Sherm Miller
Life and times with the Wildcat, the J-Department and the ’60s
This publication celebrates the influence of an inspiring and demanding mentor to students who worked on the Daily Wildcat in the 1960s—Sherman R. Miller 3rd.

Even 40 years later, these students hold powerful memories of their teacher and adviser, and of working on the Wildcat. We have collected some of these memories and recollections and published them, mostly unedited, to commemorate Sherm and the dedication of the new Wildcat newsroom.

These memories capture a moment in Wildcat history and relay a compelling story of student journalism at the UofA. Almost uniformly, they paint a picture of a hard-boiled, grizzled newsman, squinting from cigarette smoke, who demanded excellence from his students and whose lessons they remember to this day. *Backward runs the sentence.* Our thanks go out to the Wildcat alumni who shared their stories and contributed to this small memory book. It is not only a tribute to Sherm Miller, but also strong testimony to the Wildcat and to the role of the campus press.

When the Daily Wildcat launched a fundraising campaign last year to support the development of its new offices, we stirred many memories from our friends and alumni. Among those we reached were the family and friends of Sherm Miller, whose generous contributions helped make possible a 21st century student news facility where print, electronic, broadcast and video journalism is practiced daily by hundreds of students.

Naming the Wildcat newsroom for Sherman R. Miller 3rd helps carry forward this tradition of excellence in student journalism.

Mark Woodhams
Director, Arizona Student Media
and Adviser, Arizona Daily Wildcat

April 23, 2004
Lorrie Rhodes Wray

SHERMAN MILLER was my only notable professor from 60-64, the years I was there.

I was going to do a minor in Journalism since my pledge mom, Carole Haines Smith, always intrigued me in the wonderful world of the journalism department. When I first met Sherm I remember what a dynamic whirlwind of a person he was. I took beginning writing and photojournalism. He was kind enough to take the time with me to give me a D in writing and telling me not to continue with it but with the photojournalism part instead. All the rest of my journalism courses were in photography and finally I became the first female Photo Editor of the Wildcat. I had the first fashion issue photographing students and their surroundings.

We went to Willcox to do our copy of the class newspaper from the course. I remember photographing the wonderful watering ridges of its agricultural land and the camaraderie of those Wildcatters who were part of the class.

There was the JFK moment when we heard the news while we were in the Journalism room. We went from kicked in the head pain to we need to put an issue together now. Sherm had us mobilized in minutes putting together that issue.

It was a whirlwind time in my life. One moment I was photographing Van Cliburn on assignment and the next knee deep in chemicals in the dark room producing what I needed to to get my next assignment photos into the Wildcat.

Sherm had the charisma to get the best out of his people. He challenged them, mentored them and gave them the best of himself to get them to get the best out of themselves. He will be missed now as he was then. He was unforgettable.

I remember the coffee mugs he wrote with our names on them. I still have the mug even though my name on it is long gone. You remember all those things that were part of your college life and smile. Thanks.

Betty Beard

I AM a reporter at The Arizona Republic. I studied journalism at the UA in the 1960s, graduating in 1969. I took a class from Miller in the last year he taught there.

My mother took a journalism class there in about 1963 and I have always kept a red book called “Attention Editors:” published by the Department of Journalism that she used in class. The forward was written by Miller (It is signed SRM), and I am pretty sure the rest of the book was written by him. It reflects his style, his humor and beautiful brevity.

Samples:
- “Good copy editors make a paper. Bad ones wreck it”
- “The Wildcat is truly the living history of The University.”

And my favorite:
- “Don’t whistle—ever. For some reason this is about the only extraneous sound that drives a newspaperman nuts. It once was customary to throw birdseed at whistling copy boys.”

2 Miller Life and Times
As for my memories, here they are:

Sherman Miller was the first journalism teacher I had, and I have two strong memories, even after 37 years. One is that he used the word “Zilch” all the time. If he was reciting an anecdote to tell us how to write a story, he would say something like “John Zilch was elected mayor.”

I am sure he wrote the Journalism Department’s guidebook “Attention Editors,” because it advises writing “Zilch” on the back of a photograph and to mark the caption. “All things being equal, the cutline Zilch will thus be placed with the cut Zilch,” it said.

And the second is that he got my competitive juices flowing. We all had beats for the Wildcat, and about once a week, he would announce the reporters that had the most stories in the previous week. It made me want to move to the top of the list.

Lynda Cuqua Zimmer Straw

BACK IN the fall of 1966, I was features editor of the Wildcat.

Crusty ol’ Sherman Miller had been my teacher for beginning journalism so I was up for the task.

We did most of our work in the basement of the LAS building when the journalism department was only that one room. It was an era of naivete. My boyfriend was able to name fraternity party luaus with obscene Hawaiian words and, unaware, I’d put them in the headlines.

Editors had to go to the printer to put the paper to bed on week nights.

We switched printers that year, contracting with a low cost printer in South Tucson.

The best part of it was all the great Mexican food places in the vicinity, but the printing process was slow and difficult.

We were all pulling all-nighters to get the paper out.

Not sure my mother believed that. She’d call regularly to check and always get Editor Bill Woodruff on the phone saying “Woodruff here” in a one-word, out of breath manner.

When Miller had a big standoff with the administration over the printer, he apparently lost the argument and the paper went independent.

We thought those who worked for the Wildcat after that were real scab labor. We put out an alternative paper for awhile, but then most of us opted for “real” jobs.

I was able to get a full-time job with the Arizona Daily Star my senior year so that experience ultimately gave me a good pick of jobs after graduation.

I went with the Associated Press in Phoenix.

In the 1970s I covered city hall, then county courts and politics for The Arkansas Democrat (now Democrat-Gazette) in Little Rock.

Since my first husband, Robert Zimmer, an AP correspondent, died in 1992, I’ve been a reporter and columnist for The News-Gazette in Champaign, Ill. I write human interest features, local religion, a consumer column, a food column and restaurant reviews (for which I’ve won state awards).

I still use the Zimmer name professionally. I re-married Ray Straw in 1994. He is an engineer for Caterpillar in Peoria, so we live halfway between our jobs, in Bloomington, and commute in opposite directions.
Sidney Coffin Lippman

SHERMAN MILLER terrorized me for the first half of Journalism 5A in the fall semester of 1964.

He would fix me with that one eye that could see through the smoke rising from the omnipresent cigarette in his hand and pick apart whatever horrible bit of trash I had dared to hand in from my beat as Agriculture Department reporter for the Arizona Wildcat. In those days, every journalism student worked as a reporter or editor for the Wildcat, like it or not.

I had more or less stumbled into journalism—hey, my parents thought reporters spent their time peeking in windows and using their cameras to catch people doing things they shouldn’t be doing. In their defense, I will say my mother subscribed to the Sunday New York Times (we lived near Philadelphia), so I did know that newspaper had some elevated status. And I was impressed that Sherman Miller, my Journalism 5A teacher, had worked there.

But that didn’t help much on those days when he tore apart my pathetic offerings before the entire class. Day after day and week after week my writing and reporting were found wanting, and I failed the in-class writing tests. Until one day at about mid-term, when Mr. Miller stood in front of the class and said something like, “I have here a perfect item. It is not long, but it answers every question, and I will read it to you.” And he read the three graph short I had written about the upcoming Block and Bridle Club meeting.

That was it. I was hooked on journalism, which I have now been working at for nearly 40 years. I’m not sure how he did it, but Mr. Miller made me want to sweat to meet his standards and not be satisfied until I had. And he was followed by Phil Mangelsdorf and Don Carson who made me want to excel for them too. It was a great time and a great journalism department.

I graduated in 1966 and by then there had been maybe one poorly attended anti-war march, these things came to Arizona slowly. I remember it took the Beatles a long time to get to Arizona too.

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P.S. I’m a senior editor at Voice of America news. I’ve worked there since 1980 and hope to retire this year. I’d be delighted to hear from any former classmates.

Saundra Comfort McCarthy

THE UA J Dept. was a training ground for newsmen/women. Sherman was the Wildcat publisher, and, we, the students, were his staff. Writing & editing courses were geared to getting the paper out. What better way to learn than by doing! Sherm used to brag that his graduates got hired at the best papers in the country -- at journeyman scale. In my case, he helped me land a job at The Philadelphia Inquirer; where, at age 22, I was the first woman hired for the copy desk “since the war (WWII),” which opened the doors for many who followed...

As a staff, we raised a bit of hell, for those days:

Carol Crane noticed the fire extinguisher in her dorm was registering in the “red zone.” She checked others & found more of the same, so she contacted the Tucson Fire Dept. & followed an inspector around to other dorms. The ensuing editorial/
expose had parents calling from all over the country. And the extinguishers were upgraded...

A J class in the basement was interrupted one Monday morning when members of the football team stormed through the ground level windows, looking for editor Frank Sotomayor. The Wildcat editorial that day had called for the firing of coach Jim LaRue. Frank wasn’t there & I laughed. Little did they know “a girl” (guess who) wrote the piece & convinced the rest of the staff to get Frank to run it. Frank got a good scare, and LaRue was fired at the end of the season...

Campus unrest consisted of panty raids, accompanied by the torching of palm trees. We ran a story & pix 3 days in a row, yet the disturbances continued. Sherm finally suggested we let one go unnoted. We did & the torchings stopped, just as he had predicted...

Some of us got our first airplane ride when Sherm flew our Community Journalism class up to Cottonwood to gather info for our special edition of The Verde Valley Independent...

Finally, there was the time Sherm told Doug Paxton, head of campus police, to “back off,” or the Wildcat would publish the blueprints of the university’s underground security tunnels. Paxton backed off. (Sotomayor might remember what prompted this action.)

Saundra Comfort (’66) McCarthy, #21 Retorno Flamingos Bucerias, Nayarit, Mexico CP 63732

P.S. Did anyone mention Sherm used to drive around in an old, unrestored MGA with the top down? On cold mornings he’d arrive on campus wearing an old blue carcoat with a furry hood over his suit...

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**John Lacy**

I WILL unfortunately be out of town for your official dedication of the Sherman R. Miller Newsroom in the new Arizona Daily Wildcat office. I count Sherm as the major inspiration of my college career and even though I went on to law school, my beat-up copy of Fowler’s English Usage continues to occupy and important place among my reference materials. I think the highlight of my journalistic undergraduate career was when I slipped the word “harriers” into an article about the cross country team knowing full well that Sherm would publicly call me to task on its usage. We got along famously after I showed him it was a perfectly good word in Webster’s Dictionary.

I have enclosed a keepsake that deserves to be somewhere in the Sherman R. Miller 3rd archives. It is a poem that was used as lyrics to a song composed by the Community Newspapers class at our final party in Wilcox after putting out an edition of the Arizona Range News in the spring of 1964. It is sung to the tune of “Hernando’s Hideaway” and was composed by the ladies in the class (today I do not remember who they were, but if you have the roster from that class I can probably remember).
I AM delighted to hear that the memory of Sherm Miller is being memorialized in the history of the Arizona Daily Wildcat—an institution he loved, built and used as a training tool for many wonderful journalists.

Although I met Sherm on only a very limited basis as an undergraduate, his reputation preceded him. I came from the other side of the newspaper world—advertising—and thus was set into an adversarial role with the editors.

History of the Dispute – A View from the Advertising Staff

As Business Manager of the Wildcat in the fall of 1966, Bumps Tribolet asked me to ‘excuse’ the Journalism Department from continuing to write the Arizona Daily Wildcat. The ASUA (Bumps) and the Journalism Department (Sherm) had reached an impasse. This is my recollection of how we ‘came to blows.’

During my tenure as Circulation Manager in the fall of 1964, then ad salesman from 1965 and finally Business Manager in 1966, the business team had increased demand for advertising enough that Bumps allowed us to go from 2 or 3 publications per week to 3 or 4 times and then finally daily. But the increased frequency of publications was a hardship on the editorial side. Add to that the newspaper had employed a unionized and inefficient printer who was still using Linotype (hot metal) typesetting. This contractor was reluctant to advance into the coming computer age. Accordingly, I arrived back in the fall of 1966 to learn of our change to Hi-Color Litho—a new ASUA contractor—who was using ‘cold type’ to set the pages.

The Journalism Department was VERY dissatisfied: new physical arrangements and earlier deadlines were all too much, too soon in the year. Was there an interdepartmental war—that Bumps Tribolet had made this final decision to change contractors without Sherm’s input? I must confess that I was only a student—so I was not privy to ‘all the truth’ behind this suspicion.

We were now the Arizona Daily Wildcat—‘Arizona’s 5th largest daily.’ The Journalism Department resented the larger news hole when we bounced more frequently to 12 or 16 pages. Many did not think we nor the new contractor could not continue the increased pace of business.

All of this karma came to a head on Friday, October 7, 1966: the journalism staff resigned demanding no need a new printer and smaller news holes. At Bumps’ direction I advised them that the paper would go out without them. I am sure Bill Woodruff thought I was bluffing. Maybe I was.

So, on Monday, October 10, 1966 the Wildcat was published with a new abbreviated staff and a smaller masthead: Publisher—ASUA, Business Manager—Jim Berg and Circulation Manager—John Brown. I became the unwilling yet de facto managing editor of the Wildcat and wrote the first non-Journalism Department editorial: “It’s About Time.” The editorial below “Cubs’ Staff Wildcat” explained the emergency predicament the newspaper was facing. Only because we imported a professional journalist from the Arizona Daily Star named Alexander did the newspaper print without a hitch.

My de facto editor’s position—gratefully—lasted about 3 days until we could import temporary professionals. My hands were full enough being a full time student. Within weeks the ASUA launched a Publications Board search for a new Wildcat Editor and staff.

I write all of this because the events of the Fall of 1966 changed the Arizona Daily Wildcat forever. It was a significant time in 1966 when the formal separation occurred... It is a most significant time now as Arizona Daily Wildcat moves into its new self supporting offices. I am most proud of all who have made the move possible, especially the generosity of the family of Sherm Miller.
I learned a lot about myself and how hard I could work and still perform. Neither Sherm nor I knew I was to be greatly impacted by those times. Unknowingly, he had another student with newsprint in his soul. So, I, too, became indebted to Sherm: since 8 years later I became the owner of 4 weekly newspapers in San Antonio. Jim Berg Publications published about 4,500 editions over the next 22 years—all thanks in part to Sherm!

I hold no resentment again the Journalism Department. I simply happened to love selling newspaper advertising. Whatever success we had propelled the campus newspaper into the future with the independence it deserved.

Chuck Loop

I REMEMBER our journalism classes being fairly small and informal but always interesting and informative. It was great having two former working journalists as instructors—Dr. Brewster Campbell, who as I recall, had been in a managing editor position with the Detroit Free Press and Sherman Miller who had spent several years with the New York Times. Both men provided practical applications in their instruction that I have used throughout my career.

I also remember serving on the Arizona Wildcat staff and working into the late hours on Monday and Wednesday nights on the copy desk to put together editions for distribution of the Arizona Wildcat on Wednesday and Friday. Joe Cole was Editor and Edie Sayre was Managing Editor. Both were great leaders and motivators.

I remember our staff as being a closely knit team that had a tremendous sense of pride in the quality and content of the Wildcat. This was a tribute to Mr. Miller and Joe and Edie’s leadership. The copywriting and copy reading skills that I learned and developed during that time are still helpful to me 43 years later. I learned much from Mr. Miller during the process.

I also vividly remember his dream to have the Arizona Wildcat become a daily newspaper.

My Wildcat beat work involved covering sports and working for Jim Johnson who was Sports Editor. I covered U of A baseball as well as tennis and wrestling. I learned the importance of meeting deadlines and being concise and accurate in my reporting and writing skills.

I recall in 1960 that our staff put out a special 50th Anniversary Edition of the Wildcat that included a lot of feature articles. I can also remember being part of a team that set up an “Election Central” in the Wildcat newsroom to monitor and report on the 1960 election night results involving Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy. This was an exciting event and we had visitors from all parts of the campus visit the newsroom to check the results.

Mr. Miller became a real confidant to me during the second semester of my senior year. I was now married and became a father during early March. He was extremely supportive and always seemed able to make time to meet with me to listen to my concerns and provide guidance during this challenging period in my life. I’ll always remember and be grateful to him for his influence on both my professional career and in my personal life.

I’m also pleased that he realized his dream to have the Arizona Wildcat become the Arizona Daily Wildcat. It’s very fitting that the Sherman R. Miller 3rd Newsroom be established in his honor.

Note: I graduated from U of A in June 1961 and started work as a News Editor for KVOA-TV in Tucson before commencement. I subsequently left KVOA to move to California and began a career in marketing management and public relations. For the past six years, I have been President and CEO of a marketing and public relations firm called Marketing Innovations in Tulsa, OK.
Karen Despain

When I reflect on people who especially nurtured my life and my career, I think of three in particular each and every day: My parents, who instilled in me, almost from my birth, the value of a college education (at the University of Arizona, of course, their alma mater) and Sherman Miller.

Sherman Miller was the man who allowed me to take journalism classes earlier than the rules would allow, after I pitched my love for the field to him as a sophomore, and the mentor who never failed to encourage me and my classmates in our pursuit of a profession that (notice, I did not use “which” in this instance) he ennobled with his guidance of young people and his own personal gift of talent to give to us.

The foregoing long, long sentence would never pass his test, but I beg Professor Miller’s forgiveness.

How do you describe, in concise sentences, a man who gave so much to a career he loved and to young people aspiring to walk in his path?

Sherman Miller was my mentor and the person who got me my first job. My life has circled from that time so many years ago. I began my career, thanks to him, at the Prescott Courier in 1962. Life’s circumstances took me away from Prescott in the early 1970s until the late 1980s, when I returned to the Courier.

Not a day has gone by, ever, that I do not think of Sherman Miller.

He was my mentor, and still is, as I coach young reporters in tools of a profession that he so enriched.

We need him today, walking among us as the consummate newsman! But, I know, as one among the few in this big world he tutored, that he still counsels from afar.

Thanks to Sherman Miller I have my “whitches” and “thats” straight.
Dear Karen:

Many thanks for your Christmas note, which somehow got lost in the children's shuffle, so I have only my own recollections of what it said. You are going to marry the chief of police, you said? What did I tell you in 5-a about the life of adventure?? You're running true to the highest ethic of the business: Never, never, marry anyone who doesn't know or care about newspaper people. Seriously, I'm very happy for you. You are a fine, bright, capable girl, feminine and pretty, yet with more guts in your little finger than a roomful of halfbacks.

Let's see. Alquist is in France and says he gits to Paris now and then. Burkhart is in Stanford and hates it; he's going to marry Kitzi Watson, it says. Teresa going a-hailing on LA Times, yet looks rested. He's draft exempt. Sharon just made ass't. fashion editor of a California slick magazine, I forget the name. Margaret quit in Calif., now working for a PR outfit in Tucson, but the Scottsdale Daily wants her. It was she who was the heroine in the AMA Bulletin last month. Haven't heard from Jan Schneider since she got married in Denver last summer, I think it was. Bulldog Barlowe writing places all over Page One of the Yuma Sun, likewise Pete Brown (Remember him, he hated Arizona.) Solly just peaked No. 4 or is it 5? Happy in Rockford, Ill., but toying with some ag-joournal offer overseas which I hope he forgets about. Haines marrying Gene Smith in Spring. She's shifted from Chronicle to a suburban near San Fran. Wardrip stopped in to see Solly, said he was fed up with grad school and going into advertising business.

What a gang, what people. What a job I've got.

Take care and write when you can.

Love Remina pregnant in Florida.
Tony Ledwell

Sherman Miller, the Wildcat and the 1960s

AHHHH, THE University of Arizona in the fall of 1964, when I first set foot on campus as a freshman. Rumor had it that it was “a party school” with a quarter of the student body from California, not necessarily in Tucson because the quality of education was better.

It was less than a year after the assassination of John Kennedy, the war in Vietnam would prove ominous for many of us who eventually went there, and one professor of mine urged us on election day to vote “no” for president, declaring neither Lyndon Johnson nor Barry Goldwater acceptable. Still, it was often suggested the university was “a hotbed of social rest.”

It would be a year before I met Sherman Miller because freshmen were not allowed to take journalism courses. Miller wanted only “serious” students in his department who had weathered at least a year at the university.

In the fall of 1965 I finally landed in the journalism classroom/Wildcat newsroom in the basement of the Liberal Arts Building. It was an exciting time: Journalism at last and the three-times-a-week Arizona Wildcat was evolving into the Arizona Daily Wildcat.

Journalism 5a (newswriting), my first journalism course, was taught by Sherman Miller. With graying hair cut like a Marine, he strolled into the classroom, cigarette in hand, and a slight sneer on his face. He rolled the unlit cigarette around his lips for what seemed like hours before finally putting flame to the damn thing. And then he spent the entire semester telling stories!

Sherm made it quite clear that you did not learn how to be a professional newsman (we were all of the same gender, professionally, back then) from books. You learned by doing it—reporting an event, writing about it, getting feedback from Sherm and, above all else, listening to his stories. His stories were meant to inspire. His stories were meant to entertain—usually Miller first, then the students. He never hesitated to laugh at his own jokes.

Don’t ask me why, but I still have my notes from Journalism 5a. They are filled with Sherm-isms. “All the world is divided into two people – newspaper people and other people.” “Tolerance is giving the other guy the right to be wrong.” “If anybody had called me a journalist, I would have slugged him. I’m a newsman.”

He was courtly with the women students but conveyed an air of mischief with the men. He probably regarded the news business as a “man’s world” but would never admit it.

He slipped at least once. The social page of the Wildcat listed spring fraternity parties and one fraternity labeled its bash as “The Lack-a-Nukie Luau.” It got in the paper, Miller was livid, and snapped, “This is why copy editors should always be men.”

I recall he strolled into the Wildcat newsroom one day, attached a flyer seeking applicants for a journalism fellowship to the bulletin board, and chuckled to the few guys lingering around: “This is from my favorite university—Ball State!”

Then came the troubled fall of 1966. Bill Woodruff was the editor, Nick Proffitt was the city editor, and I was the assistant city editor of the Arizona Daily Wildcat, published by journalism students with Miller as
the faculty adviser. A print shop in South Tucson had won a low bid to print
the paper. Problems abounded. The staff believed the print shop could
not handle the demands of daily publication. We often worked late into
the night. Arguments flew about the low-bid contract. We wanted another
printer, the university said no. We resigned in a collective huff, saying we
could not function as professional newsmen without a professional print
shop. Some of us wrote and distributed an off-campus publication called
“The Arizona Wilder-cat,” the brainchild of Woodruff. Lasted about five
issues.

Student government leaders “took over” the Wildcat for the rest of the
1966-67 academic year. I quit reading it. The former staff moved on to
other jobs.

Sherm Miller taught another great class, Community Newspapers. In
the spring of 1967 the 12 students in that class made three weekend trips
by plane to Kingman to research and gather news for the weekly Mohave
County Miner. We would spend a week in April in Kingman publishing the
newspaper.

I vividly recall the people who put that newspaper edition together:
Nick Proffitt, Martie Hudson, Beverly Lyford, Bill Greer, Craig Dougherty,
Gerry Gable, Bob Hesler, Georgia Martinez, Jan Newton, Bill Woodruff, Jill
Zelickson and me. (I vividly recall because I have a copy of the paper before
me as I write this mess.)

Dick Waters, editor and publisher of the Mohave County Miner wrote
of our team in that April 20, 1967, issue: “They are well trained. Their top
boss is Sherman Miller, head of the University journalism department and
a former national and international news desk editor for The New York
Times. He is a pleasant sort of fellow who extends the hand of fellowship to
his charges—but takes little nonsense from them. He is a rarity—an adult
who understands kids.”

The community newspaper class and Kingman trip was my last expe-
rience with Sherman Miller, who taught abroad during my senior year. It
seems odd today that I only knew him two years.

I sought to become editor of the Arizona Daily Wildcat in 1967. I didn't
get the job, but the man who did, Bill Sauro, asked me to be managing edi-
tor. More journalism students drifted back into the Wildcat sphere, but that
year was most notable for what I would always cheerfully call the darkest
moment in the history of the Arizona Daily Wildcat—an editorial endorse-
ment of Richard Nixon for president! (Nixon was a no show on campus,
but Robert F. Kennedy made a campaign stop at the old University Audito-
rium in 1968 shortly before he was killed.)

Then came that night in the spring of 1968 when Steve Lang knocked
on the door of the Tucson apartment I shared with Nick Proffitt and an-
nounced to us without even a hello: “Miller is dead.” He had heard that
Sherm had taken ill in Turkey and died in a U.S. hospital in Germany. For
the journalism department, an era had passed.

I still have a letter Sherman Miller sent to each member of his 1965
Journalism 5a class, thanking us for an anonymous presentation to him of
framed copies of the Bill of Rights, the Declaration of Independence and
the Gettysburg Address. He called the documents his “favorite recurrent
readings.” He concluded the letter: “Because the best 5a class I have had
is no more, I have no way to thank you en masse. Therefore, I thank each
individual for giving me what truly was the great pleasure of trying to teach
you.” It is dated January 28, 1966, and signed, in his usual style, simply:
“S.R.M.”
Tony Ledwell, 815 Balsam Street, Boise, ID 83706
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Avery Keener Econome

THE UOFA Journalism Department was the best of all on-the-job learning places when I was there from 1961 to 1964. Sherman Miller was the innovative leader, the heart, the soul and the feisty spirit of the department. He also was one of only three teachers, all seasoned newspapermen whose tales of life as reporters convinced us there could be no more entertaining way to make a living. Four decades and three jobs later I still believe it.

On-the-job training was the only way to learn for students of "Mr. M." He was the toughest publisher and the best friend any of us ever had. He treated students like colleagues on the job, like kids when we needed counseling and like friends—always like friends.

He gave his colleague kids the confidence to be bold in print. But he was a brutal post-press editor who covered each edition of the Wildcat with so much red ink our egos would bleed.

We worked hard and long and late. We never missed a deadline (but we often skidded right up to it). We drank gallons of coffee. We laughed, we complained. We honed a healthy cynicism along with pretty good interviewing and writing skills. Some of the guys, including Mr. M, did it all in a haze of cigarette smoke. He was not, by nature, a man of moderation but he did make us go to a lower-octane coffee after a week or so of sleepless nights.

Late one editing night (we called it J lab then) Mr. M sat on ice all the way home. We had been so delighted watching snow fall that he forgot the top was off his sports car. We all stood laughing in the parking lot as he drove away—swearing that to an old New York Times guy, a little Tucson snow wasn’t worth shoveling off the seat.

Those were pre-computer years. We wrote stories on clackety manual typewriters, edited late into the night with soft-lead pencils, cropped photos with a grease pencil and a ruler, and spent Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays in a hot, gritty print shop in South Tucson.

When the old press crashed one print night we packed everything up, drove to a printer in Casa Grande, and had the newspaper on the stands before the first class began the next morning.

As a 20-year-old female student, during the years of the 11 p.m. curfew, I was able to go only because Mr. M. called the dean of women at home. He promised that I would ride only in the car he was driving and that he, personally, would walk me to the door when we returned. At 3 a.m. or so, when we did get back, my house mother and the dean of women were waiting to clock me in and scold the chairman of the Department of Journalism.

It was better than a jail break.

Even better than that, was the Community Newspaper Project. My year we flew one weekend to Show Low to do features, and returned for a week later in the semester to “put out” the community newspaper. It was the best time...even when the print-shop burned and we had to rescue typewriters to write copy in the back seats of cars.

Those were great, empowering years for a shy and sheltered Colorado girl. I
learned how to swear, to sneak past authorities for a story and fight for a point of view.

We all learned to cultivate news sources and strive for objectivity. And we learned, the day JFK was shot in Dallas, that even student journalists couldn't wallow in shock or grief until the story was told.

Sherm Miller treated us like colleagues and he and his wife, Elizabeth, knew novice colleagues in the newspaper business needed a good home-cooked meal from time to time. He treated us like kids, cajoling and counseling and demanding our best effort. He often listened to my complaints and, with a few well-chosen words, forced me to broaden my perspective.

He loved his students and was interested in and proud of their accomplishments. He was as thrilled as I when I sent him my first above-the-fold byline on a daily newspaper. I know that because he called from Tucson to California to tell me “well done.”

Sherman Miller was a master mentor, inspiring teacher, a fun and loyal friend. He was a devoted family man whose family happily embraced his college kids. And he had more fun than anybody when he and Mrs. M signed on to chaperone a party.

The journalism department was as small and close as a rowdy family in the mid-1960s. It was filled with characters and headed by the biggest character of all.

He’d hate this thought, of course, but I can only hope that students in the Sherman R. Miller 3rd Newsroom somehow are touched by the spirit, the wit and the wisdom of the newsman for whom it is so appropriately named.

Susan (Rabin Rosenbaum) Weaver

I DON’T recall if I knew what precipitated the changeover of the Wildcat from the J Department to Associated Students, but I was caught in the middle and cascaded into a sea of press releases to rewrite, stories to gather and headlines to count.

I had been out of favor with Bill Woodruff, editor of the Wildcat in 1966, and was not chosen for his staff. At the beginning of that semester I was just another journalism student, unconnected and probably oblivious to the conflict between the J Department and the U of A administration.

In October 1966, I met and began dating Lanny Rosenbaum, a former Wildcat editor who had returned to campus to finish his masters’ thesis. At the time of upheaval, Lanny was asked by administration to help out “temporarily” by producing the Wildcat, and I went along for the ride.

I remember honing my skills by writing volumes of news and feature stories and coping with the stacks of science school releases by bursting into tears. I could count headlines in any font, any size without marking the page. In those early days of the split, it was just the two of us putting out the paper, spending late nights in the print shop watching the linotype machines spit out hot type for proofing.

Lanny was the connection to the politics of the situation, and I was the worker bee putting out a lot of copy. Eventually the pressure was lightened by the additions of Barbara Roth and Tom Babcock, along with other lower classmen who trickled in to flesh out the staff.

Towards the end of that year, I was asked by administration to take the position of Wildcat editor for 1967-68. I would have had the distinction of becoming the first woman editor in the history of the paper, and have regretted to this day that I turned it down. I was preoccupied with engagement parties and bridal showers, preparing for my marriage to Lanny Rosenbaum.
Beverly Lyford Milkman

My Recollections of Sherman Miller and The Daily Wildcat

“COME ON out and we’ll make you into a topnotch sports reporter,” Professor Miller wrote in the spring of 1965, leaving no doubt in my mind that I should transfer to Arizona instead of Missouri to study journalism and pursue my dream of covering major sports like football and basketball for a daily newspaper.

Six months later I found myself on the UA campus, searching for the Journalism Department. I located the basement-level, one-room J-school and timidly asked for Professor Miller, who was holding forth in his glass-walled office that looked out onto the “newsroom.” To me, he appeared the embodiment of a hard-boiled newspaperman: gray-white crewcut, compact body, pugnacious demeanor and, as I recall, waving a cigarette to punctuate his remarks. Intimidating, certainly; impressive, absolutely. I was instantly in awe!

Fast forward to my first journalism class, the notorious 5a news writing, taught by the Department Head himself. Already playing catch-up ball as a junior among a group of sophomores, I struggled to master the short, crisp sentences Miller demanded. My early news stories for The Daily Wildcat could not have been more mundane or abbreviated. Yet still, I dreaded walking into the newsroom in the morning and checking the bulletin board, knowing that I was unlikely to avoid at least one of Miller’s infamous red-ink corrections to “my” story. Particularly embarrassing were the inadvertent sexual references I seemed to be prone to: “No, no Miss Lyford. You don’t call it the ‘heated women’s’ swimming pool,” and “Never tell the reader to put something in Mrs. Ruth’s box.” My face was as red as the ink on the marked-up Wildcat, as the gist of his criticism sunk in.

Fortunately, I proved capable of learning to use words more carefully and was rewarded with two semesters of “A’s” in 5(a), the only course I was privileged to take from Professor Miller. That spring, I know he played a key role in seeing to it that I was selected as an “Assistant Sports Editor” of The Wildcat, the first female to hold that distinction. The day he singled out one of my lead sentences with a large red star and exclamation points remains a highlight, with the exact phrasing etched in my memory: “Arizona’s baseball team weathered a mid-afternoon rainstorm yesterday and went on to defeat New Mexico 11 to 9 in a critical conference contest.”

Other memories of Miller include his catchy sayings, a couple of which still ring in my ears and have been repeated over the years to my family, staff, and even others who have been subjected to my editorial comments. “Backward runs the sentence, till forward reels the mind.” “Only trains and pregnant women are due.”

Unfortunately, my tenure as a Wildcat sports editor was cut short by our ill-fated attempt in the fall of 1966 to force the University to let us return to the South Tucson shop that had printed the paper prior to that time. The new shop, which apparently had submitted a lower bid, failed to satisfy the student editors I worked for, and we went on strike. Convinced that we would prevail given the obvious merits of our case, we plowed ahead, antagonizing the University Administration with our publication of The Wieldcat, whose short-lived existence included articles that pulled no punches in their criticism of those “bean counters” who were running things.

Our actions, which in retrospect seem rather “Don Quixoteish,” cost the Department The Daily Wildcat, but Sherm Miller, “Uncle Philsie Baby” Mangelsdorf, everyone’s favorite Don Carson, and the other J-Department faculty never complained. To their credit, they stepped in and found places for all of us who were interested at local newspapers, making sure we didn’t lose the opportunity of additional on-the-job training in journalism. My slot was at the fledgling Tucson Daily American (at least I think that was the name), for whom I covered high school basketball and football games, gymnastic meets, and various other local sports events. To be paid
for watching athletic competition seemed to me then—and now—an astoundingly wonderful way to earn a living.

Through no fault of my J-Department mentors who, following my graduation, put my name in for a job covering horse racing at The Arizona Republic, I gravitated away from the newspaper business and the sports writing career to which I had aspired. There is a happy ending, however, to which tremendous credit goes to Sherman Miller, Don Carson, and the rest of those “white males” who put their years of newspaper experience to use in the classroom. The skills they taught us are timeless: how to collect and analyze information and then write it up in a way that succinctly conveys the most critical points. In my case, the analytical and writing abilities honed at their feet propelled me into a challenging and rewarding career as a Federal executive, during which I achieved the highest rank available to a non-political employee and received Presidential recognition for my contributions to the Nation. Obviously, Sherman Miller’s invitation to “come on out” to Arizona had a profound and lasting impact on my life and for that I will always be grateful.

Nann Novinski Durando

Memories of a Mentor

“If CENTRAL casting had been asked to find someone to head the journalism department, Sherman R. Miller 3rd would have been sent to the audition and would have immediately owned the role.

Picture the newspaper reporter in a 1940s’ black-and-white movie—hard living, cigarette dangling between lips as he pounds the keys of his black typewriter, a little grizzled, a little disheveled, tough-talking, driven to get the story and get it first.

That was Sherman R. Miller. Almost.

Hard living? We students suspected he wasn’t as hard living as the initial impression he gave. He had a wife and a bunch of young kids he loved to talk about and a house with a swimming pool way out east (past Wilmot). He had a little white sports car with a special parking place next to one of the back doors of the Liberal Arts Building that he drove home every evening past the Maid-enform building (as he laughingly called the now-gone office building on the corner of Wilmot and 5th with the pointed white cones atop it).

Cigarette dangling between lips? Most of the time. At the start of class SRM would open the door of his glass-enclosed office at the back of the main journalism classroom and slowly saunter to the front of the room, cigarette safely tucked between his lips. That cigarette or the next one or the next one was usually there for most of the class. And, of course, most of the class was smoking too. (Non-smokers in a ’60s newsroom were pretty rare and most of us students wanted to prepare fully for our profession.)

A little grizzled? He certainly seemed that way to us 19-22-year-olds. SRM was gray-haired and, therefore, pretty old. We didn’t really ask how old. We just knew he was old (because as journalists we could observe).

Interestingly, as we got older, he kept getting younger in our memories. Some 25 or so years later when I returned to the department and saw his picture on the wall with other former j-department heads, I was jarred by how young and fresh he was. That we saw him as old and grizzled is testimony to the biased vision of youth.

A little disheveled? Usually. He almost always (or so it seemed) wore a long-sleeved white shirt. It looked a little wrinkled and the sleeves, even before his first class, were rolled up to his elbows in a haphazard, rather that orderly, way. The tie
was there but hanging loose. The pants and shoes were very casual. A green visor would have completed the look.

Tough-talking? Yes. This guy was tough because he wanted us to be good. A story of Pulitzer Prize quality but with a misspelled name got an F. No exceptions. Get a fact wrong, get an F. No excuses.

Driven to get the story and get it first? Absolutely. We heard the get-the-story-and-get-it-first message loud, clear and often. But much louder, much clearer and far more often was the rest of the sentence —“and get it right!”

Sherman R. Miller was all of the above and more. He loved his profession. “There are two kinds of people in the world—newspaper people and the rest,” he regularly said, followed by a roaring laugh. He said he was preparing us to work at a job that was so much fun we would think we weren’t really working.

He talked about truth and honesty, about trust and integrity, about the importance of a journalist’s job in informing the public. It was almost impossible to talk with him and want to work anywhere other than a newsroom.

He ruled the journalism department and the Wildcat with a strong hand—but it was a hand covered with some special substance he had that made the hand invisible. You knew the hand was ever-present. But it did not threaten or restrain; it guided and taught. It held a beacon, not a club.

The Wildcat was the tool of the journalism department in the very best sense of the word. The main journalism classroom on the bottom floor in the northeast corner of what was then the Liberal Arts Building became the Wildcat newsroom after the 12:40 class. Students in the newswriting class (5a and 5b) were assigned beats to cover for the Wildcat. The copy editing class (110a and 110b) staffed the copy desk. The editorial class provided editorials, the features writing class provided features, the photo class took pictures—all for the Wildcat editors to use or reject. SRM was the Wildcat advisor. It was a rule, written nowhere and admitted by no one, that only journalism majors (maybe a minor here and there) were Wildcat reporters and editors. A publications board interviewed applicants for Wildcat editor-in-chief. But everyone (except maybe a non-j student who applied) knew it was really SRM who made the decision.

The j-department/Wildcat togetherness was not questioned. It worked. SRM made it work. I graduated before the split. I was pretty stunned by the news and had a difficult time imagining how the journalism department and the Wildcat could possibly be separate. Many pre-split j-students probably still have a difficult time imagining how it all works.

SRM loved the Wildcat and was very proud of it. It was his vision and determination that took it from a three-days-a-week publication to five days a week. He celebrated when the word “Daily” made its first appearance at the top of the front page next to “Wildcat.” He loved to remind the Wildcat staffers that they were working on “the fifth largest daily in the state.”

The best part of every day was walking into the journalism classroom/Wildcat newsroom and seeing that day’s issue tacked on the bulletin board by the door.

SRM would take his famous marker to each issue, pointing out in bright red ink what was good, what was great, what was bad and what was inexcusable.

Occasionally we’d arrive and the paper would not yet be hung. We could see SRM in his office, circling and slashing with that pen. When he was done, he’d walk over to the bulletin board, tack up the paper and return to his office, all without a word or even an acknowledgment that we were in the room. When his office door closed, we’d rush over to the bulletin board like a bunch of grade schoolers running to an ice cream truck. We relished his comments. The brutal criticisms (and there were many) did not hurt or anger us. We welcomed them as his way of teaching us to be “great, not just good, journalists.”

Sherman R. Miller was truly loved and admired by his students. We were awed by him and inspired by him. He taught us about a great profession and made us
so excited about it we could hardly wait to get to work. I worked as a journalist for ten years and then switched to a career as a lawyer. He still influences me. There’s never a week that goes by that I don’t use the skills and apply the principles he taught us. My guess is that everyone one of his students remembers the exact moment we heard of his death. In our lives it was one of those always-remembered moments like John Kennedy’s assassination or the explosion of the Challenger.

The Wildcat newsroom could not have a better, more appropriate or more fitting name. The Sherman R. Miller 3rd Newsroom is a given. As it should be.

Lanny Rosenbaum

I WAS the Wildcat editor-in-chief who, in 1964, first took the newspaper to “almost daily” status (four days a week). Frank Sotomayor was editor-in-chief the following year when the Wildcat went to five days a week. Both of us served our terms while Sherm was adviser. Sherm was a hard-bitten newspaperman who really taught me how to investigate and write, defended me when I took editorial stands contrary to the positions of ultra-conservative legislators, supported me when I was censured by Sen. Jon Kyle (who was Chief Justice of the Student Supreme Court at the time), but shied away from allowing us to criticize the University administration on “meaty” issues.

I was a key player in the “tumult of the 1960s” in regard to the separation of the Arizona Daily Wildcat from the Journalism Department, as I was hired by Associated Students as Publications Manager, advising the newspaper, yearbook, and literary magazine. Sherm referred to me as a “traitorous fi nk” when I took the position, but it paid a helluva lot better than my salary at the Arizona Daily Star. And I needed a job at the time. I knew I was “persona non grata” in the Journalism Department after that, as my name on the Donald Still Award plaque was defaced with acid. When Phil Mangelsdorf replaced Sherm as head of the department, I think he repaired the plaque.

The “breakaway” from the Journalism Department was the healthiest result for the Arizona Daily Wildcat. The new position of Publications Manager was an ASUA staff position rather than faculty, and as a result I was less concerned about ramifications that might affect my tenure or appointment. The University of Arizona administrative premise in the 1960s was “in loco parentis,” with administrators and faculty watching over students as “parents.” The best example of the Wildcat’s breakaway from this dogma was a special supplement on “Drugs at the University” which appeared in 1966 or 1967, winning national acclaim. Such a supplement never would have been produced in those days under the guidance of the Journalism Department.

I’m happy to see the Wildcat persevere all these years independent from the Journalism Department.
I WAS a journalism major and served as editor of The Wildcat in the 1960-61 school year. The paper was published twice weekly in tabloid format, supported by advertising but also by funds from student activity fees. We had offices in the Student Union but most of the work was done in the journalism lab in the basement of the Liberal Arts Building. J-students were given classroom reporting and editing assignments and received class credit for working on the paper, and the journalism faculty served as advisors to the Wildcat staff.

Edith (listed then as Edie) Sayre (Auslander) was managing editor, Jim Johnson was sports editor and wrote a column headed “Trackin’ the Cat”, and Betsy Little (Bolding) was society editor, covering the Greeks, mainly.

Pictures in my mind from that time:

- Copy-editing lab in the basement of the old Liberal Arts building, late into the night. Copy pencils and rubber cement bottles, fat black copy pencils. “Mr. Miller” sitting off to the side, cigarette dangling from the left corner of his mouth, left eye squinting, tin ashtray overflowing. (The squint was always a mystery. Was it just the way his face was, or had it become perpetual because of the smoke?)

- Watching as he scrutinized the copy, coming to learn to appreciate his way of showing you how to think things all the way through, his rarely biting sarcasm when you had really gone off track. “Backward runs this sentence . . .”

- Hot-metal print shop on South Sixth, stink of the antimony in the lead melting pots, late nights waiting for proofs. Female students who lived in dorms and houses had curfews, so “town girls” most often got the proofreading duty before we went to press—rarely before 1:00 a.m.

- Hanging out at the L&L Drive-In across the street from the shop, pitchers and green burros while waiting for the proofs.

Earliest recollection of a disagreement with SRM: The university celebrated its diamond jubilee in 1959. The Wildcat published a special edition celebrating this momentous 75th anniversary on Friday, November 20, 1959. I was the editor of the special edition, and Jim Johnson was the photo editor. Department head Dr. Brewster P. Campbell, SRM and Leo Della Betta were the faculty advisors. It was a fluff piece, full of history, old photographs, pieces from all of the deans of the colleges, and congratulatory messages from Arizona’s senators. It was 28 pages, printed offset on good paper rather than the letterpress and newsprint of the regular Wildcat, and we splurged on spot color on the front and back covers.

In our youthful zeal for truth in reporting, some of us felt the edition should point out some of the warts of the university (I can’t recall what they were, but I’m sure they were huge in our young and idealistic minds). SRM would have none of it. This was not journalism, this was a promotional piece, and the office of the president was
footing the bill, so this was basically an exercise in public relations. It was for the good of the cause of the department's budget and standing. We weren’t happy, but we did our jobs and felt fine afterward. It was a good piece.

Other special memories of Sherman Miller:

- Listening him to him laugh when we decided to editorially endorse Oneonta Koba Daisy, a registered Holstein in the UofA herd, who had been put forth as a write-in candidate for 1960 Homecoming Queen by a bunch of Aggies. And laugh even harder when we ran an imaginary interview with the cow after she lost. The leaders of the Bobcats senior honorary (sponsors of the contest) and most of the five Greek houses with candidates were ready to storm the Wildcat offices.

- Finding out after the fact about how he took the static from the faculty and the administration when we editorialized that it was silly for the university to give us a long Christmas holiday and then give us finals three weeks after we returned.

My recollection is that I only took two semesters of classes with SRM (second-year copywriting and editing), but working with him in the lab on The Wildcat was tantamount to an apprenticeship, I discovered when I hit The Arizona Republic as a reporter after graduation.

I use every day the lessons learned—and have some of the crabby idiosyncrasies I picked up—from Sherman R. Miller III. I rail at various publications’ poor grammar and bad writing. I yell at newscasters when they abuse the language. And I think often and fondly of that gentle curmudgeon.

Barbara Shumway

Sherm was a fearful sight when you first met him—sleeves rolled up, cigarette dangling, tie askew, rather grizzled-looking in the eyes of an 18-year-old (though he would look young to me today). He worked very hard to project the image of the editor we’d face when we graduated, and I faced many who fit the profile. Some memories:

His disdain for what he called “free-lahnce writahs” who were just wannabe’s, not yet published. In Sherm’s rheumy eyes you were not a “free-lahnce writah” unless someone had actually paid you money. Imaging my pride in telling him that Grit magazine gave me $25 to reprint one of those awful “first woman” pieces (first woman to do this, first woman to do that). Kind of embarrassing, but that was my one and only. Never did figure out why they liked that story.

The annual ritual each spring when the copyeditors slipped an egregious error into the Wildcat just to see if he’d find it. He always did, even if it was buried deep.

His obsession for accuracy in the smallest detail. The best story would get an “F” for a misspelled name and there were no excuses. Sigh. I miss that.

I’m glad he wasn’t around when the Pulitzer went to a reporter who fabricated sources. Or maybe it would have been fun to hear him vent about it.

You’ve made a great decision to name the newsroom after Sherm. There are many of us who caught the fever from him and went out to save the world. We still expect today’s reporters to meet his standards.
I AM at that point in life where I have names and addresses in my little black book of some folks I can’t remember ever having met. Sherman R. Miller is not one of those. Him, I will never forget.

I was a new kid in the newsroom in January 1960—a newlywed, transfer student from St. Louis. I knew I was nearing the Wildcat newsroom (basement Liberal Arts Building.) The pungent aroma of cigarette smoke wafted down the hall every time the door opened as students reported for second semester copy editing. I followed my nose in and there it was, all set up like a real newsroom—a typewriter for every student and a copy desk set up in the traditional “U” shape. A stern-looking man with a salt and pepper butch cut and fashionable horn-rimmed glasses sat at the slot of the copy desk puffing on an ever-present cigarette.

It was 1960 and smoking was so cool. At least half the class puffed away contently. Mr. Miller, sleeves rolled up, no necktie, ready for business, was obviously very cool. I had hit the big time. I was very afraid that I wasn’t ready, that my other school had not prepared me for this. He looked like a real newsman. He was.

He handed us a piece of raw copy as we took our places around the copy desk and told us to edit it while he took attendance. I did my best, but my hand kept wanting to shake. He collected the stories and looked them over.

"Watson, Janet," he said.

I knew it. I was a dead woman.

“What school did you attend?”


“They taught you good,” he said, emphasizing his intentional grammatical error. The corner of his mouth cracked a little smile. I exhaled such a sigh of relief that it created several vortexes in the smoke-filled air.

Later I could never remember why I had been so scared. Sherman Miller was the kindest, most supportive and encouraging teacher I ever had in college. He was that way for all of us. He expected us to work hard and do our best. He rewarded with sincere and generous praise. He let us know that we could do this kind of work and do it well. His criticism was fair and constructive. He really cared about us and we wanted him to be proud of us.

The early sixties were not yet at the turbulent stage we were later to reach. One thing I remember was an editorial against compulsory ROTC that was censored by the University of Arizona’s administration. Mr. Miller advised the editorial board to run a blank space. The blank space got more attention than the editorial would have. That was a lesson that came in handy during my public school teaching career.

The only other rebellion I recall was of a lighter nature. Seems some guys in the Ag School got tired of having the Greeks control Homecoming Royalty. They wrote in their own candidate, and she won: UA Oneota Koba Daisy, a cow from the university’s dairy herd. I remember her name well because I was assigned to write the interview with her.

After graduation I opted for teaching secondary school I had found to my chagrin that a prominent local daily would have paid me 65 percent of what a male classmate was offered. I felt that was rather unfair, and that was even before I read Betty Friedan.

Naturally, I most wanted to teach journalism and was able to find a position with TUSD after all the necessary courses in pedagogy. However, I always knew that my best methods teacher was Sherman Miller. I did my best to follow his example, to care about my kids, to teach them to question authority, to show them they could do this important work and love doing it.
“What a gang,
What people.
What a job
I’ve got.”