

THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

ANNA KENDRICK PROVES THAT YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A BIG PERSON TO HAVE A HUGE CAREER

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AUGUST 1, 2010



IF YOU CAN'T TAKE THE HEAT

With Gordon Ramsay, this
is no figure of speech

PINBALL WIZARD

An in-depth look at a
pop culture mainstay

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avoid Section 203
at Yankee Stadium

Honor at the End of the Day



JOURNALISM IS NOT a profession in the way that law is a profession. Or medicine. Or education. There is no governing body, no board exam, no licensing requirement. A college degree isn't a prerequisite at many publications.

Of all the classic academic pursuits — career paths around which majors and entire university departments exist — journalism majors have, at the end of the day, but one arrow in the quiver, one not taught in ivory towers. For at the end of the day, if a reporter's work is questioned after he or she has exhausted every effort to get the facts right and set the record straight, this arrow can be pulled out and its nock loaded on the bow. That proverbial arrow is one of the oldest yet still most blessed qualities in humanity, let alone journalism: honor. Every journalist *must* adhere to an honor code, lest he or she become nothing more than a Jayson Blair or a Stephen Glass. Here's the situation:

One of the storied journalists who write for *American Way* visited a well-known celebrity and wrote a story for us. The interview was

a rousing success, but there were some controversial elements in the story.

American Way adheres to the same tenets of journalism as, say, *Time* magazine, and we run no story unless it is spot-on accurate. In fact, as a courtesy to all persons appearing in these pages, we execute a rather involved fact-checking process, whereby the facts of the story are presented to the source (or, as is the case with celebrities, to a publicist) to ensure that what's being published is, in fact, true. Enter a junior publicist for an international PR firm.

Our research editor (aka fact-checker) presented this junior publicist with a laundry list of facts for verification (26 in all). The publicist's response: "The statements below are littered with inaccuracies, but I am not included [sic] to correct until I see the full context of the copy."

Full disclosure: This is not an unusual request, as most everyone appearing in print would like to read what has been written about him or her before it runs. But that's not the policy of most publications, including *American Way*, because it gives the source or publicist a chance to rewrite the copy as he or she sees fit. We pointed this out to the publicist, but she was adamant about reading the story. At first, I decided to spike the article entirely. During my tenure here, no one has absolutely refused to work with our fact-checkers. Nor has anyone made a blanket statement that a story was "littered with inaccuracies." So I called the publicist, assured her that our stories are checked against primary sources when available and secondary sources when not, and then I asked her to walk with me through the fact pattern and correct the record. She refused. We checked the story again, and

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it checked out. So we're running it. But I'm still uncomfortable with how this played out. As any good reporter would do, I checked in with the profession's foremost experts to get their take on the situation.

"It is not, unfortunately, uncommon for a publicist or PR agent to demand to see finished copy from a journalism outlet prior to broadcast or publication," says professor Marc Cooper from the USC Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism. "This would effectively surrender editorial control to the subject of the reporting rather than it remaining in the hands of the editors. That is an unacceptable standard for journalism."

Kim Walsh-Childers, Ph.D., professor at the University of Florida College of Journalism and Communications, recognizes that although the onus is on the reporter to get the facts, that onus is transferred to the source to work with the reporter or editor to verify those facts. "[AW] took numerous steps to fact-check the story — going beyond your normal procedures (as I understand them) to respond to the accusation that the facts were faulty. At this point, if there are inaccuracies in the story, they remain there — in my opinion — because the publicist declined to take the opportunity to tell you what she felt needed to be changed."

But Linda Steiner, Ph.D., professor at the University of Maryland's Philip Merrill College of Journalism, offered an interesting dissent: "In refusing to let her see the whole story," she says, "you structured this the way nearly all editors/journalists do. You haven't done anything unusual — or unethical. But I think editors refuse to let people see and respond to the full story for reasons of convenience, rather than for reasons of ethics."

Training and education aside, at the end of the day, journalists have only their word. I'm taking our writer at her word so that at the end of the day, you can take us at ours.

Adam Pitluk
Editor



For all of you who seem to be in the air more than you are on the ground, enter *American Way's* 9th Annual Road Warrior Search. It's the perfect opportunity to share details about your world — the one that involves constant movement, packing and getting the most out of all the unique places your career and life take you. The payoff is good. One grand-prize winner will take home 2 million Hilton HHonors Bonus Points, 1 million AAdvantage bonus miles and a \$500 SkyMall gift card. One second-prize winner will win a Bose Lifestyle 48 home-entertainment system, a Bose Wave music system, one pair of Bose QuietComfort 15 Acoustic Noise Cancelling headphones, a five-night vacation for two in a premier suite at the Hilton Los Cabos Beach & Golf Resort (including breakfast daily) and a \$500 SkyMall gift card. Three third-prize winners will each receive a three-night vacation for two at the Hilton Los Cabos Beach & Golf Resort and a \$500 SkyMall gift card.

To top it off, the winners will enjoy star treatment at the beautiful Waldorf Astoria Park City in Utah's Wasatch Mountains for their very own photo shoot. They'll also appear on the cover of the March 15, 2011, issue of *American Way*, and the Road Warrior feature story will be all about them. Visit www.americanwaymag.com/roadwarrior by Aug. 31, 2010, at 11:59 p.m. CDT and enter the contest. We look forward to hearing your story.