

## PORTFOLIO

by Hank Nuwer

# Portfolio serves as oversized key to unlock closed professional doors

AS A FREELANCE WRITER who has published some 300 full-length features in national magazines, I've come to regard my portfolio as a symbol of the work I do. The need it serves in keeping copies of my best work protected is but one function of my portfolio. More importantly, it serves as my oversized key to unlock the closed doors at national magazines who have never heard of me. Like the photographer's tray of transparencies, a writer's portfolio -- upon inspection -- convinces editors that I can work for their publications.

Before telling you what a portfolio is, let me tell you what it is not. A portfolio is by no means a scrapbook. Hence, students should never buy a scrapbook to paste down precious clippings (commonly known in the business as clips). For one thing, scrapbooks lack protective sheets, allowing clips to become damaged. Clips also cannot be slipped out for easy photocopying -- a necessity for writers who need to send sample articles to prospective editors. Even worse, they look -- well, amateurish -- and the sooner that everything about your students looks professional, the sooner will they actually become professionals.

Therefore, the best portfolio is a sturdy binder containing see-through sheets. Any supply store for engineers, architects and artists should contain a well-stocked array of portfolios. A portfolio with handles is simply easier to carry.

My personal preference is for oversized portfolios. For six years I carried around a small 9"x12" portfolio, and I noticed a strange thing. Editors flipped quickly through my book, their eyes fastened on the beautiful art that editors at *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Inside Sports*, *Outside* and other magazines had used to illustrate my pieces. That did me no good whatsoever. I needed new editors to slow down and actually read my work to compel them to give me an assignment or two.

My solution was to purchase an

oversized portfolio, and it worked as I'd planned. The lovely illustrations and photographs still intrigued editors who looked at my clips for the first time, but now they actually paused to read large chunks of my copy, too. As a result, I found myself spending twice as long in editors' offices as I had spent with my tiny portfolio. I nearly always began coming away with either an assignment or the hope of one in the near future.

Of course, a portfolio is only as good as the work inside it. Even a \$200 leatherbound book is useless if it contains only two or three insignificant pieces. If a student wants to have any kind of chance

of eventually breaking into this ultra-competitive field, he or she must publish -- and publish often -- in both school-sponsored and professional publications. I'm not going to say that good grades are unimportant -- that isn't true -- but good grades alone won't get anyone freelance work or a staff job at a national magazine. A student needs clips -- preferably a solid dozen or more -- by the time college graduation rolls around.

One of the things that made me saddest during a three-year stint as a journalism professor (at Ball State and Clemson) was seeing "A" students graduate who hadn't a

*cont. on page 12*

## The Photojournalist's Portfolio

A photographer can't get a job without one. It's what you've done that sells. A well organized, neatly presented, and diversified portfolio lands jobs.

The way the portfolio looks tells the editor a lot about the owner. Use a nice multiple ring binder and acetate page system. Avoid vinyl pages; three rings are out.

I use 11"x14" prints when possible and mount each clipping or photo to a right page. An explanation, art direction credits, client or publication name, and date of publication go on the left page. Awards the photograph may have won also appear on this page.

The information is important for explanation in the photographer's absence. The photo should tell the story; these are just facts. In the case of clips of published photos, the cutline should accompany the clip. Newsbreaking headlines with photos look impressive also, especially front page ones.

A high school graduate with three years of newspaper and yearbook staff

experience should have 20 good photos in numerous areas. Remember, the portfolio is only as strong as the weakest photo in it.

Creative or unusual portraits, sports action shots, student activities, social events, and news photos should be included. No squirrels, cats, dogs or statues. They don't go to school. Outdated work should be replaced regularly with recently published photos.

Show the book to working journalists. Freelance work is always available -- many publications hire student photojournalists to cover extra assignments.

There are numerous opportunities for the experienced student photojournalist in today's job market. Few large publications hire staffers without degrees in journalism, but student experience offers a sound foundation to build on. Sharp employers know that, and they want to see sharp portfolios. □

*A photojournalism instructor during B.S.U. summer workshops, Michael McKinney owns and operates a photographic illustration business.*

## PORTFOLIO

by Hank Nuwer

# Portfolio serves as key cont. from page 5

“Most editors demand to see a wide variety of clips. One clip or even three just isn't enough to sell a student in this competitive era.”

prayer of entering the field to which they aspired. Why? Simply stated, they lacked a portfolio. Too often as seniors these good students made a desperate effort to write a piece or two for their college paper, yearbook or magazine. But I knew in my heart that unless their pieces were truly exceptional award-winners, these students were wasting their time. Most editors demand to see a wide variety of clips. One clip or even three just isn't enough to sell a student in this competitive era.

My advice to high school and college advisers is to urge your best students to publish frequently. Set them up with appointments to write for the local weekly paper or even, in some instances, a bigger established publication.

You might urge students to enter essay contests offered frequently by the likes of

the American Legion, Sigma Delta Chi and various other social and professional groups. Such essays teach students to think and make impressive additions to portfolios.

And, of course, convince your students of the need to write for school publications - all of them -- and to continue that habit once they enroll in college. All things considered, the student who leaves school with fifty or more published pieces in a portfolio has a tremendous advantage over peers with little or no writing samples to take to an interview.

Finally, here are a few tips that your students who plan to keep a portfolio should know:

✓Fasten down your clips with easily removable hinges that are available at any store that sells stamps to collectors. Never

glue down clips. Editors frequently wish to make copies of samples that they can read after the writer has left the office. Samples that are glued into a book are difficult to photocopy.

✓When a plastic page in their portfolios gets torn or soiled, advise them to replace it. They wouldn't wear scuffed shoes to an interview. (I hope!) Portfolios make strong, silent statements about people's personal habits.

✓Insist that they keep a separate set of clippings filed safely away in a drawer. If a portfolio is lost on a plane or damaged in a catastrophe of some sort, a student will save the time and expense needed to replace those valuable clips.

✓Insist that all portfolios carry the owner's name and address. If a book is lost or stolen, the student stands a chance of it being returned. Finally, tell your students to choose portfolios that look impressive to them. If they feel good about their work and how they look, chances are they'll be able to sell both -- often. □

*Hank Nuwer, a freelance writer and lecturer, has four books forthcoming in 1987-88. He is a contributing writer with Inside Sports and Satellite Orbit.*

## WORKSHOPS

Ball State summer journalism workshops will give you and your publication staffs "a step in the right direction."

**Saturday, June 6**, is registration deadline for student workshops which run from July 5-31 (four one-week workshops.)

The Advisers' workshop will from July 12-24.

Applications will be processed on a first-come, first served basis. Contact us at (317) 285-8900 or the address at the right for applications or more information.



communiqué  
 Secondary Educational Services  
 Department of Journalism  
 Ball State University  
 Muncie, Indiana 47306

Non-Profit Organization  
 U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
 Muncie, Indiana  
 Permit No. 140

**ATTN: PUBLICATIONS ADVISER**





BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

# Communique

MAY/JUNE 1987

VOLUME 5

ISSUE 5

FOR ADVISERS  
WITH SERIOUS JOURNALISM  
STUDENTS ONLY

Preparing for the professional world:

- Portfolios
- Publications experience
- Writing tips

Pages 5-8

## Jungblut honored with state award

JOSEPH A. JUNGBLUT, adviser to South Newton Jr.-Sr. H.S.'s newspaper, was awarded the Indiana Scholastic Journalism Award at the Ball State Department of Journalism's annual national/state awards luncheon on April 2, 1987. His award reads:

"Since moving to Indiana in 1978, Joe Jungblut has developed one of the state's most honored scholastic newspaper programs at South Newton Jr.-Sr. H. S. For four consecutive years, South Newton's *The Rebel Charge* has been named the most outstanding high school newspaper in Indiana at Ball State University's Journalism Day. For the past two it has been named the outstanding paper in the Indiana High School Press Association's Harvey Award competition. In addition, *The Rebel Charge* has been a consistent award winner in national competitions.

"Jungblut has served as a summer workshop instructor for Ball State for five

years and twice has served as a featured speaker at Journalism Days. He has also written a number of articles on scholastic journalism for national publications. As evidence of the success of his program in encouraging students to pursue journalism, Jungblut has had eight students receive journalism scholarships to colleges and universities.

"For his exemplary high school newspaper program and his contributions to scholastic journalism, the Ball State University Department of Journalism is proud to honor Joseph A. Jungblut with its 1987 Indiana Scholastic Journalism Award."

Jungblut claims that he couldn't have done it without his students. "It's really the students' achievements. It's their reflection on me." He continued, "We (the advisers) do the best we can. Every adviser functions the same."

Jungblut thinks that everyone should

cont. on page 3

## ALSO INSIDE...

**AN INSIDER'S STORY** gives a fun look at your yearbook's academic section. *by Nancy Ruth Patterson, page 2.*

**ADVISERS OFTEN DON'T** hear of desktop publishing's limitations. Learn how to overcome the obstacles of applying it to your publication. *by Casey Nichols, page 4.*

**1987 JOURNALISM DAY** is over. Highlights of the day were publications awards, scholarships, over 90 sessions and keynote speaker Betsy Ross. *pages 8-11.*