J-School Honors Leading Muckracker, Adds to Pulitizer Board

For more than 15 years, reporter Jerry Mitchell has unearthed documents, cajoled suspects and witnesses, and quietly pursued leads in an attempt to investigate the unsolved murders of civil rights activists.

Now Columbia's journalism school has honored Mitchell's work with the John Chancellor Award for Excellence in Journalism, presented to him at a ceremony in Low Library on Tuesday, Nov. 29.

The $25,000 annual award recognizes and rewards a journalist whose reporting over time shows courage, integrity, curiosity and intelligence, and epitomizes the role of journalism in a free society.

Mitchell's reporting for The Clarion-Ledger in Jackson, Miss., led to four Ku Klux Klan members being brought to justice decades after their crimes, including Byron de la Beckwith, who killed Medgar Evers in 1963.

Most recently, Eddie Ray Killen was found guilty in June for orchestrating the murders of Aneta Gooch, Goodman, James Chaney and Michael Schwerner in 1964.

"Mitchell pursued these stories after most people believed they belonged to history, and not to journalism," said David Halberstam, a member of the award's selection committee. "But they did belong to journalism, because the truth had never been told."

In other journalism school news: Paul C. Tash, editor of the St. Petersburg Times and chairman and CEO of the Times Publishing Company, has been elected to the Pulitzer Prize Board, where he will serve for up to nine years.

As chairman of the Florida First Amendment Foundation and a director of the Committee to Protect Journalists, Tash is active in First Amendment issues. He serves on the boards of the Poynter Institute for Media Studies and the Newspaper Association of America, and participates in journalism contests, including the Pulitzer Prizes.

The 2006 Pulitzer Prizes will be announced on Monday, April 17, 2006, and presented in May at a ceremony at Columbia University.

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Sex and the City Star Imparts Screen and Stage Wisdom

Brimming with show business anecdotes and hard-won advice, Kim Cattrall emphasized in a recent talk to Columbia MFA students the importance of actors and directors having wide-ranging life experiences rather than spending all of their time burrowing into their craft.

"We have a mission to portray humanity in all of its facets," she said, "so it's important to develop through its libraries a collection of images from its distinctive Barbara C. Adachi Japanese Puppet Theater Collection, which features rare and original puppets related to the revival of bunraku, a 17th-century form of puppet theater, in postwar Japan. The collection consists of more than 12,500 slates and nearly 7,000 black-and-white photos, as well as theater programs, texts and audio recordings.

According to Starr Library director Amy V. Heinrich, the digitization project is intended to make the collection "a public as well as a library resource."

In addition, the Libraries have launched a new Web site for Ling Long, a Chinese women's magazine from the 1930s that provides a unique glimpse into the life of Republican-era Shanghai.

An initiative of Columbia Libraries Digital Project, the site offers significant new content, such as essays filling in the historical and cultural background to appreciate the magazine's collection of articles on topics such as film, fashion, marriage, and advice on how to be "the girl of today."

We can expect to see more initiatives of this kind in future that the Starr Library has answered a $1.5 million dollar grant from the Starr Foundation by raising $2.1 million of its own, much of which came from library users.

The grant is directed toward improvements to the library's physical infrastructure, additions to its Korean and Tibetan collections, and further digitization of its holdings.

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Libraries Adding to East Asia Digital Collections, Human Rights Archives

The Columbia Libraries will soon be enhancing their traditional strengths in two key areas: East Asian studies and human rights.

The C.Y. Starr East Asian Library is making more of its extraordinary collections available online, to the benefit of scholars and other interest-ed people who are unable to visit its collections in person.

"With the help of a grant from the Freeman Foundation, Starr Library will be creating a searchable online database that can be completed from its distinctive Barbara C. Adachi Japanese Puppet Theater Collection, which features rare and original puppets related to the revival of bunraku, a 17th-century form of puppet theater, in postwar Japan. The collection consists of more than 12,500 slates and nearly 7,000 black-and-white photos, as well as theater programs, texts and audio recordings."

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Universal Player Contract System, which controlled the careers of many television performers until the late 1970s, was, in retrospect, an ideal way of honing her talent.

"Because of that, I was constantly dy about the sexual exploits in many shows and roles, I got a chance to perform—most recently, in a revival of Life Is It, Anyway in London's West End theatre district.

Her ‘theater habit,' as she calls it, goes back a long way and may have been responsible for her big film break more than 20 years ago.

Playing the sexy gym teacher in Porky's, a light teen comedy about the sexual customs of a group of Florida high school students in the 1950s, she wanted to earn enough money to continue doing theatre and more serious work.

Months after the film wrapped, she was determined to drive past a billboard on Sunset Boulevard emblazoned with her name and promoting the film—it had become a bigger hit.

Cattrall said that working under the Universal Player Contract System, which controlled the careers of many television performers until the late 1970s, was, in retrospect, an ideal way of honing her talent.

"Because of that, I was constantly working," she said, "doing Quincy one day, Charlie's Angels the next. With so many shows and roles, I got a chance to really stretch. I could try new things in each take."

The actress is currently working on a book and companion video called Everything I Ever Learned about Being a Girl, a collaboration with several teenagers that provides advice to girls as they approach womanhood.

Her Nov. 30 talk was moderated by Kristin Linklater, a well-known teacher of voice production and a professor in the Graduate Theatre Division of the School of the Arts.