newsletter.*

THE EARLY YEARS:

When "The Young Man and Journalism" was published in 1922 the profession was male dominated and women had just been granted suffrage. There was no internet and television would not be experimental for another three years or so. Colour printing would also come many years later.



*Charlie passed away after I finished University. While I was still looking for work in my profession I took a job at the Ohio Veterans' Children's Home in Xenia, Ohio where I kept my hand in by producing a trade newsletter for house-parents*

Unlike my Uncle Chester's experience, I got my start in the news business by creating my own magazines, newspapers and news agencies. After university I discovered that, though I had all the necessary qualifications, no one wanted to pay me for them. In order to gain experience I had to create a newspaper/magazine. It was my experience that newspapers, radio and TV stations preferred people just out of High School, with no special qualifications, who would look good, command less salary and do what the editor told them to do.

While in University and after I graduated I had the opportunity to do a variety of jobs to earn money to do publications on the side. The first one was a neighbourhood newsletter that had birthdays, anniversaries and tidbits relating to the few streets in Xenia that surrounded Charlie's house - Charlie being the spry 89 year-old I cared for in his senior but not un-lively years.

After Charlie's passing I went to work at the Ohio Veterans' Children's Home in Xenia, where I learned childcare and fulminated about how I would go into business making my living by practicing journalism. In late 1981 I came up with the idea about having a county-wide magazine with events and features as well as photos and light news. People liked the idea and I copyrighted the name of the publication and put out several monthly issues before I had to make a decision about whether I wanted to continue to work for the State of Ohio or begin a new career in journalism. I chose Journalism.

Other employment helped me to write about subject areas with more expertise and helped me to gain confidence and a good list of contacts.



*My first professional publication – “The Greene Magazine” – copyrighted in 1982 Covered Greene County in Ohio. This also marked the last of the newspaper/magazines I published in the United States. Soon after this was published I began my move to the Falkland Islands.*

By necessity reporting has changed due to improvements in communications and printing equipment as well as editorial focus. Presumably this means that if you get it wrong there are far reaching ramifications – and being thrown in at the deep end meant there were plenty of ramifications.

Thanks to what was written in “The Young Man in Journalism,” I had a guide to make what I wrote factual, honest and easy to read. The book also provided a blueprint for my career as a journalist.

J. L. B.  
(With more than a little help from Sarah and Laurian)  
Edinburgh of the Seven Seas, Tristan da Cunha  
Twenty hundred and seven



*Sarah Glass - at work for Tristan da Cunha for the Tristan Times Online Newspaper*