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20 YEARS AND COUNTING

FOUNDING MEMBERS CELEBRATE NORTHWESTERN NEWS NETWORK'S MILESTONE ANNIVERSARY

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A LABOR OF LOVE

TWENTY YEARS AGO, THE **NORTHWESTERN NEWS NETWORK** WAS NOTHING MORE THAN AN IDEA IN LINTON JOHNSON'S HEAD. BUT IN THE FALL OF 1993, HE, MARY-JO LIPMAN, AIMEE NUZZO AND A HANDFUL OF OTHER STUDENTS BROUGHT NNN TO LIFE.

BY MARC ZAREFSKY (BSJ07)
PHOTOS BY RAY WHITEHOUSE (BSJ12)

LINTON JOHNSON'S FORMER CLASSMATES CALL HIM A VISIONARY, "THE GODFATHER OF NNN." IN 1993, JOHNSON DECIDED TO CREATE A STUDENT-RUN TELEVISION NEWSCAST FOR, AND ABOUT, NORTHWESTERN STUDENTS, SOMETHING NOT PRESENT ON CAMPUS AT THE TIME.

So that fall, he, Mary-Jo Lipman, Aimee Nuzzo and some of their fellow students introduced the University and the City of Evanston to the Northwestern News Network. Now, as NNN celebrates its 20th anniversary, a collection of original core members reflect on the first year of NNN — from pushing televisions and VCRs down Sheridan Road to filming commercials for Jimmy John's — and reminisce about their ultimate goal at the time: producing the perfect newscast.

LINTON JOHNSON (FOUNDER, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER): We were determined to do a newscast that was about the people of Northwestern, told from our perspective, and make it interesting and fun because we had to get people's attention.

MARY-JO LIPMAN (NEWS DIRECTOR): At the time there was no regular newscast for the students, and we wanted to create a newscast for the students and by the students.

BRENDA BOUDREAUX (FACULTY MENTOR): I was not surprised when they came up with the idea because they were a very unusual group of students; very ambitious, very idealistic, and they tended to eat, drink and breathe broadcast journalism.

LJ: I realized that in order to do this, I was going to have to find the right team to put in place, because I couldn't do this by myself by any stretch of the imagination. When Aimee and Mary-Jo showed me their first story, I was blown away. Their writing was just phenomenal and their energy was unbelievable. I said, they've got to be on the team. Whatever role they wanted, they were going to have.

AIMEE NUZZO (ANCHOR): I had done the radio station. I had done the newspaper. But what I wanted to do was TV news. The second I heard about NNN, I said, 'I'm in.' Once I got involved with NNN, that became my college experience because that's where all my passion was. Everything I was eager to do, I was finally able to do.

ML: Aimee and I were really excited and enthusiastic to be a part of it, and we really wanted to make ourselves indispensable to the project. We'd shoot, write, produce, floor direct; whatever was needed to get the job done, we'd do.

'THE TEAM BUILT ITSELF'

ALAN HEYMANN (REPORTER): We didn't have any infrastructure to set up a college newscast. We had to make it up.

LJ: Through the entire summer, all I worked on was trying to get everything in place for my junior year to start NNN. The team built itself, honestly. The right people fell into place, and then they ran with it, and they never let me down once.

PATRICIA DEAN (NNN FACULTY ADVISER): The undergraduate students proposed the show and organized themselves as an extracurricular opportunity. We could give them access to our facilities, but there was no budget for any other costs.

LJ: I anticipated that we weren't going to have any funding, so over the summer prior to the launch, I started working on a marketing plan that included seeking sponsors and then created a sales kit. Part of the sales kit included having us create commercials for the sponsor. I was working at Jimmy John's delivering subs, and I leveraged my connection with the owner. They gave us several thousand dollars to help us launch. That was our seed money.

AH: We had folks from the Radio/Television/Film program working with us on various parts of the production, including the ads. They scraped together this little commercial for Jimmy John's full of almost stop-motion animation of a sandwich arriving so quickly in the hands of a customer that it knocked him off his feet. The final shot is of him seeing stars and rolling his eyes back and forth because he got his sandwich so quickly.

TODD FLEISCHHAUER (ANCHOR): I still remember the Jimmy John's commercial.

AH: "Subs so fast, you'll freak." I remember it 20 years later.

'IT HAD TO BE FUN AND ENERGETIC'

TF: We were trying to broadcast a product to a mass amount of people, and that was the challenge: How do you get this product to this group of people when you don't really have a great resource for distribution?

LJ: We had this brilliant idea. We used some of the seed money to buy our own TV sets, and we would organize pizza parties at the dorm.

ML: Or we tried to coincide with 'munchies' or whatever the dorms were doing. That was our distribution strategy.

LJ: If the dorms didn't have a VCR and television, we would roll the sets from Fisk Hall. It didn't matter if it was snowing or raining or whatever, we got them there.

JASON OVERSTREET (SPORTS ANCHOR): Technology was different than it is today. We would actually have to dub VHS copies of the show and distribute them around campus.

AH: We had to do real-time dubbing from 3/4-inch tapes to VHS, so if it was a half-hour newscast, we needed a half hour to make a dub.

LJ: I think you could do four or five copies at a time.

JO: You would have timers set to go off, almost like for laundry, and you'd have to come back and switch all the VHS tapes. All of us helped with copying and running VHS tapes around to all the dorms. That was just part of what we needed to do to make it happen.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Coming soon: Watch first season episodes and bonus content on the tablet edition.



LINTON JOHNSON (BSJ95)
Johnson spent nearly a decade in on-air positions in Wichita, Kan., St. Louis and

San Jose, Calif. Today he is chief strategist for the office of external affairs for the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART). Johnson's entrepreneurial spirit remains; He is founder and CEO of Fit & Fun! Living, a sports nutrition business launched in 1999, and created "Tie One on for Charity, By Dominique," a company featuring customized ties Johnson designs.



MARY-JO LIPMAN (BSJ95)
Lipman's career began as a producer and copy editor for CNN Headline

News; she then became a writer and editor for CNN.com. In 2000 Lipman moved to Orbitz, where she spent seven years as content manager and an editor for the company's website. In 2008, she became site's the editor-in-chief. Three years later she returned to Northwestern, where she is the director of content strategy for the Kellogg School of Management.



AIMEE NUZZO (BSJ95)
Nuzzo began reporting/anchoring at WMBD-TV in Peoria, Ill., then in 1997 jumped

to San Diego, where she was a correspondent for KFMB-TV. Three years later Nuzzo made it to New York, where she was a correspondent, first for two years at WCBS-TV, then for five at WNBC-TV. Today she is executive producer and co-owner at Concept2Cut Productions, a video production company she founded with her husband in 2012.



TODD FLEISCHHAUER (BSJ95)
Fleischhauer's career has had a variety of stops. He reported in Greensboro and Raleigh, N.C., taught high school media, news directed and anchored at a public broadcasting channel in the Chicago TV market and

worked in media relations at Valparaiso University. He now is a registered nurse.



ALAN HEYMANN (BSJ97)
Heymann's first job was as Springfield bureau chief for WCIA-TV in Champaign, Ill. In 2000 he moved to Washington, D.C., where he's held multiple non-profit and government

communications positions. Heymann currently is vice president of communications for The Humane Society of the United States.



JASON OVERSTREET (COMM96)
Overstreet started covering news and sports in Champaign, Ill., and has since held on-air jobs in Oklahoma City and Dallas/Fort Worth. He currently is managing director of marketing

and communications for the United States Bowling Congress, bowling's national governing body.



JEREMY COOPER (WCAS94)
Cooper earned his master's in meteorology from Penn State University in 1996, then began working as chief meteorologist in Savannah, Ga., then became the weekend weatherman at KSDK-TV in St. Louis. In 2003

he partnered with his brother to open Cooper & Cooper Real Estate, a residential real estate firm in New York City.

LJ: We usually got the shows to people no later than 10 p.m., and it would actually happen over the course of several days. That's important because a lot of our news was outdated, which was another reason why it had to be fun and energetic, because all of our stories had to be somewhat timeless.

'WE DIDN'T KNOW IF WE WERE GOING TO SUCCEED'

LJ: Initially, we had to compete with the TV journalism classes for equipment, and we wanted our own equipment. So we went out and we got a couple more sponsorships. We used that money to not only buy TVs, but also buy one or two cameras and all the tapes to store the shows.

BB: The equipment they were using improved as time went on. That helped a lot with the progression. But also, the students' skills improved.

JO: We wanted it to feel cutting edge and fun, as opposed to just a stuffy news show. If we had people noticing and talking about it, then we felt good about that.

LJ: Weather was probably the most difficult thing.

JEREMY COOPER (WEATHERMAN): I was nervous about recording something now that I knew was not going to be watched for another day or two, or three. I believe I gave a five-day forecast. I don't remember if I was right or if I was wrong, but hopefully I got the trend generally correct.

LJ: We also knew we had to have sports in there.

AN: Having a dedicated sports anchor made it seem that much more like a real newscast, and we had an incredibly talented guy in Jason who totally owned it and brought so much to the newscast.

JO: The first feature story I did was a baseball story looking at Mark Loretta, who was a star player for Northwestern who went on to a great professional career. I had my roommate point the camera at me for a stand-up, which looking back on it was very awkward.

AH: NNN in the early days was sort of like battle in that we didn't know if we were going to succeed. I think Linton maybe did, but the rest of us were just running on caffeine, his wisdom and inspiration, and a little bit of blind faith.

ML: It was definitely a labor of love. No project is without frustrations, but we were having such a good time with it, and we saw such potential in what this thing could become.

PD: Linton, Aimee and Mary-Jo were amazing. They had the talent and tenacity to produce those early shows. They left a legacy that grew into an award-winning program.

AN: I'm very proud that the students and the faculty kept it going and let it grow to its potential.

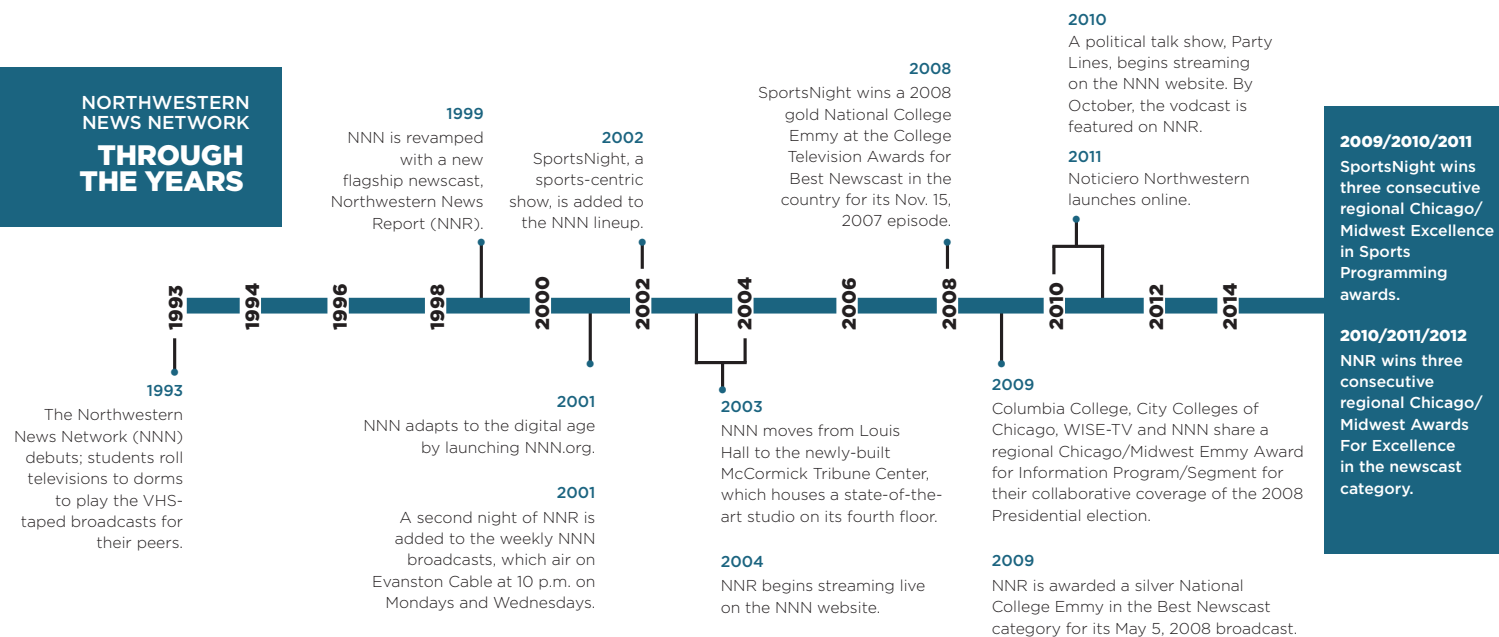
JO: It's really gratifying to see that the brand still lives on. To see how far it's come and just the talent of students that are involved is terrific.

ML: We owe a big debt of gratitude to the students and the faculty who built NNN into a real operation and a real award-winning network. I also feel thankful for those who gave it the loving tender care it needed to grow.

LJ: We may have started it, but it would never be what it is without them, so to each and every person who has helped out, thank you.

MARC ZAREFSKY IS MEDILL'S COMMUNICATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER. HE ALSO IS MEDILL MAGAZINE'S CO-EDITOR/MANAGING EDITOR.

NORTHWESTERN NEWS NETWORK THROUGH THE YEARS



Adjunct Lecturer Jazmin Beltran (right) checks a Noticiero Northwestern script with Carlos Manuel Martinez (BSJ14) and Ornella Hernandez Flores (BSJ16).

PHOTO BY LARRY STUELPNAGEL

By Matt Paoletti (BSJ05, MSJ06)

DIVERSIFYING AUDIENCES

THE SPANISH-LANGUAGE BROADCAST, 'NOTICIERO NORTHWESTERN,' CONTINUES TO EXPAND BOTH NEWS COVERAGE AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS BEFORE AND AFTER GRADUATION.

It all started with a conversation in the McCormick Tribune Center broadcast studio in 2010. Laura Rodriguez (BSJ11) and Gabriela Gonzalez (BSJ11) — both Spanish-speaking Miami natives who were already heavily involved in the Northwestern News Network (NNN) — thought there should be an opportunity to expand Medill's extracurricular broadcast offerings to include a Spanish-language news program.

"I truly felt that Noticiero Northwestern could fill a void in on-campus media and provide a source of information for international and Spanish-speaking students," says Gonzalez, who now anchors and reports for WNDU-TV in South Bend, Ind. "We started out with a staff of three. Two of us produced and anchored the show, and we had one reporter."

They enlisted Medill Assistant Professor and NNN Faculty Adviser Larry Stuelpnagel to oversee the Spanish newscast.

"What attracted me to the idea was the enthusiasm of the students and giving them the experience of working on a newscast targeted at one of the fastest growing audiences in America," Stuelpnagel says. "Noticiero has the same high production values as all of our NNN programs. Some of the stories are the same, but many are aimed at Hispanic students and issues of importance to the Hispanic community."

The weekly online show debuted in January 2011, covering everything from the "snowpocalypse" that canceled classes on Northwestern's campus and Associated Student Government issues, to the British royal wedding and an ice festival in China.

Producing weekly broadcasts was not without its challenges, but the small staff juggled studio time with the other NNN shows and even garnered a 2011 Chicago/Midwest region college Emmy nomination from the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences.

For the founding members who graduated, the Noticiero Northwestern experience proved invaluable.

"During my job search, a news director complimented my ability to report in both languages, saying it's not easy to find a reporter who can do so," says Dana Molina (BSJ11), who now reports for KRDO-TV and Telemundo in Colorado Springs, Colo. "The Noticiero Northwestern clips in my resume reel grabbed the attention of the news director who hired me at my current job."

The show has lived on since that first season, and Stuelpnagel says the new school year will bring a renewed energy as Adjunct Lecturer Jazmin Beltran (BSJ05, MSJ06) joins the effort as a co-adviser.

"My plan is to develop these reporters into true bilingual journalists," Beltran says. "The business needs these types of journalists, and we have a responsibility to develop every marketable skill our students can have in order to prepare them for an increasingly competitive field."

MATT PAOLELLI IS A WEB CONTENT PRODUCER FOR NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY AND AN ADJUNCT LECTURER AT MEDILL.