

4-6-2007

# Sexy Sensationalism Case Study: The Fascination with Celebrity News and Why *USA Today* Caters to the Obsession

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Sexy Sensationalism Case Study: The Fascination with Celebrity News  
and Why *USA Today* Caters to the Obsession

by

Grant Edward Boxleitner

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
School of Mass Communications  
College of Arts and Sciences  
University of South Florida

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Date of Approval:  
April 6, 2007

Keywords: gossip, media, ethics, newspapers, competition

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Grant Boxleitner

ABSTRACT

In the digital age where newspapers compete with the Internet, cable TV and other publications for an audience, *USA Today* strives to stay relevant in the media with a daily dose of celebrity news. Newspapers continue to lose circulation during a time when the fascination with celebrities shows no signs of dwindling. This study explores how much celebrity news coverage *USA Today* gives readers, how much competition from other outlets plays a factor and whether the nation's largest newspaper is making a sacrifice of traditional forms of newspaper content in favor of celebrity coverage. The methodology for this qualitative case study is a two-fold approach. In-depth interviews with sixteen managers, editors and staffers at *USA Today* were conducted, using questions that gather an overview of the newspaper's celebrity news approach. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed in the findings. The second part was a one-year analysis of *USA Today's* main front and Life section front pages, looking for patterns of celebrity news.

The study shows clear differences between *USA Today* and its non-newspaper competitors. *USA Today's* newsroom has a strong culture of journalism ethics and standards that limits the newspaper from going head to head with tabloids and celebrity magazines for the rumor and gossip stories. Among them is a strict sourcing policy that

forbids blind or anonymous sources in celebrity coverage. Nearly all of the interviewees questioned about competition and gossip mentioned the ethical standards at the newspaper.

The analysis of news fronts shows that USA Today uses the skybox in the upper right-hand corner as a way to promote its celebrity news. The majority of days, a celebrity photo and teaser were in that space, something a high-ranking editor at the newspaper said is a conscious effort to showcase celebrities. The Life front pages were loaded with celebrity news, including stories one can argue are tabloid-like in nature.

Most of those interviewed at *USA Today* insisted they are not sacrificing other content for celebrity coverage. They say celebrity news is just part of a balance the newspaper gives readers every day. Covering celebrities heavily is a way USA Today keeps relevant in the ever-changing media landscape. USA Today can be used as a celebrity news model for other newspapers looking for techniques to keep circulation numbers from dropping.

## Chapter One

### Introduction

*USA Today* has long been known for its celebrity news coverage, but in this age of Internet, cable TV and celebrity gossip magazines galore, the newspaper's stake in this competitive battle has never been greater. Circulations of newspapers throughout the country continue to decline, yet *USA Today* flourishes with more than 2.3 million daily readers-- a steady increase from the 1.3 million it began with in 1983 -- and a Web site that brings in millions more, according to its company profile (Gannett Co., 2006). The features that originally set it apart--abundant colorful graphics, brief stories and a concentration on sports and celebrity--have influenced other newspapers, according to answers.com's definition of *USA Today*. *USA Today* founder Al Neuharth says the newspaper when it began in 1982 "had to be different, in appearance and content. Wrapped in color. Four sections. Everything organized and in a fixed place. Short, easy-to-read stories. Lots of them. Heavy use of graphics and charts. Heavy emphasis on sports, TV, weather" (Neuharth, 1989, p. 130). Many of *USA Today's* innovations have been copied, and now, according to Neuharth, anywhere in the country, newspapers have the color, the graphics and are no longer gray and dull (Pleasants, 2003, p. 36). Shortly after the newspaper's inception, media analyst John Morton wrote *USA Today* was widely imitated, a success with readers and pushed other newspapers into "rethinking their traditional stodgy, haphazard makeup." (Prichard, 1987, p. 315).

The nation's newspaper, with its branding, carved out a niche of covering celebrities and

is widely available. But with its celebrity coverage, is *USA Today* actually competing with tabloids and Web sites, willing to drop its journalistic standards in the name of attracting readers caught up in the celebrity obsession? Why does it willingly dish out a steady dose of celebrity news, and how does it attempt to stand apart? And how much of a sacrifice are staffers making to the traditional objectives of a newspaper?

This case study is a behind-the-scenes look into *USA Today's* approach to covering celebrity news, offering rare insight into how and why the nation's newspaper covers the stars. In-depth, taped interviews collected from editors, reporters and managers in all facets of the newspaper--writing, photography and online--lend academic insight into how newspaper editors make such decisions. To augment the interviews, a yearlong analysis of *USA Today's* main news front page and Life section front page was conducted, its data yielding certain patterns and adding to the examination of celebrity news coverage at *USA Today*.

Celebrity coverage used to be limited mostly to outlets such as big-city tabloids, *People* magazine, the *National Enquirer* and *Entertainment Tonight* (American Press Institute, 2005). Celebrity news rarely got mainstream news play. John Carroll, an editor at the *Los Angeles Times*, says the trend of covering celebrity comes as newspapers attempt to stop circulations from dropping. He says, "The public, particularly the much-sought-after young reader, has an insatiable appetite for celebrity coverage. And newspaper-owning corporations are more interested these days in responding to raw market demands, no matter how demeaning" (cited in American Press Institute, 2005). Poynter Institute ethicist Bob Steele says celebrity as a news value has reached a crisis point (American Press Institute, 2005).

These general research questions will be addressed in the case study:

1. Does *USA Today* use its niche of celebrity news coverage to compete directly with other newspapers, tabloids, Web sites and other celebrity news sources in an effort to preserve dwindling circulation numbers and stay relevant in the digital age?
2. How does the staff at *USA Today* generally approach celebrity news coverage?
3. Why is celebrity news so prevalent at *USA Today*, and how does the public's historic desire for celebrity news and gossip play a factor?
4. By making a strong commitment to celebrity news, does the newspaper make a sacrifice to other traditional forms of newspaper content?
5. What is the general celebrity news makeup of the newspaper's news front and Life front during a yearlong sample period?

A high-ranking editor at *USA Today* said sales jump when the paper features celebrity on the front page and said he makes a conscious effort to get a celebrity on the front page daily. During a one-year period of 253 editions, the research showed that *USA Today* featured celebrity coverage in 93 percent of them. Additionally, on its front page there were more than 40 articles and 200 photographs in the upper right corner to tease readers. The Life section's front page during the same period was consistently dominated by celebrity coverage, especially down the left rail. A high-ranking editor for *usatoday.com* said that celebrity news is a major part of the newspaper's balanced formula for success.

The reason to study *USA Today's* celebrity news approach instead of the *New York Times*, for instance, is a matter of choosing a newspaper that makes a daily commitment to celebrity news. *USA Today* is the largest newspaper in the nation and is



widely available with national distribution to every state. In Lazarus Research Group's "E-business impact" page, Nielsen ranks *usatoday.com* among the top five entertainment Web sites (2006). Nielsen in October 2005 also ranked *usatoday.com* second behind only the *New York Times* in the top 10 newspaper Web sites with more than 10.36 million unique audience members (Lazarus Research Group, 2006). Newspapers circulation continues to dwindle throughout the country, but *USA Today* is not affected by the downturn. According to numbers released in October 2006, The *Los Angeles Times* lost 8 percent of its daily circulation and 6 percent on Sunday; The *Boston Globe*, lost 6.7 percent daily and almost 10 percent Sunday; The *New York Times* and *Washington Post* each lost about 3.5 percent of its circulation both daily and Sunday; The *Wall Street Journal* fell by less than 2 percent but its Weekend Edition dropped by 6.7 percent. (as cited in <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/31/business/media/31paper.html?ex=1319950800&en=52c5a2a81949d599&ei=5088>). Exploring whether a newspaper's approach to celebrity news may be a contributing factor to preserving circulation is a worthy cause for academic media research, Lazarus Research Group suggests (2006).

Celebrity news for the purpose of this study is defined as anything written about actors and actresses, both film and television; TV stars including reality-based shows; prominent musicians; pro athletes; and politicians. Celebrity news includes a photograph, a teaser or an article about a show or movie, a profile of the celebrity and any other article that features someone defined above as a celebrity. It also could be any story written about the personal life of a celebrity, such as marriage plans, divorce, court dealings, breakups or other scandal. In this study, stars and celebrities are used interchangeably.

The newsroom culture at *USA Today*, according to those interviewed, features a strict allegiance to ethical sourcing policies and standards that limit what the newspaper will do in the quest to gain a competitive edge. However, *USA Today* does not shy away from promoting its celebrity coverage, using a steady front page celebrity presence. The Poynter Institute held at the University of Southern California in 2004 an ethics seminar in which participants discussed the trend of celebrity news coverage in America's newspapers. One of the questions explored was whether celebrity news came at the expense of other news and whether the pressure of celebrity interviews compromised ethics. Some panelists argued the popularity of celebrity coverage can help increase viewership and readership, saying journalists shouldn't ignore what people may want (Merlina, 2004).

The study first will examine the historical context of celebrity coverage in the media, demonstrating that the fascination with stars goes back to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The section also features other cultural observations and anecdotal examples of celebrity and entertainment news in the media. The literature review summarizes some similar studies that were conducted in this general topic. Nonetheless, no study could be found in data bases and online searches that mirrored this method of inquiry or focused on celebrity news coverage at *USA Today*. The methodology section will outline how the case study was conducted. Sixteen *USA Today* managers, editors and writers were asked 10 questions during taped, in-depth interviews. In addition, one year's worth of *USA Today* main front and Life front sections from Sept. 1, 2004, through Aug. 31, 2005, were reviewed and analyzed, looking for patterns and themes of celebrity news.

The main body of the case study dissects the questions asked during the

interviews with *USA Today* staffers. The questions asked in the survey frame the answers to the broader research questions. The sections will establish patterns and themes from quotes taken directly from more than 200 single-space pages of interview transcripts. Another section focuses on the findings of the *USA Today* main front and Life front analysis. Finally, the study wraps up with observations outlined in the conclusion, tying everything together with a summary of findings based on the independent research of *USA Today*.

### *Justification and Limitations*

In a column about the excessive media coverage of Anna Nicole Smith's death, *USA Today* media critic Peter Johnson summarizes the underlying argument for this case study. He writes, "All of those angles are being examined by mainstream media outlets that once might have left such stories for supermarket tabloids, but no longer. These days, all media are under increasing competitive pressure from 24-hour cable news and Web sites, and that means paying close attention to pop culture in all its forms. Some media critics decry the media's obsession...but as coverage of entertainment and scandal stories plays an increasingly important role in modern-day journalism, those who practice it are increasingly unapologetic about the time and resources they devote to such stories" (Johnson, 2007).

As the self-proclaimed nation's newspaper, *USA Today* and its approach to the newspapers business sets examples for the 90 daily newspapers Gannett owns, according to the Gannett Co. online Web site (2006). How and why it covers celebrity news the way it does offers a chance to gain additional knowledge into competition strategies, ethical standards and the applying theories of gatekeeping and social responsibility when it

comes to covering celebrity news. Interviewing some of the top *USA Today* decision-makers and mid-level editors and reporters who compile the entertainment and celebrity coverage is a useful academic exercise. This type of scholarly research with so many interviews, staffers said, had not been conducted to this extent at *USA Today*.

Questioning staffers about their approach to covering celebrity news produces answers to broad questions in a practical context from people who are doing it every day. A qualitative case study looks in-depth at a specific issue, in this case, the newspaper's celebrity news.

The notion of *USA Today* competing with tabloids and Web sites for the best celebrity photos and scoops, along with other newspapers, provides a strong cause for journalism research because these decisions challenge the fabric of print journalism, questioning what the newspapers considers news, its obligation of giving readers more of what they want instead of what they may need. Covering celebrities and competing with tabloids also brings into questions a newspaper's credibility, and by doing so contributing to the gradual trivialization of news. Competing with outlets that do not have the same credibility with the public is at best a risk. Yet newspapers--especially the groundbreaking *USA Today*--seem willing to try new strategies to keep up with other media. The additional research of sampling one year's worth of *USA Today* main front and Life front pages strengthens the in-depth interviews with actual content patterns in the newspaper.

The other major justification for conducting this study is to explore whether *USA Today* is making a sacrifice to hard news and its readers by neglecting traditional newspaper content, such as politics, education and health care, to provide so much celebrity news. Critics would argue it's always important to ensure the line between

journalism and entertainment is not blurred in the name of the bottom line. In an article in the *Journal of Political Science*, Princeton political science professor Marcus Prior conducted a study and found people who prefer entertainment over news often abandon their consumption of news, are less likely to vote and have major knowledge gaps in overall political knowledge (Prior, 2005). Purdue University Calumet professor Neil Nemeth, in reviewing a recent journalism critic's book, mentions how news is suffering because of "the contemporary criticism that not all ideas have equal standing or the ability to be heard in today's profit-oriented entertainment-heavy media landscape" (Nemeth, 2006).

The interviews included many editors and reporters in the Life section of *USA Today*, but some high-ranking editors and managers are not part of this study, including the managing editor of the Life section, who said her schedule was too busy during the visit. They may have provided more background about how the newspaper covers celebrity news. And while the questions posed to the staffers were all the same for the sake of consistency, staffers generally don't have the same context to answering policy questions about the paper that editors and managers do.

The case study focuses exclusively on *USA Today*, a publication unique to most other daily publications. *USA Today* is such a unique publication, catering to travelers and people in news stands as much as home circulation. It's the largest newspaper by circulation in the United States, yet it is published just five days a week, minus major holidays. The crux of the thesis focuses on 16 interviewees who work on the staff at *USA Today*. Nevertheless, any academic research pursuit into the little-studied newspaper celebrity news and entertainment coverage is helpful to the overall knowledge of the

topic as an in-depth look into how something is already being done, with observations about celebrity news coverage.

### *Historical and Cultural Context*

From O.J Simpson to Kobe Bryant and all the Anna Nicole Smiths in between, celebrity stories saturate the media. For years, the line has been unclear between news and entertainment. The public cannot seem to get enough celebrity news and gossip, and Internet sites, cable and network television, books, magazines and newspapers continue to feed the public. The media appear to give the public more of what it wants, in this case, sensational stories about celebrities. Marvin Kalb, who previously was at CBS News and is now at Harvard, says the media think people “want to know about--what will pull you in to boost their ratings--is celebrity gossip, scandal, disasters and threats, conspiracies and the paranormal, and health and lifestyle features” (Feder, p. 44). This strategy of giving the public more of what it wants is bred into capitalism, and it is essential for survival because “one of the most profitable commodities in the modern world is human attention” (as cited in Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 190). In postmodern culture, celebrity seems to be the only source for aspirations and role models, and it “occupies us day and night, drives our dreams, inspires our obeisance and reverence” (Sardar, p. 29). People are infatuated with celebrities, and the news media know it.

Newspapers, once reserved for only the hardest news, have had to tailor part of their coverage to celebrity news and gossip or run the risk of readers turning to other forms of media. In print media, celebrity gossip tends to be separated from more traditional news, but on TV talk shows, it’s all together (Monaco, p. 52). Country music artist Brad Paisley’s song “Celebrity” pokes fun at the whole larger-than-life

phenomenon, but it's noteworthy, since this is exactly what the phenomenon of celebrity is all about. The lyrics read, "You can act just like a fool / People think you're cool / Just 'cause you're on TV" (Remz, 2003). One circuit court judge in California, in ruling against actress Pamela Anderson's quest to keep a sex tape private, said the former Playboy model's sex life was in the public's interest because "she is famous as a sex symbol" (Franklin, Anderson & Cate, 2000, p. 433). The courts acknowledge the popularity of celebrities among the public.

Celebrity news has been finding its way into newspapers since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Already then, celebrities were trying to manage their images using publicists, always looking to be self-promoted, so that made a journalist's job more difficult (Ponce de Leon, 2002, p. 77). Celebrities achieve their status through media exposure, including news and feature accounts from print media. In the early part of the 1900s, stars were born out of the silent movies, business, sports and stage shows. Ponce de Leon writes, "Thanks to the miracle of modern mass media, readers of newspapers and magazines in the United States were able to acquire information--often seemingly intimate information--about people who lived far away, men and women of wealth, power, and influence whom they would never actually see in the flesh" (pp. 81-82). Different celebrities such as Ty Cobb and Henry Ford were willing to share profiles of themselves, believing it gave ordinary people inspiration in the American characteristic of individualism and steered them away from depression and socialism (Ponce de Leon, p.119).

Press critic Howard Kurtz argued that celebrity news and features have a place in newspapers and says that major newspapers in the 1990s began to refocus their effort on

hard news and government reporting. Still, he notes that “*USA Today* remains a paper that runs a banner headline when Julia Roberts calls off her marriage to Kiefer Sutherland” (1994, p. 361). The nation’s largest newspaper also once ran a poll that revealed 7 percent of Americans thought Elvis was still alive (Kurtz, p. 361). If the nation’s largest newspaper dedicates virtually a complete section (*Life*) on the highlights and pitfalls of celebrities--whether it be a new movie preview or a major breakup between stars--this type of content must be what at least some readers want, and *USA Today* is delivering that content. It is difficult to point to just one reason for the public to be so curious about celebrities. When it comes to people craving celebrity news, to “see evidence of the actual flesh-and-bone existence of these phantoms must account for a wide variety of phenomena” (Flanagan, 2001, p. 156).

It should be noted that circulations spike whenever there is a major story involving celebrities. For example, newspapers have enjoyed an increase in sales during the Simpson case and the death of Princess Diana. They saw the same phenomenon during the Kobe Bryant rape case. When Magic Johnson announced he had the virus that causes AIDS in 1991, the *USA Today* sold an extra 600,000 copies the next day (Kurtz, p. 380). Newspapers have missed some good stories because they’re too busy concentrating on scandal and drooling over the exploitation of celebrities (Kurtz, p. 12). Even the coveted *New York Times*--widely considered the standard for journalism excellence--had to follow the lead of the *National Enquirer* at times during the Simpson murder case, quoting the tabloid as a source (Flanagan, 2001, p. 157). During one week in August 2003, a sports star (Kobe Bryant) accused of rape and a movie star (Arnold Schwarzenegger) declaring his candidacy for California governor on the *Tonight Show*



dominated the news cycle (Trigoboff, 2003, n.p.). Professor Frank Sesno of George Mason University says, “There’s been a trend toward ‘celebrification’ of the culture. . . . Celebrity often provides a simple story . . . the material is irresistible” (Trigoboff, n.p.). Trigoboff argues that the lines between show business and news business blurred with the coverage of these two celebrity stories. Still, both Bryant’s rape charge and Schwarzenegger’s announcement fit most definitions of news (Trigoboff, n.p.). But the high volume of mainstream news coverage came because of their heightened celebrity status. For the purpose of this study, a celebrity is someone who has achieved fame through one of the media genres of film, television, music or books. One of the definitions found in the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines celebrity as “the condition of being much extolled or talked about; famousness, notoriety” (Marshall, p. 5).

Covering celebrities as a source of news gathered steam in the 1920s with the boom of the motion picture. By then, fans flocked to movie magazines that were filled with the lives of celebrities. “The appetite for films, film stars and their movie and private lives had by the 1920s become voracious,” P. David Marshall indicates (p. 9). The rise of star system in Hollywood in the 1920s meant that people could achieve celebrity status in spectator sports or acting through the media (Monaco, p. 125). “By the 1930s, Hollywood was the third largest news source in the country, with some 300 correspondents, including one from the Vatican.” Moreover, Marshall contends that “Celebrity status also confers on the person a certain discursive power: within society, the celebrity is a voice above all others, a voice that is channeled into the media system as being legitimately specific” (p. X, preface). Some, such as Daniel Boorstin, looked at celebrities during the rise of postmodern period as the fall of values and standards. Boorstin wrote decades ago

that a celebrity “was known for his or her wellknownness” (Boorstin, 1961, p. 57). He goes on to say "the celebrity is a creature of gossip, of public opinion, of magazines, of newspapers and the ephemeral images of movie and television screens. ... The celebrity is born in the daily papers and never loses the mark of his fleeting origin." (p. 63). But few can argue the impact celebrities have had on American culture, and newspapers have been there to capture that wellknownness in a tangible form.

Film scholar James Monaco makes a comparison between two types of heroes: those active, such as an astronaut, and those more passive, such as an actor. The media, he says, molds celebrities into icons. These kinds of stars have little control over their reputation, and the public seems more fascinated about what they perceive these people to be than what they are or are not. Celebrities “are passive objects of the media--created whole out of ‘ordinary newspaper print,’ or film, or broadcast airwaves,” Monaco notes (p.6). Marshall, too, suggests that the media help facilitate these impressions (p. 16).

To get a perspective of the news media’s relationship with celebrity, it’s important to mention some mass communication theories that may apply. Marshall McLuhan’s notion of a global village really took off at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century with the start of newspapers and magazines and then gathered traction with the advent of film and broadcasting. Advances in the history of celebrity are closely related with advances in media technology, yet they are not fully dependent on each other (Monaco, p 6). Magazines allowed accomplished authors such as Charles Dickens and Mark Twain to reach more people, and thus they gained a celebrity status that sometimes outshined their own work (Monaco, p. 6).

By the 1960s, newspapers competed against TV for celebrity stories. “People tune

in, not to hear the news or the stories, especially, but simply to spend time with the personalities” Monaco indicates. “Hence, the rise of the talk show, true home of the celebrity” (p. 7). A celebrity creates a public voice that bring thoughts from a private to a public setting (Monaco, p. 14). By 1976, *The New York Times*, the standard-bearer for newspapers, was featuring “soft news, consumer goods, self-help pieces, and arts coverage” (Leonard, p. 177).

Celebrity news has traditionally been found in lifestyle sections, and *USA Today* is no different. The main purpose of this qualitative study is to examine how and why *USA Today*, the largest U.S. daily newspaper, provides extensive celebrity coverage to its readers.

#### *Literature Review*

While it is common knowledge that celebrity coverage saturates the news media, not much scholarly attention has been paid to the phenomenon that celebrities of all sorts are considered newsworthy regardless of topic or context. The literature on the topic of celebrity is mostly limited to in-depth journalism articles in trade journals that provide a critical analysis of the practice. There is also much work on pop culture and the notion of fandom, but these issues take the issue of celebrity from the consumer point of view instead of the news-gathering organization. An extensive search in academic data bases yielded little qualitative or quantitative research on celebrity news coverage in newspapers. Cited articles include studies linking celebrities to dreams and a celebrity identification theory.

In a 1993 study in the *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, George Albert Gladney wrote the article “*USA Today*, Its Imitators, and Its Critics: Do Newsroom

Staffs Face an Ethical Dilemma?” While the study doesn’t talk about celebrity news per se, it does focus on *USA Today*’s influence and content and how ethics play a role.

Gladney conducted a content analysis of the 230 largest U.S. dailies and a mail survey of 200 newsroom reporters and editors to identify media that adopted or did not adopt *USA Today*’s presentation of content of short articles, charts, graphics and colorful presentation. The abstract indicates the findings suggest that journalists don’t have as much of a problem with *USA Today*’s innovations that critics do, but adopting these changes has led to some ethical questions (cited at [http://www.leaonline.com/doi/abs/10.1207/s15327728jmme0801\\_2](http://www.leaonline.com/doi/abs/10.1207/s15327728jmme0801_2)).

Among the published research is a content analysis of local TV news broadcasts around the country, which adds validity to the prevalence of celebrities in news coverage. The researcher watched and analyzed 50 local TV news broadcasts across 29 cities on Jan. 11, 1995 (Klite, 1995, p. 25). In one sample in Washington, D.C., “fluff” made up 46 percent of the broadcast, with a third of that coming from celebrity coverage of public figures such as Michael Jackson, Miss America and Paul Newman (Klite, p. 33). The author concluded that local TV news had too much celebrity stuff such as the Simpson trial and too many crime and disaster pieces, thus recommending a complete overhaul of local TV news by putting more emphasis on everyday issues that matter and practical news that applies to people (Klite, pp. 25-32).

Another study is found in Jack Lule’s book *Daily News, Eternal Stories*, in which he examines the myth of heroes. Lule contends that famous people--unfortunately, in his opinion--have become heroes in this mass-mediated world because of their ability to be carefully presented and publicized to the press (2001, p. 83). He makes his argument

using a qualitative case study that examined stories in the *New York Times* about former baseball slugger Mark McGwire's pursuit of the 1998 home run record. Through his research, he concludes that "the myth of the Hero must be related within a structure that includes celebrity and the omnipresent news media. *Celebrity status is not a deterrent to the Hero myth today. It is a prerequisite*" (Lule, p. 101).

Because the proposed study will analyze how newsroom staff determines which celebrity news to include in the newspaper, it is necessary to mention some of the research about editors' routines when deciding what receives play in their newspapers. These routines are the "repeated practices and forms that media workers use to do their jobs" (Sumpter, 2000, p. 334). Randall S. Sumpter conducted a six-week case study using non-participant observation and in-depth interviews of editors at a large Southeastern daily for six weeks (2000, p. 336). Editors were asked about their work, including how they make story selections for publication. (p. 337). To satisfy their desire to read their audience, they dined with non-traditional news sources, talked to spouses, conferred with callers and peered through letters to the newspaper (p. 338). The researcher also observed editors conversing during meetings about stories budgeted for upcoming editions and during other newsroom meetings. Choosing page 1 stories that can compete with non-print sources was among the findings (pp. 343-344), and this is part of the reason celebrity coverage, it could be argued, gets into newspapers. Because of their widespread fame, celebrities have mass appeal, and other media feature them and news coverage about them.

Some of the celebrity news coverage involves crime or scandal, as shown in the stories about Kobe Bryant (sexual assault charge), Michael Jackson (child molestation)

and Prince Charles (homosexual relationship). A study by Frederick Fico and Michael Drager examined 615 stories about conflict in 15 mid-sized dailies from around the country (2001, p. 2), analyzing whether the stories are source-balanced. They maintain that many issues are covered by only one story, and when there is more than one story about an issue, there is usually less balance with each additional article (p. 8). Some of the imbalance is attributed to reporter creativity. In the cases of Bryant, Jackson and Prince Charles, however, there are many stories with new developments, making it sometimes difficult to give these stories proper context.

Among the complaints media consumers have that erode media credibility is “that sensational stories are covered to sell papers” (Ibelema & Powell, 2001, p. 41).

Newspapers have struggled in the credibility war with other media, such as television and radio. In a random sample survey of 400 Alabama residents, cable TV was seen as most trustworthy, followed by local TV news, network TV news, national newspapers, radio and local newspapers (Ibelema & Powell, p. 46). Also, cable news may have an advantage “if only for its ubiquitous ability to provide information constantly” (p. 49). When examining celebrity coverage, it is important, again, to look at it within the scope of media theory. Agenda-setting is the notion that journalists do not necessarily tell people what to think but instead what to think about, which was first mentioned in Bernard Cohen’s 1963 book *The Press and Foreign Policy*. The original agenda-setting hypothesis was conceived by Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw during a study of news about the 1968 presidential campaign (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989, p. 264). The study concluded that “the agenda of the press did become the agenda of the public” (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, p. 264). Much of the agenda-setting research is used within

the limits of political coverage, yet agenda-setting tendencies are also at work in other news stories, such as celebrity coverage. If the media believe certain celebrity stories warrant coverage, those stories will be shipped to the public. The O.J. Simpson case is one example. The media virtually forced people to think about the case in some form, if only because of its saturated coverage, from his arrest through the civil suit verdict.

The roots of agenda-setting research were planted with Walter Lippmann's 1922 book *Public Opinion*. His well-cited first chapter, "The World Outside and the Pictures in Our Heads," points to the media being responsible for "taking actual events and reshaping them in people's minds" (Rogers, Dearing & Bregman, 1993, p. 72). Lippmann argued that people do not know the actual world they live in, and they act instead on images in their heads rather than reality, images that often come from the media. He writes that those images in our heads are "the artificial censorships, the limitations of social contact, the comparatively meager time available in each day for paying attention to public affairs, the distortion arising because events have to be compressed into very short messages" (Lippmann, 1922, p. 8). Much of the published agenda-setting research, nonetheless, seems to peak only during major elections every four to six years (Rogers, Dearing & Bregman, p. 81), but examining the media's agenda-setting role outside the political realm would be a useful endeavor to understand celebrity coverage. Many of the ideas regarding this theory would have to be expanded.

In their study, Everett M. Rogers, James W. Dearing and Dorine Bregman prepared an analysis of 1,544 citations from 223 agenda-setting studies, looking to see which ones were most frequent (1993, p. 74). They found that political science scholars had to consult communication journals much more than their own for agenda-setting

samples (p. 76). This demonstrates how influential the media's agenda-setting role in society is for issues such as celebrity news coverage. Other disciplines even use examples of media coverage of a specific issue to make their argument. In their 1993 article “The Evolution of Agenda-Setting Research: Twenty-Five Years in the Marketplace of Ideas,” McCombs and Shaw bring up an important notion that suggests media also tells the public “*how to think about it*” (1993, p. 62). Daily stories are selected based on personalities, issues and events and their overall newsworthiness (p. 62). This concept can be helpful in understanding why celebrities garner so much press. Their perceived newsworthiness must be high in most journalism newsrooms.

However, there are other classical media theories such as gatekeeping to which celebrity coverage can be applied. Because newspapers cannot possibly give readers every story available on their wire services in any given day, the decision-making process of what stories get selected offers insight to what people see in the finished product. In the media, “A print newspaper is somewhere between a universal medium and a personal one” (Singer, 2001, p. 65). A recent study of newspapers and the World Wide Web found that the Internet has brought on new challenges to the gate-keeping role (Singer, 2001, p. 65).

In some online versions, newspapers simply give a link to the Associated Press (p. 66), which offers up much more news content than most newspapers could print. The decisions of what to print, studies suggest, are subjective but are made by professionals who take into account interest, quality and space (p. 66). Singer conducted a content analysis using six online daily newspapers updated daily in Colorado--the *Boulder Daily Camera*, *Colorado Springs Gazette*, *Denver Post*, *Loveland Reporter-Herald*, *Pueblo*



*Chieftain*, and *Rocky Mountain News* (p. 68). In one week of June 1998, the study indicated there were 3,403 combined print stories and just 1,383 online stories (p. 72). It also revealed that nearly 45 percent of the news stories online were metro items, compared with only about 31 percent of print versions, and that there was no original content for the Web (p. 72). The study acknowledged that the data was from 1998 and that newspapers have continued to modify their Web content since then (p. 76). The research question--asking whether a newspaper's online product is more or less local--yielded findings that the online content was local, suggesting that a newspaper knows its own market (p. 77). This study demonstrates how editors and managers of a given publication can choose what to print based on what they think the market wants and how much space they have to deliver it. Editors at *USA Today* use agenda-setting techniques every day to decide what celebrity news coverage goes online and in the newspaper.

Most major news services have a section called celebrity or entertainment, and someone is assigned to send those stories originating from those categories. Once those stories are on the wire, editors at a newspaper such as *USA Today* decide what articles to publish. That's a tremendous responsibility that can influence an entire news cycle. Depending on the news value of the story, celebrity stories also can be found on the national, sports and state sections of the wire services. Celebrity coverage can be found in almost all sections of a newspaper. The Colorado study found that newspapers should not give up their role of connecting readers to the world outside their coverage area because that is an important function (Singer, 2001, p. 78).

So who are the people on staff hired to make these decisions? Decreased ratings and readership have been brought on by the advent of other forms of content that give the

audience more of a chance to turn away from news altogether (Hollifield, Kosicki & Becker, 2001, p. 92). Media critics have argued that news staffs have sacrificed quality reporting and traditional news values to the demands of boosting readership and ratings (Hollifield, Kosicki & Becker, p. 93). In the study of TV news director and newspaper editor hiring decisions, the authors examined what characteristics are sought in new employees and how the two compare (p. 93). Among its hypotheses is that newspaper editors will be more likely than TV news directors to place a high emphasis on “journalistic professional values” and on “basic knowledge and education” (p. 101). The method was a secondary analysis of three national surveys of TV news directors, daily newspaper editors and select mass communication and journalism program directors. The findings were mixed, yet both employers seem to be hiring more employees who can meet organizational demands rather than those who can meet those of the journalistic culture (p. 111). The hypothesis that suggested newspapers were more concerned about journalistic values was not supported (p. 112).

Hiring practices, however, are only one factor in determining how a topic such as celebrity news will be covered because it is difficult to determine when these hires will be in positions to be making those types of coverage. The *USA Today* case study doesn't explain who is making the decisions per se, but why and how they are being made. With that concept in mind, a case study explored what happens “when celebrity, race and news collide” (*The Quill*, 1999, p. 1). As celebrity coverage continues to skyrocket, editors and reporters agree that “prominence is a legitimate news value, but how that news value should be balanced with others is open to debate” (*The Quill*, p. 1). The case study used a panel from the media to discuss a hypothetical rapper, Dizzy Top, whose pregnant wife,

who later refuses to press charges, makes a 911 call to report domestic violence (p. 1). The police, who do not approve of the rapper's anti-police lyrics, give the reporter unusually easy access to the 911 tape, and the publicist for the rapper insists on being on the line when the reporter interviews the wife (p.1). The managing editor, who is black, does not want the story on A1, though one female editor says the paper should report incidents of domestic abuse and not downplay the story because someone is "wealthy, famous or black" (p. 2).

The method used in this case study was a series of open-ended questions directed at each panelist, whose responses were gathered and published. This qualitative approach to newsroom decision-making is particularly helpful, and the responses, while anecdotal in nature, come from a panel of media experts. Some select responses from the case study published in *The Quill* will be used to further illustrate the dialogue of celebrity coverage. One respondent said the story was newsworthy if the Dizzy Top is such a popular figure in the community. Another argued anytime a celebrity is suspected of domestic abuse and there is a 911, it is legitimate. One person wrote, "The only reason the newspaper is considering the story is Dizzy Top's celebrity status" (*The Quill*, p. 4). When asked if the story should have been played differently, perhaps on A1, one panelist argued the paper would be playing up the sensational and celebrity with little facts to back it up (p. 5). Good journalism practices need to be modified to produce balanced articles, and the police procedure and publicist on the other line should be reported, one panelist said (p. 8). The panelist said the story is an example of a celebrity bias (p. 8). This notion of bias toward celebrity just because they are who they are will be examined further in the study.

Newspapers are just one of many media that contribute to the celebrity culture,

yet Benson P. Fraser and William J. Brown's research (2002, abstract) examines popular culture and the creation of international celebrities with the use of global communication systems. The authors performed "an ethnographic study of Elvis Presley fans and impersonators, concluding that they have developed a strong identification with him by role modeling his values and changing their own lifestyles to emulate him" (abstract). They bring forward a theory of celebrity identification (abstract). Newspapers benefit by fueling this penchant for celebrity information because they have the means to supply celebrity content.

A similar qualitative study of celebrities and dreams by Neal M. Alperstein and Barbara H. Vann proposes "that the world of mass media is reflective of the collective unconscious of society rendered transparent for all to see" (1997, p. 145). They conducted a survey asking 197 undergraduate students whether they dreamed about celebrities, which they define as people in the news and characters in entertainment programming. They found that the majority of people surveyed dreamed about celebrities (1997). This gives strong evidence to suggest that celebrities--and henceforth celebrity news--have a powerful effect on people's minds.

One important research of note is the notion of the made-up term "tabloidization." Nicole Rene Harris, a graduate student at Georgia State University, examined the process of tabloidization in her 2005 thesis, "Tabloidization in the Modern American Press: A Textual Analysis and Assessment of Newspaper and Tabloid Coverage of the 'Runaway Bride' Case." Tabloidization can be defined as "involving a shift in the priorities within a given medium away from news and information toward an emphasis on entertainment" (C. Sparks & J. Tulloch, 2000, as cited in Harris, 2005, p. 6). Implementing elements of

this change in media philosophy has led to increased circulation and profits in the mainstream media (Harris, p. 14). That case study, an ethnographic textual analysis, pointed to a shift from traditional news policies to a blended product sometimes called infotainment, first name Harris suggests (p. 153). There was widespread acceptance in the newspapers examined to adopt coverage techniques once thought to be “unethical tabloid ploys” (Harris, p. 154).

Vashti Nevita Singh of Queen’s University conducted a similar study titled “Entertaining the News: The Effect of Business on Entertainment and News Blending.” In her thesis, Singh studies the past 20 years of mainstream print and television news coverage in Canada and finds there has been a considerable increase in the number of entertainment celebrity stories in the news sections of newspapers, news magazines, and news television programs. According to a synopsis of the thesis “Although the press may claim their primary function is to serve as a public informer and watchdog, there is substantial evidence to show that corporate profit drives the media to cover entertainment and celebrity news” (as cited in [http://www.journalism.ubc.ca/research/2001/research\\_singh.html](http://www.journalism.ubc.ca/research/2001/research_singh.html)). These findings are relevant because Singh examines the trend of celebrity news in all forms of mainstream media, but the research looks at a huge span of time and makes broad strokes and focuses on the effects of this phenomenon.

Finally, Ball State journalism Professor Warren Watson’s 2006 article in the American Society of Newspaper Editors examines the proliferation of celebrity news. In a piece about celebrity news, journalist Gail Koch writes, “Watson is conducting research for a pilot study on celebrity news coverage in newspapers. So far, he’s found the number of

stories and column inches devoted to celebrities in *The Star Press* has more than doubled over the past 15 years” ([http://medialit.med.sc.edu/celebrity\\_grabs\\_headlines.htm](http://medialit.med.sc.edu/celebrity_grabs_headlines.htm)).

Watson wants to examine whether celebrity news is a national trend and stresses that newspapers need to find a mix of civic journalism citizens need and celebrity news they crave, Koch suggests ([http://medialit.med.sc.edu/celebrity\\_grabs\\_headlines.htm](http://medialit.med.sc.edu/celebrity_grabs_headlines.htm)).

Several media theories can be applied to how celebrity coverage at newspapers is filtered, including agenda-setting first introduced by Lippmann, social responsibility and gatekeeping. Hiring practices, too, can have an impact on those decisions. There are general concerns in the industry about how journalism is being compromised by too much celebrity news, aptly laid out in Harris' Tabloidization study and the Singh study.

### *Methodology*

In attempting to better understand how staffers at *USA Today* incorporates celebrity news into their product, the answers to broad research questions will be evaluated:

1. Does *USA Today* use its niche of celebrity news coverage to compete directly with other newspapers, tabloids, Web sites and other celebrity news sources in an effort to preserve dwindling circulation numbers and stay relevant in the digital age?
2. How does *USA Today's* staff generally approach celebrity news coverage?
3. Why is celebrity news so prevalent at *USA Today*, and how does the public's historic desire for celebrity news and gossip play a factor?
4. By making a strong commitment to celebrity news, does the newspaper make a sacrifice to other traditional forms of newspaper content?
5. What is the general celebrity news makeup of the newspaper's news front and

Life front during a yearlong sample period?

The *USA Today* is being examined because of its obvious national relevance and its traditional format of giving readers daily celebrity stories. Here's what the Gannett Company Web site says about its flagship newspaper in its company history:

After two years of research on what readers wanted, what advertisers needed and what technology permitted, on Sept. 15, 1982, *USA TODAY* reached up from its headquarters overlooking the nation's capital, and grabbed an orbiting satellite to present information-hungry readers news about the USA in an entirely different way. The newspaper quickly established itself, selling more than 1.3 million copies a day all across the nation by the end of 1983. Today its daily circulation is approximately 2.3 million, making it the largest-selling daily newspaper in the nation. (2006)

The case study of *USA Today* uses a two-fold method. First, there were in-depth, taped interviews conducted with 16 staffers at *USA Today*. For practical reasons and a finite amount of time to interview reporters and editors, the majority of the interviews were one-on-one, but some of them were as many as three people being interviewed. Attempts to get everyone involved in the feedback from the interviews with more than one person were made with follow-up questions and prompting others to add their comments during the interviews. Most of the interviews were conducted at *USA Today* world headquarters in McLean, Va., during the week of Aug. 15, 2005. Three of the interviews were taped by phone in May 2005 with reporters based in Los Angeles and New York.

Interviewees included high-ranking editors and managers, mid-level editors,

subject editors, photo editors, assignment editors and reporters based in Virginia, New York and Los Angeles. Four of the sixteen worked directly in the usatoday.com part of the company. The interviewees were given assurances that their names would remain confidential and anonymous before the research started so they would be able to speak freely about the issues. All of them assist in the daily gathering and placement of celebrity news in some way. A new editor at that time also participated in one of the interviews yet didn't add much to the discussion because she had just started working there a week before the interview. The interviews included 10 questions to spark discussion, which prompted follow-up questions and opportunities to ask for more information about an interesting comment made. These survey questions form the foundation to answer the five research questions laid out for the study.

### *Research Goal*

The goal of the case study was to gather data examining whether competition from other sources such as the Internet and perceived reader interest in celebrities guide the newspaper's decisions about what and how much celebrity news they publish each day. Also, to find out if these newsroom employees acknowledge whether publishing this information is justifiable at the expense of more traditional forms of newspaper content and whether *USA Today's* methods of covering celebrities can be a model for other newspapers. Interviewees' answers often prompted a follow-up or a "tell me more about that" comment. Listed below are the survey questions that guided the interviews and discussion with the participants.

1. What are the paper's basic guidelines to decide what celebrity news you give readers? Is it simply what editors and writers consider newsworthy and interesting or is it



more than that?

2. Are celebrity stories pretty much just profiles and court dealings such as divorce, criminal charges, along with new movie and TV show advances or does *USA Today* try to do more with the celebrity stuff? Explain.

3. Have there been any reader surveys about celebrity news or whether these types of stories are content the people want to see more of? Let's talk about that.

4. How much does competition from TV, cable, the Internet and other publications matter when deciding what and how many stories to cover? Is there a thought process to make sure *USA Today* has celebrity coverage so readers don't have to go elsewhere for it? Let's discuss this issue.

5. Film and TV stars, musical artists and prominent professional athletes, politicians and authors. Is this a pretty thorough list of what the papers considers "celebrities" Anyone else? The answers to this question helps better define celebrities in the definition section listed below.

6. In general, how often does the front page become a place where *USA Today* will publish a story about a celebrity or celebrities?

7. Is there a feeling that these types of stories are widely read by newsroom editors and writers and have you done any tracking to see what celebrity stories on the Web site get a lot of hits?

8. Historically, I've found that celebrity coverage from about the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century has been a big part of newspaper coverage and continues to be today? Why do you as journalists think this is?

9. Does the fact that *USA Today* reaches such a large national audience give you

guys more leeway to give readers a daily dose of celebrity news? Do you think younger readers are drawn to this type of coverage? Do any surveys show this?

10. Is there a sacrifice *USA Today* makes by publishing celebrity stuff in lieu of more traditional forms of newspaper content, i.e., hard news, politics, health care, education?

Once the interviews were on audio tapes, they were meticulously transcribed into more than 200 pages of single-space transcripts, which provided the qualitative data for analysis, highlighting themes while summarizing similarities and differences.

To augment the interviews, examination and analysis of the main news front pages and Life front pages from Sept. 1, 2004, to Aug. 31, 2005, were conducted, looking to gather a sense of the volume and types of celebrity presence in the newspaper. In the sampling period there were 253 issues, since *USA Today* publishes five days a week, excluding certain holidays. Specifically, the analysis measured key categories of celebrity news coverage, using the raw data of a year's worth of newspapers that could not be ignored for a case study like this at *USA Today*. The data provided answers to research questions for the analysis that include:

1. How many times were celebrity stories featured on the main front in the sampling period? Similarly, how many times were there no celebrity presence on the main front?

2. How many times were celebrity photos included above the fold to draw readers to the newspaper in the sampling period?

3. How many times were above-fold promos on the Life front? What types of celebrity coverage generally dominates this page on a daily basis?

4. What and how many stories were considered celebrity gossip in nature on the Life front?

This approach would fit most accepted forms of case study, which look into a situation from a set period of time using different types of data collection (Creswell, 1998, p. 61). The one-on-one interviews were conducted at the *USA Today* main office in McLean, Virginia, in a private conference room. Themes were recorded to get an intimate understanding of why celebrity coverage is so prevalent from the insider's point of view, in this case, one of the largest newsrooms in the country. Because they each have different perspectives about celebrity news, one-on-one interviewing would be the most effective way to capture those ideas and make sense of them.

In his study comparing focus groups to individuals, Edward Fern discovered people in interviews produced between 30 percent and 40 percent more ideas than focus groups, rejecting the notion that focus groups are more productive (Morgan, 1996, p. 136). Although some documented research suggesting that discrepancies sometimes occur when focus groups are used before interviews, Jenny Kitzinger argues that scholars should not question the validity or honesty of the information deriving from individual interviews because the differences in the information is merely a caveat of the culture (Morgan, 1996, pp. 136-137). Mark B. Palmerino makes a strong case for in-depth interviews in his 1999 article "Take a Quality Approach to Qualitative Research." He claims that "one-on-one interviews uncover the best thinking of each and every respondent without the drawbacks of group dynamics" (p. H35). He also outlines other advantages, notably that people with good or bad thoughts do not influence others and the question of why is easier to obtain in one-on-one interviews rather than focus groups.

Moreover, Palmerino claims that researchers can receive about twice as much information from a person in an interview instead of a focus group (p. H35). For this study, *USA Today* employees gave candid answers in private settings. Every word in interviews can be transcribed and analyzed to identify themes and get a saturated data base of more than just superficial answers (Palmerino, p. H36). It is a question of getting the most out of the research, and Palmerino argues that one-on-one interviews can give more information in less time with fewer logistical nightmares (pp. H35-H36).

#### *Glossary of Terms and Concepts*

Definitions for purposes of this study are listed here.

**Celebrities:** This term refers to the collection of film and TV stars, well-known musical artists, prominent professional athletes, some major politicians and major authors. This list of what *USA Today* would consider a celebrity was posed to the staffers, who were asked to comment on its completeness. They added reality television stars, people such as Paris Hilton who are “famous for being famous” and prominent CEOs such as Bill Gates.

**Paparazzi:** While the term has been fragmented in recent years, these are the photographers who get paid big money to photograph celebrities and other famous people for various publications, both print and online. Some critics refer to them as the “stalkerazzi” because of their alleged behavior in pursuing these photos. Some of them actually look to shoot stars at unsuspecting moments and attempt to provoke a reaction.

**Blind sources:** Sometimes called unnamed or anonymous sources, these are people quoted or used to provide information for a story but are not identified. An example is “A friend of Paris Hilton said she was no longer dating that guy.”

Tabloid: A generic term that refers to gossip and celebrity magazines such as *Star* and *National Enquirer*. Sometimes, interviewees also include other magazines such as *OK* and *In Touch* as a tabloid or “tab.”

Ear and skybox: These two interchangeable terms refer to the upper corners of *USA Today*, where a photo and a teaser sentence into the newspaper are featured. It’s kind of a promotional feature of the cover page. The ear plays a critical role of introducing celebrity news of the paper to readers, as the study will show.

Gawker: This is a celebrity and pop culture Web site. According to the Web site, “Gawker is Gawker Media’s flagship title, a mix of pop culture and media gossip, updated up to two dozen times a day. Gawker is compulsory reading for New York editors and reporters, and often sets the agenda for the entertainment weeklies, gossip columns such as Page Six, and the soft sections of newspapers such as the *New York Times* (<http://www.gawker.com/about/>).

## Chapter Two

### Themes and Findings of In-Depth Interviews

In a case study focusing on qualitative research techniques, it's important to ask questions that will offer insight into the topic that can't be gained through other means. The 10 in-depth questions posed to *USA Today* staff members set up follow-up questions, offering an opportunity to expand on the topic. This chapter focuses on themes that emerged through more than 200 pages of interview transcripts with 16 editors and writers at *USA Today*. They explain in detail the newspaper's overall approach to celebrity coverage, providing examples and insight of *USA Today's* celebrity coverage philosophy that other newspapers can follow.

Below are themes and patterns that became apparent from the series of answers by the *USA Today* staff members and summaries of the five research questions. Throughout the analysis section, interviewees will be referred to as pseudonyms because they were given anonymity and confidentiality during the interviews. In many instances during this section, direct quotes from staffers are included. Their words help provide inside knowledge and insight that paraphrasing can't always do.

RQ1: How does *USA Today* generally approach celebrity news coverage? What immediately became obvious was *USA Today's* desire to bring readers a different point of view that they perhaps can't get somewhere else, be it a different angle, a scoop or more in-depth coverage. It's the news of the day and trends, they said. But it's also celebrities that "people talk about a little more," according to Debbie, who covers stories for

*usatoday.com*. “For instance, anything Paris Hilton will be huge and goes up immediately. And yesterday, Madonna broke her bone; that was huge,” Debbie said. Others agreed that Hilton was a big draw, part of the paper’s attempt to lure younger readers. Editorial judgment--who’s in the news--newsworthiness, space, staff and availability of certain stars all play a role in the coverage, along with striking a balance so as not to alienate certain age groups, the staff said. *USA Today*, like all major publications, has daily budget meetings to decide what stories or topics to pursue on a given day or week. Mary, a celebrity reporter, summed up *USA Today’s* approach this way, “We just kind of give more of a broader cultural spin, I think. You know, how, what is the bigger story here?” A second reporter, Julie, talked about *USA Today’s* strategy and advantage over other newspapers. She said, “And then you’re looking for people who have an interesting story to tell. . . . You want somebody that’s got a little bit of drama . . . because *USA Today* has a lot of stature. . . . We are certainly given a lot more opportunity to interview people than most papers, but at the same time, you can’t just pick every plum off the tree.” When celebrities die, some reporters said they’re almost assured coverage at *USA Today*, said Blair, a senior reporter. In addition, Todd, a photo editor, offered an anecdote about getting a different angle that other media outlets may not have, in this case, Nicollette Sheridan of “Desperate Housewives” and her fiancée in a limousine:

Like last year at the Golden Globes we photographed from the idea of the Golden Globes is an event where there's a red carpet for the show, there's a trophy room, there's a lot of photographers there getting the same kind of thing. There’s different moments but since you're shooting at the same situation, so we worked on finally were able to put a photographer in a limousine with one of the stars for

the last couple of blocks that arrived to the show. So we got something different than everyone else had to lead off the page, and augment the coverage of the rest of the stuff.

Online staff members at *usatoday.com* mentioned the fact that they were not bound by spatial constraints like the newspaper, so they're able to offer more breaking news about celebrities, even links to other Web sites that may have a scoop or a story *USA Today* staff hasn't nailed down. The common theme to these answers is that *USA Today* is competing hard to get an edge when it comes to celebrity and entertainment news against other outlets, whether they are other publications, Web sites or TV shows. Veronica, a mid-level editor, mentioned that her editor's direct competition, in her view, were the celebrity magazines *Us Weekly* and *People*. These findings are significant because they indicate *USA Today* staffers acknowledge that they are trying to separate themselves from other newspapers, tabloids, online sites and celebrity publications such as magazines. They don't deny that celebrity publications are viewed as competition, but rather many of them focused on how to overcome this competition by offering a different angle to readers. *USA Today* went beyond the cliché celebrity stories and attempted to set the newspaper apart from other competitors, with packages such as Q and A stories, live coverage from award events, including the Oscars and Emmys, fashion trends by women celebrities and in-depth profiles and fun charts that readers can't get elsewhere. Celebrity reporter Julie said, "I mean, there's the people page that deals very specifically with celebrity and celebrity-hood, you know, just who, who is dating whom? What a celebrity is wearing and where a celebrity is seen and, and that sort of thing. And then when you got to specific areas of entertainment, it's more about their artistic endeavors, and what



they're doing.”

One reporter said her goal was finding newer angles and shying away from a straight profile. Mary mentioned giving stories a “broad cultural spin” and writing about factors that celebrities have to deal with in a breakup such as Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman. A reporter said that reporting on particular celebrities is often tied to projects on which they are working, and whether or not editors think they are worthy of news coverage as opposed to mentioning them on the inside People page, where celebrities are also featured. In celebrity news, just like other news beats, breaking news and originality are paramount, according to a senior assignment editor. Melissa, a mid-level editor, said, “If it’s a different such as a breaking news celebrity story, we try to add some additional elements to it like a timeline or a fun chart or something that might be a little added information.” *USA Today* staffers specifically mentioned *Us Weekly* and *People* as competitors. Celebrity reporter Tim even mentioned the *USA Today* engaged in couples watch stories like those two publications. But getting an advantage in celebrity news is a daily challenge, according to a high-ranking editor at the newspaper, because the entertainment world is tightly controlled and celebrities are guarded. “And they are very savvy,” said Jack (Colton), the high-ranking editor. “There is nothing to gain for a celebrity to be honest about what happened on a set or how they feel about a project, so it’s really tough to get beyond the celebrity picked at their salad, and, kind of profiles where we get wonderful detail, but we don’t really get to the essence of what the project was all about.”

Another pattern that emerged in the answers is that *USA Today* brings the stories down to a level where they mean something to the everyday person. During the

“Desperate Housewives” craze, reporters did stories about real housewives and women who dressed like the housewives. One high-level editor, Eileen, offered an example of how the newspaper tries to capture the real person behind the celebrity, using the anecdote of a reporter following actress Jennifer Garner around her favorite farmer’s market and telling a story of her Midwest roots. *USA Today* was given access like this, Eileen said, because celebrities “trust us to be fair and accurate.” In online coverage, *USA Today* can compete with other media outlets in real time with online blogs and because space is not an issue like the print version. Chloe, an online editor, said, “we’re able to include little things, like Gwyneth Paltrow tripped on the red carpet or before Jack Nicholson did an interview he popped five breath mints. So we’re able to zero in on what makes them sort of human like the rest of us. And I think that that’s something unique to online that we’re able, we have the space to do that sort of thing.” The online staffers also said *USA Today’s* Web site looks for anything that will make the publication stand apart from other celebrity coverage. That means using online techniques such as linking to other sites and blogs, along with the ability to gain access to celebrities and offer readers a different take on stories about the stars. This demonstrates that *USA Today* attempts to use its own Web site in a prominent role for its endeavor to gain readers of celebrity news. In addition, *USA Today* staffers are trying to get a competitive edge by going beyond the headlines and the predictable celebrity profiles and giving readers more of the material they can’t find in other celebrity news outlets such as other newspapers, Web sites and magazines.

As far as specific readership surveys that would confirm that readers want celebrity news, editors didn’t offer specific data. Although the ones who had inside

information about surveys said celebrity news is among the readers' favorite to see. Jack, a high-level editor at the newspaper said celebrity news "gets high marks." One way to see how well *USA Today* celebrity news is received is to measure the online page views and hits. Writers in the Life section mentioned celebrity stories on the Web site get the most hits. Online editors said the Life section recently grabbed the No. 2 spot behind the news section for most readership and popularity, overtaking sports, which held the spot for 20 years. They say celebrity news is a big reason why. Chloe mentioned celebrity coverage gets the most page views at *USA Today* "far and away."

The next major theme is how staffers at *USA Today* view celebrity news competitors and how that plays into the newspaper's coverage. Part of that is the whole notion of being first to break a big celebrity story, a constant motivator for the newspaper. Staffers in the newsroom leave little doubt that *USA Today* monitors all facets of celebrity coverage. Inside the Life section of *USA Today* in McLean, Va., piles of celebrity tabloids, magazines and other newspaper lifestyle sections are spread throughout the department. They read everything celebrity, in some cases to see what's been done, and in some cases, what hasn't been done. Many of those questioned talked about *USA Today* striving to be first or among the first, taking a different angle on the coverage and looking closely at the competition. "So much of what you're describing, so much of what drives the competition is fundamentally, is this total information of volume and wanting everything that's going on," said Fred, a high-ranking online editor. "And we're as much subject to that onslaught as they are. So once you know how they play these things, and you know what's coming over the pass, the amount of unexpected original stuff that shows up in their pages is pretty low. . . . they're doing it on the cheap,

and the difference is, is we're putting reporting substance behind it." Nevertheless, Debbie, who writes an entertainment blog, admitted she's constantly combing the Web for celebrity news. "And with the blog, that does play a part because I do try to keep feeling like they're the first to know and that they're updated on everything. So I do look at the competition when it comes to that kind of stuff and when I'm trying to figure out what I'm going to write about." Todd, a photo editor, said *USA Today* reporters will attempt to find a different angle, and it's important to be aware of what the competition is doing to avoid giving the public the same material as others. Jack, the high-level editor, talked about fundamental changes *USA Today* is considering to address the competitive environment for celebrity news, especially online. He said:

Well, that's changing like even as we speak. I mean the Internet is so lightning fast. We are assessing as are all newspapers, but especially *USA Today* . . . how real time to get. If we were to get that Britney is going to have twins, let's say, or something like that . . . should we wait for tomorrow's paper, which is like 18 hours from now, or should we put it online right away and say *Usatoday.com* reports that Britney's going to have twins, and the brand gets the credit. I think that's the world we're headed for.

RQ2: Does *USA Today* use its niche of celebrity news coverage to compete directly with other newspapers, tabloids, Web sites and other celebrity news sources in an effort to preserve dwindling circulation numbers and stay relevant in the digital age?

The next major theme that kept coming up throughout the case study was *USA Today's* commitment to its standards. Some answers demonstrated a strong newsroom culture of ethics and sourcing policies that are staunchly defended when *USA Today* is

put alongside other publications, TV and Internet sites. *USA Today* is a newspaper, where accuracy and objectivity maintain credibility with the audience. Newspapers are the oldest form of journalism and arguably the most trusted among the people. These principles, though, may be relaxed when topics such as breakups, hookups and fashion faux pas are bandied about in print. But *USA Today* staffers interviewed maintain the paper's responsibilities do not change when the topic does. This newsroom culture of maintaining a strong code of ethics when it comes to these stories is captured in the interviews.

An online reporter, Debbie, said *USA Today* attempts to distinguish itself from the rest, again, with journalistic standards. "I think that we want to provide a look at everything that is happening," she said. "But it's not going to be a stop for, I mean, *USA Today* is never going to be *Star* magazine. I mean it's not going to be a stop for extremely, pure rumor. It's not like we won't scoop somebody, but if you're going to scoop somebody, you have to make sure that it's right."

Veronica, a mid-level editor, said: "We have restrictions on us that other publications don't have. We don't use gossipy sources. We don't say 'sources say' or 'a friend of Julia Roberts said.' We don't do that. So that's a restriction we have to deal with. They don't. . . . But we are objective and we are trying to get a source, a knowledgeable source to it to say 'yes this is true,' or 'this is not true.' We don't print an anonymous source said such and such. We don't do that." Fred, a high-ranking online editor, held very similar views when it comes to the newspaper's credibility versus other media outlets excluding newspapers:

Our view is if it can be done without undermining the confidence and trust in the

brand, as long as we're clear about what we're doing, and finding the right words, the right graphic presentation to distinguish between the stuff we've absolutely confirmed and the stuff we're saying somebody else reported. . . . We have the same standards as print with sourcing if we're writing the story. Why I talk about this, is, in terms of trying to find the identity and certain positioning of some of these other competitors is to win and stay clean at it, on popular culture, what's going on, do I care without being totally immersed in it and obsessed and make them feel like a tawdry *People* magazine reader.

When asked a follow-up question about the Internet age and so many places to get celebrity news, Fred replied, "There are, but they're doing it on the cheap, and the difference is, is we're putting reporting substance behind it." *USA Today* staffers made repeated efforts to distance their product from others that cover celebrities. Mary, an entertainment reporter based away from the editors in the main newsroom at *USA Today* headquarters in McLean, Va., doesn't waiver in her commitment to the paper's policies. She said:

We don't use, or we largely don't use, unnamed sources...you know how the tabloids work. They allege something, the publicist comes out and denies it, and then you have to figure out, short of actually talking to the celebrity about it. It's often difficult to figure out who saw what where. . . . But I mean a lot of celebrity gossip is bullshit, so, you know, and a lot of these stories, do you really want to be in the business of outing someone?

John, a photo editor who comes at the topic from the perspective of photographs and the paparazzi, offered insight into how *USA Today* decides what to publish under the

umbrella of strong sourcing policies. John states that:

Our standard is that we won't run anything that was obtained in an illegal way, of course, or in a way in which the celebrity was confronted, intimidated where a reaction was provoked, where a photographer just got right into somebody's face. . . . If you can see it from the street, if you can see it on the street, we're not going to shy away from those photos. We've purchased helicopter photos before for one of Jennifer Lopez's many weddings. We get the second tier, we're not bidding against the *National Enquirers*, the *People* magazines or anything like that. We won't get the absolute best photo, but we might get a photo from the same photographer, but it's not going to be their real money shot. Um, part of the reason we can get that second tier is the exposure that the photographers get. Because we're a daily, if something occurs on Saturday, and it's in *USA Today* on Monday, and the tabs and celebrity magazines haven't had a chance to get it in, um, it helps sort of advance the cause of the photographer so we get a cut rate. . . . But, you don't say, you can't handcuff the Life section and say you can't run those sorts of photos without saying guess that means we'll never run another perp walk. . . . If I'm looking for a new photo of Britney Spears, the AP is not stocking Britney Spears on a daily basis. They're not out looking for a candid photo of her, so then you have to start dealing with these agencies, the paparazzi agencies. That's where it becomes very, very difficult to know who you're dealing with because the paparazzi agencies have gone away from using their own staff to now buying photos from every Tom, Dick and Harry that comes in off the street. They just care about photograph, so you're dealing with representatives as

opposed to directly. They don't have the skills or the training that most photojournalists have. That's not across the board, but that's the new breed. There is a level of paparazzi that is very highly trained. You know, they sort of, they made this new model of, of paparazzi, but they were the guys who did know what the heck they were doing.

These comments imply that *USA Today* competes against tabloids and Web sites. It uses paparazzi photos on occasion in its efforts to stay relevant. John made the comments when the speculation of the breakup of celebrity couple Jessica Simpson and Nick Lachey was at its peak. Bill, who covers television, too, references the paper's ethics, suggesting that they have evolved over the years. He said:

Well if you're, if you demand sources, and you won't base things on anonymous sources, and we no longer will, it used to be that we couldn't put a story in with anonymous sources, but we would run it after someone else printed it. Now we don't that. Now, we don't do that." We won't run those and we won't run rumors. That's the whole world of Nick and Jessica. . . . I mean we have basically banished gossip from the paper. I think a lot of it, I think, is good. I think the banishing of allowing people's own spokespeople to speak anonymously as many newspapers do, and it's silly. The idea of an anonymous spokesperson is the most absurd thing on earth. But it also gets us into the ridiculous position of printing things that we know are untrue.

Blair, a long-time reporter at *USA Today*, agreed, saying the *USA Today* never uses blind items, even when rumors take on a life of their own and become the news. Instead of reporting that it's true, she said the paper often will print that this is what



certain people are saying about this person. When it comes to interviewing celebrities, Julie, a music writer, said *USA Today* can set itself apart from the competition by staying true to journalism interviewing techniques. She says:

Yeah and again, I think one of the ways that you do it, you try to ask some of the less, sort of, obvious, less frothy questions that you're going to see on *Entertainment Tonight* or the softball shows like *Larry King*, where they're just giving these celebrities a platform to sell themselves. You have to be a journalist, and you can't be an extension of the publicity machine. That, I think, is the crucial difference between what we do and what some of these, um, sort of celebrity-driven shows and magazines do. You have to call them on things. You have to say to Madonna, for instance, if you've written a children's book and it sold well, but one of the reasons that you get any attention for it is because you're a superstar in the music realm. Why should anyone think that you have any credentials whatsoever to write a children's book? You got a free ride. How fair is that? You're not going to see somebody confronting her, challenging her on taking that kind of a shortcut, you know, on *Entertainment Tonight*, where they're just going to say, "Oh, this is so fabulous!"

Tom, a celebrity reporter, said he directly competes against the celebrity tabloids and TV celebrity media on his beat covering entertainment. He said he holds true to the paper's ethical principles and policies:

There's a fine line because we're not allowed to print rumors, whereas *Us Weekly* and *In Touch*, all they are is rumors, pretty much. Secret sources, we don't use secret sources. And we don't print gossip. We're not even really, we're

discouraged from using the word rumor in the paper, so we really, unless it's confirmed, that's kind of a challenge because they (*USA Today* editors) want to break news, but we have a policy not to exploit what is rumor. . . . we're a paper with integrity as opposed to just a fanzine that kind of play around more and gossip, and rely more on hearsay.

Meanwhile, Todd, the photo editor, explained the recent move by *Star* to distinguish itself from other tabloids. He said *Star* is trying to become "legit" by getting a glossier front instead of tabloid paper. But as someone who attended journalism school, he said tabloid journalism will always be different than newspaper journalism. If he reads something in a tabloid, he said he always wonders if it's really true. Similarly, Chloe articulated the journalistic difference between *USA Today* and celebrity magazines. She said while celebrity coverage is booming, tabloids such as *Us Weekly*, *OK* and *In Touch* have different standards that aren't as high as *USA Today*, and they'll go to any length necessary to get the story, pointing out a *People* magazine reporter was trespassing on Brad Pitt's property. *USA Today* doesn't do that, she said. But as mentioned earlier by John, *USA Today* does purchase photos from paparazzi companies whose photographers have been known to break laws to get photos.

In keeping with the ethics theme, Debbie, a young online staffer who covers celebrities, said *USA Today* wants to give people a higher quality of news, and if a Web site is reporting a rumor, *USA Today* may mention it but is not going to give them "crap." Jack also noted the newspaper's policies and credibility with readers when it comes to reporting truth versus reporting rumor. He said "there are publications that will write around the celebrity, talking to friends, and we almost never do that. We either get the

celebrity, or we won't." When asked a follow-up if people want to see the celebrity content, he again talked about the newspaper's credibility with its readers. He said, "Not so much for the titillation of it, but it's almost like a reality check on what they've seen on the Internet or heard on some of the trashier tabloid shows during the day. And if you read in *USA Today* that Julia Roberts is going to have twins, then there's a lot more credence to the readers, I think then if they see it on some trash Internet site or something like that." But again, Jack goes back to the newspaper's sourcing policy when he attempts to emphasize the difference between *USA Today* and competitors when it comes to celebrity news:

Our sourcing rules are pretty solid, in fact, more solid, more stringent than almost anybody in the industry lately. And it goes to entertainment news as well. We also are, an old trick in journalism is a publication says it so therefore you can print that a publication says it. And do no reporting at all, but you'll drive home thinking we did the journalistic right thing. We're not saying she's having twins, you know, but Drudge says she's having twins or whatever. We increasingly don't do that, and either try to confirm it ourselves or let things circulate a little. Things are almost moving too fast, and you can easily fabricate an entire news cycle of stories if you use the Internet right. And we're quite aware of that and try to avoid that. So I think in competition, everybody loves a scoop, and it's great to break something . . . .but, I think what *USA Today* has, what newspapers have, is there's sort of a real deal to the newspaper. If you see it in a newspaper, I think is has more credibility than it does if you read it on the Internet or somebody says it on television. I think people do believe something if they see it on television. I'm

not sure they believe it too much.

But *USA Today* is just one of many publications, including other newspapers, that give the daily dose of celebrity coverage. Many staffers talked about competition strategies and their views of the competition. Chloe, an online editor, concedes the battle is difficult for *usatoday.com*, especially with the celebrity magazines and tabloids. She mentions the point Jack refers to when talking about quoting other publications to get celebrity news out there. She said:

I will be very honest, it is very difficult to keep up with the publications like *Us Weekly* and *Star* and *In Touch*. I mean they have sources so they can get everything first. They really do get everything first. And one thing that the paper does, which I'm a little iffy on, but they write about *Us Weekly* . . . . what *Us Weekly* is reporting. So say, for instance, *Us Weekly* first reported the Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston divorce. Well, we didn't have that confirmed (laughs), so we had a story in *USA Today* that said *Us Weekly* is reporting that Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston are...and, so I think that we've kind of resorted to that. We kind of let them get at it first and then we'll come back on it with maybe more detail. And a more informative story. But I think a lot of the time we just kind of have to admit that they're going to get it first. ....a publication like *The Washington Post* or something could maybe ignore it, but I think because our Life section or our Life section of the paper is so celebrity oriented that we kind of have to do it. But even if it's a small little blurb, we're kind of obligated to do it.

These comments by Chloe serve to reiterate how *USA Today* continuously competes against celebrity publications online and in print, even feeling "obligated" to do

so. But not everyone interviewed at the newspaper agreed. Tom, the celebrity reporter for the print side, offers a dissenting opinion of sorts when he said his publication would be less likely to cover celebrity news that's been covered to death. There's a lot of competition out there, he said, but *USA Today* wants to try to be if not first than among the first. The theme of being first to break a story in the realm of celebrity news coverage is echoed by Melissa, a mid-level editor. She acknowledged the staff reads tabloids as a part of the coverage strategy. She said:

We try to have an awareness of everything that's out there to make sure what we do is different in some fashion. You know, whether we add additional elements to it. We try to cover a side part of it that no one else is covering. We try to get the interviews as quickly as we can so we're in the front edge of the coverage, try to get exclusive photo shoots, any number of things we can do to try to get it out first.

Tim, a fellow mid-level editor, also said he reads the competition as time permits and said staff tries to keep up and offer a different angle if possible. Julie, a long-time reporter, eloquently discussed the notion of saturation in the celebrity news business in answering this question while talking about *USA Today's* role in all of it, along with frustrations of getting something different. She said competition plays "a great deal" in deciding the coverage at the newspaper:

And I mean the problem these days is that there is far too much media covering celebrity news. I mean it is just, it's reached saturation levels so that you have not just all of the major dailies that have gossip columns and big flashy pages devoted to celebrities and celebrity coverage. You have all of the entertainment TV shows,

and you've got celebrity magazines and tabloid magazines, and, you know, and they're all going after the same thing. And they're all highly competitive. And so one of our aims is to, because we can't devote as much space, for instance, to a celebrity profile as some other newspapers or a magazine can. Our aim is to get somebody first, for instance, or to get a news item first. ... or to get the only interview or to be one of few or to get a unique situation. Instead of getting those revolving door interviews...hotel suites that are so often the vane of journalists who have to do these movie junkets. It's to try to get somebody in their home or to try to get somebody in an unusual situation.

John, the senior photo editor, admitted all of the top editors in the Life section look closely at the competition. "They all look at a huge amount of this material," he said. "And they're using the same sources you just cited as possible competition. They're looking at the Internet, they're watching the shows at night and in the morning. ... I would hope that, you know, the L.A. guys and the New York guys would be getting some sort of tip." Mary, a celebrity reporter, said *USA Today* has a big enough staff that reporters can usually get good access to celebrities. And because of *USA Today's* stature, Blair and Bill said they wouldn't be able to get the stars they get to interview at other papers. *USA Today* gives them the ability to get stars on the phone, they said. Monica, a fellow celebrity reporter, said competition matters a lot during celebrity coverage. "When I'm interviewing Martha Stewart, I have to find out where else is she going to appear. Where is she going first? Who will have it first? Where can we fit into that scheme? I mean all of those. Not even just are you doing this or that. Everything about our competition," she said. At the beginning of the newspaper's life in the early 1980s, before

the advent of the Internet, Blair, a long-time reporter, said the newspaper's main competition came from television, and there's many more celebrity-oriented TV shows on now than there were back then. Before the Internet, the main motivating competitor in the electronic media was television, she said. Eileen, a high-ranking online editor, said *USA Today* is aware of the competition but at the same time, the initial ideals in place that help form the *USA Today* brand have become very successful:

So again, you look at an *OK* magazine. They are flat-out admittedly paying for that content. How much of that can you trust? So, it's interesting that there's more and more stuff in the space, and in a way, it's almost bolstered what we are able to bring a different spin to it. So, it would worry me more if the *New York Times* decided to get into celebrity in a big way because then they would bring formidable journalistic troops as well as ethics and policies to it. One more celebrity magazine doesn't worry me that much.

While some said *USA Today* was trying to conquer the celebrity news landscape, most were quick to call that a losing proposition because of current staffing levels, space and other commitments. John, the long-time photo editor, conceded *USA Today* just doesn't have the resources to accomplish that goal. "But are we ever going to launch a full-out attack on the other publications? This is the only place you need to go, day in and day out. I can't imagine it," he said. "We would have to have a far greater staff. We would have to have a larger budget for photography because these are photos that have to be purchased as opposed to photos that we get from the agencies that we already have a contract with."

A fellow photo editor, Todd, said *USA Today* doesn't have a large enough news

hole to compete with a magazine. But *USA Today* would have a level playing ground on its Web site, where space, in theory, is infinite. Fred, a high-level online editor, and Eileen, also an online editor, both agree that there will never be a one-stop shopping or an end-all, be-all for celebrity news. They say you have to attempt to gain an edge, something that sets you apart and build content that brings people back. Trying to all inclusive would be very difficult, they said.

Tim, a mid-level editor, said he expects people to elsewhere for their information and said *USA Today* will never stop someone from watching TV. Chloe, who oversees the Life section online, said other publications have “tons” of reporters who are “stationed on every street corner,” and *USA Today* “doesn’t have the capability to do that.” *USA* isn't solely a celebrity publication and doesn't have the resources to focus on celebrities to the extent that celebrity publications do. Therefore, it relies on its reputation as a credible newspaper not only to get access to celebrities, but also to assure its readers that what it prints is better sourced and documented than what is published in many places elsewhere.

In what proved to be the minority opinion, Tom, a celebrity reporter, said *USA Today* does want to win the battle against other celebrity news media. “Yeah, we want to be the leading supplier, but I mean in reality, *USA Today* is a lot of people who are traveling, hotel people, and, so I think we’re relying more on the online aspect to reach younger viewers. ...we can’t ignore the younger audience and what they want. And no one is doing that. If you watch *Entertainment Tonight* and *People* magazine, it’s so much more about these people as opposed to the established veterans.” Those comments were echoed by Jack, the high-ranking editor, who said “Yeah, in its highest form, we’d like to



create an environment online where we become almost an exclusive place for celebrity news. And that's a high goal. ...We're not there. Nobody has that. If you want to know if Britney had her baby, you go a lot of places. There's not that one hard-wired place yet. I'm not sure that will be done, but it would be cool if it were done."

These answers unveiled a rift in the philosophy of the newspaper when it comes to celebrity news. Some seem to strive to aspirations that will improve the product's quantity so it can be a bigger player in the game, while others were quick to concede it's probably not reality going up against different publications and media in an effort to achieve supremacy in the market.

Nevertheless, *USA Today* competes with every outlet that offers celebrity news, and like most newspapers, does it in a way that stays true to ethical policies and standards. This was agreed on by both reporters and editors. While reporters may not have the expansive knowledge of specific policies, the newsroom culture at *USA Today* demonstrated during these interviews is *USA Today* is not willing to jeopardize its credibility in the name of covering celebrity news. The interviews demonstrate *USA Today* holds a strong commitment to covering celebrities and will compete against any outlet to do it.

RQ3: Why is celebrity news so prevalent at *USA Today* and how does the public's historic desire for celebrity news and gossip play a factor? The next themes highlighted from the interviews are public's guilty pleasure and perceived desire for anything celebrity. Covering celebrity news is a big hit in the newsroom culture, where so many departments are competing for staff and space. Almost all of those questioned were quick to say that celebrity news is a popular topic for others in the business. Some also said that

the staffers from the competition will e-mail if they liked a story or to offer congratulations for getting a celebrity everyone wants in an interview first.

Julie was quick to say this stuff is popular with colleagues. “I mean everybody likes this stuff, even if they say they don’t. ... I think, frankly, a lot of readership surveys aren’t always trustworthy is because people do gravitate to celebrity news and gossip and, you know, it’s just sort of, you know, it’s, it’s, it’s trashy and fun.” Similarly, Todd, a photo editor, said, “celebrity stuff is kind of the water cooler talk, you know. Everybody’s interested in it. I guess it’s fun to talk about.” Again, John, a fellow photo editor, offered the minority opinion, that celebrity news falls on deaf ears with some bosses at *USA Today*:

That’s just in the photo department alone. With very few exceptions, most of those people do not give a rat’s ass about celebrity, about entertainment. They are bordering on ignorant on pop culture. I mean they just...The don’t know who these people are. What they rely on is, is. ... No what they rely on is me coming to them and saying ‘this is an important story.’ That’s why I need to spend money to buy this photograph or this is a really great get. This is a really great interview for, and I need to put a staff photographer on a plane to do the photo because I don’t want to entrust it to a freelancer.

According to Eileen, a high-level online editor, *USA Today’s* celebrity beat gets a lot of respect at the newspaper because its print version and Web site is outstanding compared to other Web sites. Jack talked about *USA Today* leading the way on recognizing glitzy stories that have legitimate content, such as the Janet Jackson Super Bowl incident with the exposed breast. Chloe said staffers at *USA Today*, *Entertainment*

*Weekly* and *E! Online* and *People* watch each other and how they all cover celebrity stories and what scoops each organization is getting. She called celebrity news a guilty pleasure, a recurring theme with many staffers. Calling celebrity news a guilty pleasure was not popular, however, with a group of editors. They seemed to get offended with their work being trivialized like that, as this exchange demonstrates:

Tim: "I don't know if it's a guilty pleasure."

Veronica: "We're guilt. It's a guilt. It's a pleasure (laughs)."

Melissa: "Yeah, I think we, I mean at least I feel like I am a totally functioning, contributing editor to the paper as a whole. I don't feel like we're in the fun ghetto or something (laughs in background), where people are really ashamed that we exist. I think we have a realistic notion that all four sections balance each other very well and complement each other very well."

Tim: "Yeah, there's no real back of the bus feeling as far as our like our stories are trivial than their stories or something."

Melissa: "We don't think that. Maybe there's an illusion out there about it."

Veronica: "But they're looking for us on the 1A desk to, to generate excitement beyond the front page of the news, I mean, everyone is interested in the news of the plane crash or whatever, but they're looking for us to give a little jolt to the rest of the paper, like we've got an interview with Britney Spears...So they're looking to us because everyone is interested in celebrities."

Historically, celebrity news from about the turn of the 20th century has been a big part of newspaper coverage and continues to be today. Getting staffers at *USA Today* to explain this phenomenon from a journalist's point of view required them to do some

critical thinking about the subject. Among the themes that emerged was that celebrities provide an escape of sorts, with some comparing stars in America to royalty. Also, watching them fall from grace is something that interests people, they said. The staffers at *USA Today* all the while are making the case for providing celebrity coverage. Chloe likens celebrities to a fantasy life, saying “This is sort of like a diversion where you can almost kind of dream that maybe you could be like that one day or your kids could be like that one day or sort of something that can take the mind off of all the stuff that’s just so bad out there. ... Anything that can bring, lend a human light to celebrities, I think that’s very interesting.”

Melissa, the mid-level editor, eloquently put it, “They’re people who are usually popular because they seem to have everything, looks and style, money, position and success. So I think it’s kind of a great leveler and people always want to know about people who are very, very different from their life. You know, I mean, you know, Courtney Cox, we’re interested in what she’s going on in her life because she’s been part of our life for so long. ... In some ways, they’re part of the family.” Tim said the 1920s began this larger-than-life factor with celebrities because they were up on the big screen, it “embodied what you heard on the radio.” He added people have a curiosity factor when it comes to Hollywood. In addition, anyone with a voice supposedly can break through and become successful. Melissa also mentioned many celebrities do not start off wealthy, so it’s very American that they work their way up and live the American Dream. But she also talked about why people are interested in every aspect of their lives. Tim added that’s especially true in a society where traditional family values break down sometimes. “You get a surrogate family situation going,” he said.

Tom, the celebrity reporter on the West Coast, said:

Well, I think it's personality, I just think it's the thing that we all have in common. I mean if you look back to the grand days of the kings and queens of Europe, those were the people gossiped about. Cleopatra was gossiped about. Caesar was gossiped about because he was the one powerful person that everybody kind of had in common and yet they were shielded from what happened in the palace, so there was a great curiosity effect as to what's going on and who's having affairs with whom and where do they spend all their money. And that applies very easily to celebrities, the same kind of thing. They're who we all have in common. It's easy conversation that we can share. Hey, what do you think about Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie? And the same thing with their money. They have a lot of money. They try to protect their private lives. We're curious how they spend their money. It's like being in a soap opera, too. These are soap opera characters, and they have these lavish weddings and these grand funerals when they pass away and we're interested in what goes on between the wedding and the funeral.

In keeping with the royalty theme, Eileen said the fascination with celebrities can be traced even deeper in history. "Going back to ancient Greece, you know, people would talk about the Gods and who they looked up to," she said. "And you had the royalty and you cared about them. You always want to look up to a little bit and you want to know what's going on. And to the point people who are attractive, and there's hundreds of studies that show we are just naturally attracted to them." She also mentioned that when people are attractive, there are biological reasons we want to look at them and know more

about them. In a biography of John Adams, she said, he complained at one point about George Washington, suggesting he got all the attention because he looked good on a horse. “So, this goes back literally to the founding of our culture,” she said.

Jack, the high-level editor of the newspaper, said people like celebrities for their larger than life qualities but also for their humanness:

I think people like to live bigger or different than they way they live, and you can both aspire to be a celebrity and say ‘wow, what a nice home,’ but you can also, when they stumble, feel superior to a celebrity. So you can aspire to be a Michael Jackson and you can also like ridicule Michael Jackson. ...I think people are just fascinated to see people who are living so fast intellectually and physically and mentally and sexually and all those ways, emotionally. That is, you’re watching somebody very special even if sometimes it’s a car wreck. And, it’s just a sure-fire human story.

Fred, the high-ranking online editor, replied to the question from a different perspective. He said:

Movies and books, you can look at these things. They’re reflective of our culture. They play off and speak to us about our culture. And in turn, writing about them is a sort of reverse of that mirror. Sow for many of us, the coverage of that, celebrity, is a kind of way of trying to get the whole picture. You may in your own, particularly in cultural issues, be much more selective of what you want, but you still want to have a sense, sort of a referential sense, of what’s happening to people around you.

Mary, a celebrity reporter based in New York, also emphasized the royalty theme.

“Well I mean celebrities I would say are probably American royalty at this point, you know. And they’re good looking, and they’re fabulous and they always do stupid things. And I mean that’s what people care about,” she said. John, a photo editor, said celebrities take people away:

It’s fantasy. Because life is hard, the world is an ugly place...and it’s escapism.

It’s just like the same reason you go to the movies or turn on the TV to watch *Survivor*: or to watch, um, ah, *CSI* to watch anything that’s on TV...and it’s easy to pretend that have a knowledge about this stuff than it is to try to understand Social Security or why crime is, where it is or getting your kids to college. And that stuff frankly, I even have a hard time getting my head around.

One argument that’s made to justify certain coverage is the we-just-give-them-what-they-want philosophy. Surprisingly, just two of the interviewees, Todd, the photo editor, and Julie offered the reasoning that is often picked apart by media critics who don’t think public desire alone should guide media coverage. Todd said, “And as a journalist, I mean, it sounds like we have a responsibility to give these people that coverage and tell them about this stuff if they want it. If readers are interested in it, yeah, then we should, you know, give our readers what they’re interested in.” *USA Today* staffers demonstrated that they have a working knowledge of why they cover a topic that newspapers have done for decades, so much that it has become second nature. This is significant to the overall study because they seem to justify why newspapers do this by, in almost every theme, putting it back on the readers and the public. It’s their interest, their escapism and their fascination that drives the celebrity news coverage, they said.

*USA Today* reaches a national audience and doesn't have local responsibilities, so

it may be able to give readers more celebrity news than local-driven newspapers. Many staffers talked about having more space and resources dedicated to celebrity than most other papers, and that they aren't bound by local boundaries, so they can do more with it. One staffer noted that every story, celebrity or otherwise, is local to *USA Today*. One said it gives *USA Today* more responsibility to provide this type of coverage. Mary mentioned reporters get plenty of time to do stories, where reporters elsewhere don't always have that luxury. Julie summed up the *USA Today's* approach to celebrity news each day. She said:

Well I just think it's part of the daily diet. I mean if you look at the paper, you kind of get a rather broad buffet of stuff, and there's a dash of celebrity coverage in that everyday. And some of it is fluffier than other parts of it. You can get a very kind of serious in-depth kind of celebrity interview with somebody who is very earnestly talking about their career and then you can get a comparison of Britney Spears' and Paris Hilton's Chihuahuas. I mean it could go from ridiculous to sublime.

One of the highest ranking editors at the paper, Jack, said celebrity news is a tradition. He added, "it's part of our success. It's part of our journalistic formula. And readers might miss out that we don't have real estate every day, but they sure know what we do have everyday. And one of the things we have every day is entertainment and celebrities. And, ah, it isn't like whether we'll cover it that day. It's what kind of celebrity coverage we'll have that day. And I think it's just built into the structure of both the newspaper and the product. I think our national reach just gives us more, more clout." Tom mentioned how working for a newspaper can give him an advantage over some



outlets, but not others. He said:

I mean, we really can beat *People* magazine to the punch. However, with my (inaudible) of stories, I'm battling *Access Hollywood* and *Entertainment Tonight* because if I cover a premiere, say Wednesday night, we've already closed the Thursday paper, so my Wednesday premiere coverage can't get in until Friday morning, whereas *Access Hollywood* and *Entertainment Tonight*, they're scoops, they report on the premiere the following evening, Thursday evening. We have to find a new way, a more inside way to present the information that I get.

Tim said not being "shackled to what's going on in any given town" like local papers give USA Today a "more measured overall perspective of what's happening and needs to be covered." Appealing to younger readers is another major factor in *USA Today's* celebrity news coverage. Debbie, a young writer who writes about younger celebrities, mentioned that her audience is more drawn to younger stars than just any celebrities. Melissa, a mid-level editor, said the paper hopes to appeal to younger readers but doesn't do it at the expense of older readers, striking a balance. Veronica mentioned the celebrity magazines' relentless approach to attracting younger readers. She said, "I mean it's clear with all the plethora of all the *In Touch-es* and the *Us-es* and all the other millions that have sprung up within the past year that there's clearly an interest out there and they're clearly going for younger readers." Similarly, Mary said *USA Today* definitely wants younger readers, and part of deciding what to cover is to cover a lot of younger celebrities and not do celebrity news that's too stodgy and old. But she also mentioned that can be a challenge because, she said, some younger celebrities are boring and don't say anything in an interview, such as Cameron Diaz, who "won't say anything

about her private life. She's very testy when you bring anything up." Said fellow reporter Monica: "It's that coveted 18 to 49s. Just like everybody wants them in movies, everybody wants them in TV, we want them too. We're writing about what they're interested in based on what's the hottest TV show among 18 to 40, you know."

There is a classic debate in journalism between the philosophy of giving readers what they want versus giving them what they need. Obviously, celebrity news would fall in the want category. Staffers argued for balance, not too much of one or the other. To be a successful product, you have to write about the successful shows and movies because that's what people want, Monica and Bill said. We write about what's the top thing I guess at the moment, said Todd, a photo editor. Eileen said it's all about journalism judgment and confirming your gut feeling with reader feedback. "We know generally from surveys that people want celebrity news," Jack said. "If a TV show is hot or you know we're always going to write more about *War of the Worlds* than we are going to write about *The Island*."

Throughout this section, the research has been building a case for *USA Today* competing against newspapers and other celebrity news outlets. Tom talks about feeding the public's desire for celebrity news. He said:

I mean if you just walk around any pool at a hotel, you'll just see everybody, mainly women, reading *Us Weekly* and *People* and even the tabloids, and they have piles of these magazines covering the same stories. But they just can't get enough of it. Even if, if Jessica Simpson's on the cover of *People*, *Us* and say *In Touch*, a lot of people will buy all three just because they want to absorb this, and it's easy to read. It's little paragraphs in those magazines. And *USA Today* is

known for having shorter articles that are easy to quickly to read on air or in transit.

He added that *People* and *Us* often send *USA Today* their big scoops that are coming up to promote them in advance. At *usatoday.com*, where space is no issue, Chloe, a mid-level online editor, said she could put in 100 celebrity stories a day and readers can and do find them. “I mean I think that’s part of what’s so great about our Life section is that we’re comprised with people who actually do have a pulse on the nation and what’s going on,” she said. John, the photo editor, added some insight into how the newsroom often reacts to a big celebrity story:

If there’s a really strong hey Martha celebrity story in play at noon, and we’ve already decided how the front page is gonna be chopped up, how it’s going to be designed, we know that OK, top story is some, I don’t know, news conference about new television shows. And the cover story is something about antique car collectors and the bottom story’s a book story. At 5 o’clock we’re standing around looking at the paper for the next day, those two strip stories, the top and bottom strip story, are, they’re in jeopardy until the paper goes to bed for the night. So if somebody nails that hey Martha celebrity story, and if Susan Weiss (managing editor of Life section) really likes that hey Martha, that other story is gone. It’s either going to be. It’s either going to be inside...Or it’s going to live to be printed another day or it just dies on the vine. In most cases, either it finds a home or it lives to run another day. But if it’s a talker, if it’s something that Susan thinks people will pick up the paper and look at it and go ‘hey’ and then they’ll chat about that around their water cooler all day, she’s all for it, particularly if she

thinks we're first. If she thinks that ...if she thinks the *Today* show or *Good Morning America* or whatever CBS's thing is called, um, would, ... if she thinks that Katie Couric or Matt Lauer is going to hold up *USA Today*, which they've done and say, this morning, you know, 'Matt did you read this in *USA Today* this morning? I can't believe that Jennifer Lopez had her breasts reduced? You know... For Susan, that's just like, yeah. That's, you can't beat that because she knows the guys that are, our readers, everyone that reads *USA Today* regularly or in their hotel rooms or in their dorm rooms or whatever with the *Today* show on, you know.

*USA Today* is feeding the public's desire for celebrity news that has been a tradition for decades. A form of escapism, the newspaper is providing something that their readership has come to expect from *USA Today* – lots of celebrity news, large photos of the stars, and in turn, giving themselves an edge over other newspapers in this category.

RQ4: By making a strong commitment to celebrity news, does the newspaper make a sacrifice to other traditional forms of newspaper content? This final question is significant because many journalism purists would argue that any inch of celebrity news comes at the expense of covering subjects that "matter" to everyday lives. But the *USA Today* staffers interviewed, almost without exception, defended their coverage of celebrity news, refusing to say any sacrifice is being made to cover Hollywood and entertainment. The theme that resonated was striking a balance, and the newspaper should be diverse, and celebrity news plays a part of that but isn't overdone. Celebrity news and entertainment is part of the news of the day, some of the staffers said. "We

need a relief valve I don't think people just want to read that. ... You know, I know gas prices are going up, and that's important, because I follow it, but I don't just want to read that. I want to know where I can go to a movie or see on TV, or you know, what's the hottest show," said Blair, an entertainment reporter. Several staffers pointed to the Better Life section, which covers health and education issues and shares Life with entertainment, saying that staff is actually bigger than the one that covers celebrities. "I would not say we're sacrificing, you know, if somebody has the cure for cancer for Britney Spears has stretch marks," said Veronica, a mid-level editor. John mentioned celebrity news can be used to attract readers and hopefully get them to read other sections of the newspaper.

One of the few dissenting opinions came from Chloe. She said the answer to the sacrifice question depends on who you ask. For instance, if one talked to the Better Life section, "they would say by all means we are sacrificing health content, education content for this dumb people stuff, they might say...but if you ask the entertainment staff, I think that they would, actually they'd maybe say that we could include even more or it would be nice to include more....I'm of the opinion that we could use a little bit more (entertainment news). And we could probably hire five more people and we could compete with *Us Weekly*.

Said Tom, a celebrity reporter in Los Angeles, "It's actually kind of frustrating to us entertainment people who would actually like to see more of our stories on the front page, but we understand that *USA Today* has a reputation to uphold as a hard news paper, and that's what it provides chiefly." The highest ranking print editor interviewed in the study, Jack, said the paper is not sacrificing anything for celebrity coverage. He said the

paper may pay the price in the image department for covering celebrity news but not in actual coverage. If the *USA Today* can engage the reader more and maybe get people who wouldn't usually read a paper to read the paper, he said he'll take the criticism from traditionalists:

If we put Britney on the front page, you see her more than you see our story on health care even though we have three times more coverage of health care than we do of Britney. It's hard to see. So I think casual people look at us and say, 'oh, they cover Britney, that's the paper that covers Britney Spears.' And I think it's more of an image thing than reality. We're a good, solid, very traditional newspapers. And we cover all the issues of the day with limitations just on our expertise and our space. And we also cover celebrities. I think it's because we simply recognize that readers have an interest in that."

Mary took the question more literally than most. She said. "We're not, you know, as far as I know, pulling someone off of President Bush so they can go interview Tom Cruise," she said. Bill , agreed, saying "Yeah. There are some magazines like *In Touch* that only do celebrity and like, there's the *Wall Street Journal* that only does financial news and business. You can make your choice. Or there's us that does a little bit of everything." The only person interviewed who felt the paper was sometimes making a sacrifice was Julie. She said:

Well, I think there are, there are certainly days that I feel that way. And there are certainly days that other people feel that way, and I'm sure there are days that readers feel that way. It's a very kind of personal call, and I think as long as the serious news is addressed and is covered, you can't really say that it's hurting

anything. But there will always be people who think that if any resources at all are dedicated to these inconsequential events of people who are not doing anything important, (laughs).

*Analysis of USA Today News and Life Fronts*

RQ5: What is the general celebrity news makeup of the newspaper's news front and Life front during a yearlong sample period? The national newspaper is printed five days a week, excluding some holidays. Editions of the newspapers in order to draw compete conclusions about *USA Today's* actual celebrity content and how it competes with other celebrity news distributors. The raw data in this analysis was one year's worth of *USA Today* front pages and *Life* front pages from Sept. 1, 2004 to Aug. 31, 2005. Hard copies of the news front and *Life* section front of the newspapers were taken from the *USA Today* archive at the newspaper's headquarters in McLean, Va. In this time period, 253 editions of the newspaper were published.

In the analysis of the front page, sometimes called the news front, 18 of the 253 or 7 percent of the editions had no celebrity presence in a photo, skybox, teaser or story, using the definition of celebrity as defined earlier. This shows that rarely is *USA Today* willing to sell an edition without its signature celebrity presence on the cover. The few days without this type of coverage helps to show how important *USA Today* considers celebrities in its mix of content. The front page is the first that readers see. This indicates how celebrity coverage has become fundamental *USA Today*.

The next part of the newspaper data analysis looked at how often *USA Today* published an actual story about a celebrity or celebrities on the news front. *USA Today* published 45 stories involving celebrities from Sept. 1, 2004, to Aug. 31, 2005. Again,

celebrities are the collection of film and TV stars, well-known musical artists, prominent professional athletes, some major politicians and major authors. That's just slightly less than one celebrity story a week on average. In many instances, the front-page stories that featured celebrities were cover stories, which are typically longer stories that focus on a profile of a person or issue. A detailed list of the stories published is listed in Appendix M.

Most of these stories add to the diversity of the front page while breaking up the hard news typically featured on page A1. The limited number of celebrity stories on the front during the sample period, however, doesn't suggest that *USA Today* overplays celebrity-type stories on the front. Having a celebrity story on the cover most weeks also show that upper editors at the newspaper think celebrity stories are valid selling points. *USA Today* staffers questioned about the front page and celebrity coverage suggested the newspaper will run celebrity stories on the main front sparingly. Many said about once a month or slightly more. Some specifically mentioned that when a celebrity dies, the obit is often times on the main front. It's important to note, however, that the definition of celebrity for the people who answered may or may not have included some politicians and pro athletes that are included in the definition of celebrities for purposes of this case study, with 45 such stories identified on the front in the sampling period. Jack , the high-level editor, confirms *USA Today's* policy about celebrity stories and the front page. He said:

We'll we always want some celebrity. It's rare if I don't have a celebrity on the front page in some way. And not just, I don't mean celebrity, but some kind of... personality. It's not that I haven't looked. It means that, you know, we're short



that day. But almost every day we have the world of celebrity represented. It actually comes to the page as a story maybe only once every two weeks, if that. Usually it's a cover story of a major movie, an interview with Spielberg we had out there.

But Jack was careful to distinguish what kinds of celebrity stories will run on the main front. "But we will not, just regular celebrity news or a celebrity scandal. We won't take that unless it is the absolute moment. You know, we had the breast incident from the Super Bowl," he said. Melissa, a high-ranking assignment editor said once a month or a little more for a celebrity story. "Generally it's cover stories that make it out front," she said. "What we do is not hard breaking news by and large. ...If it's a trend that we've discovered that no one else has yet. We've done trend stories on like epic style films, um, war films and that kind of thing. It has to be sort of a big idea or something that's super hot." Veronica, a mid-level editor, remembered a cover story about Steven Spielberg that came out with his film, "War of the Worlds." She said, "Our reporter got him to talk about how aliens and snakes and all these different themes of the movie. What themes did he like when he was playing out and how we would have done some of his movies different had he done them as a family man now. That was a unique angle that no one else had."

In *USA Today* and most other daily newspapers, there is a place in the upper corners of the front page where inside stories are often promoted with a photo and a few words. Considered a teaser, these corner positions are usually called skyboxes or "ears." In *USA Today*, the Life section is usually the section that's featured in the right ear, while sports usually gets the right ear. Jack said that the paper usually tries to get a celebrity in

the right ear. “The one on the right side, it’s not written down anyplace, but just de facto has become the Life entertainment ear. And usually we’ll have news about Britney getting married, latest films, those kinds of things.... Yeah, we will proudly put that on the front page, and it seems to have some kinds of sales impact. If there is major celebrity news, we can see a bump in sales,” Jack said. Some other reporters and editors specifically mentioned the right ear as a source for promoting celebrities, demonstrating how the staff knows this unwritten policy, even if they are not laying out the paper. Jack’s comments are supported by the data analysis of the newspapers sampled in this case study. In the sampled one-year time period, *USA Today* placed a celebrity photograph in the right ear in 204 of the 253 dates, or 81 percent. This data provides strong evidence that *USA Today* values celebrity coverage and believes it gets readers’ attention. Putting a celebrity on the front cover, one can argue, is an apparently successful ploy *USA Today* uses to lure readers into the publication.

Of the celebrities in the right ear, 118 were actors or actresses, 37 were music stars and 49 were classified as others, which include reality TV stars and personalities such as Martha Stewart and Donald Trump. While listing each celebrity in the skyboxes here would be too cumbersome, the complete data analysis in Appendix L includes all names of the celebrities identified in the skyboxes. Those featured ran the gamut of the who’s who in film, television and music.

The significance of the front page being used as a place for celebrity cannot be overlooked. This strategy is what tabloids and celebrity news magazines such as *People* and *Us Weekly* have been doing for years to sell their products on newsstands. Putting photos on the front page of a magazine or tabloid with a teaser of what’s inside is not

unlike what *USA Today* is doing with its right skybox. Sure, tabloids and celebrity magazines have little content other than celebrity, so of course they're going to have photos on the front cover. But *USA Today* has dozens of stories it could promote in the Life section on the front page but chooses celebrities most of the time. This practice demonstrates a deliberate practice by *USA Today* to lure readers with the use of well-known celebrities in a prominent position on the front as bait. With many *USA Today* staffers attempting to articulate differences the newspaper has with these other types of media, this practice demonstrates a similarity between the newspaper and other magazines and tabloids. The content inside may be drastically different, but getting people to turn the pages is the main goal with front-page teaser photos of celebrities.

The Life section includes celebrity, entertainment, health and education stories for the most part. The analysis in this case study only consists of the front page of the Life section, sometimes called the "Purple" section because of the color in the front corner. There is an inside area of the life section called "People," usually a half a page or so where lighter celebrity news often gets played. But the front of Life remains a staple for celebrity and entertainment news as the analysis will show.

Using the skybox to tease a celebrity story was not used quite as frequently on the front of the Life section as it was on the front of the News section. During the sample period, there were 129 skyboxes with celebrity photos, which equates to 51 percent of the editions. The breakdown featured 80 actors and actresses, 25 music stars and 24 in the others category, which could be someone such as a politician or reality star.

Based on these statistics, the editors at *USA Today* don't put as much luring value of a skybox inside as they do on the front of the news section. Once someone is looking

at the Life section, the person will probably thumb through the section anyway. The Life section features a left rail that is full of stories about new projects of celebrities, court dealing of celebrities and other tidbits. Monday through Thursday, this rail is called Lifeline. On the weekend edition, the rail still exists, but it's not called Lifeline, and stories as a rule are a bit longer. Nevertheless, celebrity coverage dominates the left rail on a daily basis, the analysis shows. In the yearlong sampling of *USA Today*, there were 208 editions or 82 percent where at least one celebrity head shot photo appeared in the left rail. Photographs of celebrities along this "briefs" section of the Life front attract readers to *USA Today's* star coverage. *USA Today* has set trends for other newspapers to follow when it comes to photo-placement, color and page layout.

*USA Today* staffers became almost defensive when the questions about competing with other celebrity news sources and gossip finding its way into the newspaper were raised. The Life section content in the sample period provided plenty of examples of stories you could also find on a celebrity news Web site or a publication such as *Star* magazine. The stories found in the analysis, it can be argued, are at the very least tabloid-like in nature. They're listed in Appendix N.

Of the 85 examples found on the front of the Life section, most appeared in the left rail. Many of these tabloid-like stories are about celebrities being injured, being sued, filing suits, having babies, battles with paparazzi and tabloids and addictions. The staffers' defense against running gossip stories in the paper are the newspaper's sourcing policies. Most of these stories listed above, it can be argued, can be labeled under the title feeding-the-public's appetite for anything celebrity. Some of the most glaring examples of tabloid-like material include a cover story about Emmy after-parties hiring "eye-

candy: to please stars; skybox photo of Ben Affleck and Jennifer Garner with teaser headline: “Ben, Jen, look like a couple”; news brief about singer Houston gouging out an eye during a suicide attempt; Cover story about Fashion Week with headline “Celebs turn up runway lights” with photos of actress Ashley Olsen and singer Lil’ Kim. The newspaper’s People section also features similar stories daily of the ones found in this analysis of the Life front. The stories cited clearly show editors at *USA Today* won't shy away from these kinds of sensational stories that can just as easily show up on Internet sites and celebrity magazines.

The rest of the Life front sections included a slough of celebrities in stories such as profiles, previews of shows or movies and awards shows. These findings were expected, since the Life section is where celebrity coverage is most often placed in the newspaper. Hundreds of photos, large and small, and stories on the Life front featured celebrities during the sampling period. They are listed in Appendix L by date.

## Chapter Three

### Conclusion

Saturating the pages of *USA Today* with celebrity news is only a reflection of what our society and culture have become. Anna Nicole Smith's recent death dominated the news cycle for three straight days, with front pages of major newspapers running the story, and local and national newscasts devoting considerable coverage to the story. *USA Today's* weekend edition is published Friday, the same day Smith died, so it could not cover the story in its print editions until Monday. Nevertheless, *The Los Angeles Times* and *Washington Post* both ran the story of her death on their front page, and the *New York Times* sponsored a Google link that led users to their coverage, making it the single-most story read on the site (Rainey, 2007).

Smith was a media-driven celebrity in the truest sense, and her life -- from her marriage to an 89-year-old tycoon to her weight gain -- is the perfect example of how Americans are captivated by such stars, if only for the entertainment value and conversation appeal. Neil Postman writes, "Americans no longer talk to each other, they entertain each other. They do not exchange ideas; they exchange images. They do not argue with propositions; they argue with good looks, celebrities and commercials" (Postman, 1984, p. 93). Overnight ratings for the syndicated magazines--*ET*, *Extra* and *Inside Edition*, each saw significant increases in ratings because of the coverage of Smith's death. *Entertainment Tonight* had the largest spike, up 40% from the night before to a 4.9 rating/10 share average in the Nielsen overnights, according to Broadcasting & Cable

(cited at [www.broadcastingcable.com/article/CA6415355.html?display=Breaking+News](http://www.broadcastingcable.com/article/CA6415355.html?display=Breaking+News)).

*USA Today* has set an industry-wide example with its color, shorter stories, graphics, sports and weather page. Its celebrity news coverage, too, can serve as a useful model for many newspapers struggling with dwindling circulations to follow. *USA Today's* Web site, as mentioned, is among the top five most popular entertainment Web sites, and its circulation remains robust at 2.3 million. Some staffers were quick to say celebrity coverage is what readers want, while displaying celebrities on the front page boosts sales. Providing more celebrity coverage and using techniques such as putting a celebrity above the fold and featuring additional celebrity news on the Web site are innovations of *USA Today* that other newspapers should consider.

*USA Today* makes a sacrifice to the spirit of classic journalism to give readers a daily dose of celebrity coverage. One celebrity story means one less hard-news story. This case study demonstrates the tremendous commitment *USA Today* makes to celebrity news. It has carved out a niche in this genre that gives it an advantage in this coverage over most newspapers. Many of the innovations *USA Today* has given to the newspaper industry are considered positive influences. Devoting extensive pages and resources to celebrity coverage brings in readers, but it also contributes to the trivialization of news. The patterns outlined in the case study show that *USA Today* makes a decision to publish a steady stream of celebrity news, staffers say, as part of its formula for success. Editors there don't shy away from celebrity news because they know it sells. The unwritten policy to put a celebrity in the left ear of the front page as much as possible is not unlike *People* magazine or *Star* or the main page on Web sites using celebrity images to lure

readers -- some of who may not be interested in other aspects of newspaper coverage -- to buy a copy or subscribe. A high-ranking *USA Today* editor interviewed in the case study confirmed the practice helps boost sales.

But *USA Today* provides steady celebrity coverage to stay relevant in a digital age where celebrities are protruding from Web sites, cable TV, magazine racks and nightly entertainment and gossip shows. The print version of newspapers has remained largely unchanged for decades, so newspapers must find a specialty or a topic that is going to spur reader interest. For *USA Today*, the case study shows that celebrity news is a vital part of that strategy. The *USA Today* staffers, including editors, managers and reporters, interviewed in the case study, acknowledged the tremendous demand by the public for celebrity news. Few of them however questioned why *USA Today* is in the celebrity news game. In fact, they defended it.

Every time there's a story that speculates whether Vince Vaughn and Jennifer Aniston are going to get married, for instance, means *USA Today's* editors believe that's what their readers want to know, no matter how trivial. Cheaply produced celebrity news and gossip are desirable to more expensive forms of journalism such as political and economics coverage when media companies are pressured to turn out huge profits for investors (Armstrong, 2002). But *USA Today* editors explained time and again that this is their model for success, giving readers a balance of everything, including entertainment and celebrity news. A lack of investigative, watch-dog stories about government abuses, extravagant spending and other worthy causes, may cause *USA Today* to lag behind other major U.S. newspapers that make these kinds of stories a priority. Postman argues that little in newspapers or television news makes you alter your plans or take special action



but instead just gives us something to talk about without any meaningful action (Postman, 1984, p. 68). Celebrity news doesn't offer anything of news value other than as a "hey Martha, did you hear" factor and pure entertainment and amusement.

This is not to say *USA Today* is taking the wrong approach. Some news purists would like to severely limit celebrity news coverage in favor of more traditional newspaper content such as health care, politics and education. Editors and reporters at the newspaper counter by saying celebrity and entertainment coverage is part of the newspaper's diverse coverage. How one views this debate depends on their philosophy of what a newspaper's role in society is. *USA Today* staffers believe that celebrity stuff should be part of the news of the day.

*USA Today* uses celebrity images to lure readers into the paper just like tabloids and celebrity magazines have always done. Along with the upper right ear as a consistent fixture for celebrity photographs, *USA Today* does not shy away from putting a celebrity story on the news front. In the year sampling period, celebrity teasers in the ear remained the norm to promote the Life section. *USA Today* uses this technique on the news front and to a lesser extent on the Life front. A high-ranking editor said sales increase when they do this, so it's not hard to understand why the practice is in place.

Pop culture icons are instantly recognizable, and when many newspapers continue to lose circulation at an alarming rate, using TV and movie stars in the battle to keep them doesn't sound so outrageous after all. Staffers mentioned how they get feedback from other editors and reporters at *USA Today* and elsewhere who get their fix of what some would call a guilty pleasure.

It's apparent that there is tremendous demand for celebrity coverage, and *USA*

*Today* tries to fill that niche. Some authors have attempted to explain this fascination with the rich and famous. In the book *Celebrity and Power*, P. David Marshall concludes:

The close scrutiny that is given to celebrities is to accentuate the possibility and potential for individuals to shape themselves unfettered by the constraints of a hierarchical society....their wealth does not signify their difference from the rest of society so much as it articulates the possibility of everyone's achieving the status of individuality within the culture. ...the spectacular quality of the code of individuality that is enacted by public personalities works ideologically to maintain the idea of continuity between wealth and the disenfranchised rest of society. Celebrities reinforce the conception that there are no barriers in contemporary culture that the individual cannot overcome (1997, p. 246).

The case study showed that the staffers believe people use celebrities as a form of escape from their daily lives and view them as American royalties, but they also take interest when the stars succeed or stumble while everyone is watching. *USA Today* attempts to take different angles that make it stand apart from other competitors, getting beyond the police and court fodder, marriages and divorces in an attempt to deliver more substance to the people who entertain the masses. Staffers mentioned examples such as in-depth profiles, question and answer stories and even getting in a limo with a celebrity for a different angle.

*USA Today's* national reach gives it more leeway with resources and space to give readers more celebrity news than other larger newspapers. Besides its residential circulation, *USA Today* is widely available in hotels, newspaper vending machines and racks inside airports, supermarkets and drug stores and book stores around the nation,

right next to *People* and *Us Weekly*. But what cannot be overlooked is how *USA Today* uses its Web site, *usatoday.com* to deliver celebrity news coverage. Staffers on the online side confirmed that surveys show celebrity news is something readers want to see more of each day. In addition, *USA Today* was among the top five entertainment sites on the Internet in a prominent survey at the time of this research, according to the online Life editor. This tool gives the paper a resource to keep up with other outlets that aren't bound by five-day-a-week, once-day deliveries in this digital age of instant gratification. Stories about celebrities, sex and scandal prove solid ways to bring viewers into newspaper Web sites (Shiver, 2006). A story about a rapper arrested on rape charges was the top daily story in February 2006, while a story about actresses Keira Knightley and Scarlett Johanson posing nude in *Vanity Fair* also made the top five (Shiver, 2006).

The piles of celebrity magazines and tabloids at the Life section department in McLean, Va., is evidence that staffers are paying attention to these publications. The case study questions posed to the staffers at *USA Today* solidified that point. But how the media theory of gatekeeping works at *USA Today* shows how the newspaper approaches celebrity news coverage. The gatekeepers at the nation's largest newspaper put ethics and principles behind their coverage of celebrities, a point that was made time and again during the interviews. According to *USA Today* founder Al Neuharth, "*USA Today* has a firm policy that bans all anonymous sources. It has taught our reporters responsibility and has given the newspaper unprecedented credibility with sources and readers" (Neuharth, 1989, p. 259). These ethical practices that are instilled throughout the newsroom became clear as reporter after reporter and editor after editor cited these practices. This widespread newsroom culture of ethics and policies in celebrity news was an unexpected

finding of the research. While it can be argued that newspapers often have higher standards than other non-newspaper competitors, this obvious culture of ethics in a category of coverage that is so often associated with gossip and innuendo was among the most significant findings of the case study. These answers were not provoked by specific questions about ethics. This newsroom culture of ethics first was obvious as they make comparisons between *USA Today* and the rest. Almost without fail, the staffers identified their sourcing policy making the contrast between themselves and the others. Jack, the high-level editor, made reference to this when he said people know when they read it in *USA Today*, it must be true.

Many reporters and editors repeated the policy at *USA Today* that forbids quoting blind or anonymous sources. Several editors also mentioned how *USA Today* doesn't run photos of celebrities in which the photographer provoked a response. What was surprising, however, is that *USA Today* has paid for paparazzi photographs. This fact is further evidence that the newspaper is competing against all sources of celebrity news in the effort to keep pace, and while strict ethical policies are in place, competition can cause temporary breaches of doing what many journalists believe is right. Paying for people to talk goes against most journalism ethical codes and standards. The decision to be a main player in celebrity news puts *USA Today* in an ethical dilemma. Running photos of covers of magazines and running stories that quote other publications such as *People* or *Us Weekly* lowers reporting standards in an effort to feed the public's want for celebrity news coverage. While news organizations use each other for tips to get the story themselves, quoting other magazines that have a major scoop or exclusive on a celebrity, like *USA Today* does, demonstrates their desire to stay relevant against those outlets that

focus almost exclusively on celebrity news. Some of the online staffers during the in-depth interviews acknowledged that they use links and reference other celebrity stories, especially in columns or blogs. These techniques offer a way for the newspaper to give people the gossip and other stories from other outlets without lowering the paper's journalistic standards. That way, they can distinguish the stories they publish under their brand and others. The fact that they are willing to link to other stories is further proof that *USA Today* is willing to stretch the boundaries of ethics and objectivity to compete in the celebrity news craze. When *USA Today* goes the extra mile to provide celebrity news, it forgets about the media theory of social responsibility, which suggests that journalists have a duty to provide information and news coverage that will help people make good decisions about their lives. Celebrity news, it can be argued, is an addictive form of entertainment, but it can hardly be called news that matters.

*USA Today* strives to strike a balance in its four sections, and this case study shows that celebrity and entertainment news is a fixture in that formula. If *USA Today* wants to maintain the ethical standards its staff staunchly defends, the newspaper should limit the number of gossip stories it publishes and limit the number of times it quotes magazines and other publications. The case study offers pages of evidence that shows *USA Today* sets the standard for covering celebrities in the traditional newspaper format. History shows that the newspaper is only continuing a tradition that began with the emergence of Hollywood. People will always be fascinated with celebrities, and feeding that curiosity is a winning formula, but it must be done in a way that doesn't erode journalism publications into just another tabloid in the grocery store. *USA Today* has not blurred the lines between news and entertainment enough to cause a major concern about

its practices. For the most part, the nation's newspaper places ethics and standards behind their celebrity and entertainment coverage, and other newspapers can learn from their successful ways.

A 2001 article by Ziauddin Sardar in the *New Statesman* makes some poignant comments about celebrities. He said that "celebrity is the main currency of our economy, the prime value in our news and the main impetus in our charitable works. It is the predominant means of giving and receiving ideas, information and entertainment. Nothing moves in our universe without the imprint of celebrity" (p. 27).

Celebrity status is made possible by the mass media because a soccer star such as David Beckham can be just as popular abroad as he in Manchester (Sardar, p. 27). The news media, along with their cousins in mass media, are largely responsible for making people the celebrity and stars they are by saturating the public with their images, their stories and their many talents, be it sports or entertainment. The decision to provide celebrity news must be more than just selling newspapers, which, unfortunately, is what many media consumers cynically believe is the only reason to publish certain stories. This case study explored those reasons. Based on the cited literature, however, there is not a magical reason one can point to in an attempt to explain why celebrity coverage in newspapers is so prevalent. Media theories such as gate keeping, agenda-setting and others, including the uses and gratifications model, all have components that may be applied to celebrity coverage. For that matter, so do traditional news elements such as prominence and unusualness.

Celebrity itself should be another news element, listed right beside the old standbys that include proximity and timeliness. The news media constantly use celebrities as

news, and covering celebrities seems to ensure that a chunk of the population will be interested in that story, based perhaps on little more than the famous name in the article. Newspapers name-drop celebrities similarly to someone looking to impress a friend in a conversation. Right now, celebrities are shoved into the news element of human interest, but celebrity deserves its own category because it can be defined in and of itself. Journalists should not be ashamed of providing news and updates on celebrities, as long as it is done responsibly and using sound journalism practices and strong personal ethics. Newspapers such as *USA Today*, however, must acknowledge that other influences on media content such as profit-making and newsroom routines have significant impact on celebrity coverage. The celebrity fascination has been aided by cable TV, computers, satellites and an ever-changing culture (Shenk, p. 12), and “celebrity coverage remains one of journalism’s few guaranteed growth sectors” (Shenk, p. 19). Newspapers have no choice but to deliver their share of the celebrity diet or risk the further alienation of its already declining readership. Covering celebrities and entertainment in a saturating way is a niche *USA Today* has carved out in the newspaper market in its quest to keep readership during a time when other newspapers’ circulations continue to dwindle.

Americans will always be fascinated with the rich and famous. As this case study demonstrates, *USA Today* attempts to set itself apart in the celebrity news race from publications and outlets with less journalism credibility. By doing so, *USA Today* once again leads the way, setting the example for other newspapers to follow.

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## Appendices

Appendix A. Interview with Debbie, Columnist at *USA Today*

Grant: First of all what are the paper's basic guidelines to decide what celebrity news you give readers...

Debbie: Um.

Grant: Is it just what readers, I'm sorry, is it just what writers and editors think is important or is it more than that?

Debbie: So you want me to take on the dot-com angle?

Grant: Please.

Debbie: Because obviously we post everything that the paper runs.

Grant: Right.

Debbie: So throughout the day, um, the Life section online is more celebrity oriented . . .

Grant: Yeah.

Debbie: . . . than the newspaper. And really that we found what people, online people, tend to gravitate toward more.

Grant: Really.

Debbie: And so in terms of what kind of stuff, like breaking news, like stuff that maybe I write about throughout the day.

Grant: Uh huh.

Debbie: Or breaking news to post to our Web site. Um, they're just certain celebrities that people like to talk about a little bit more.



Appendix A (Continued)

Grant: For instance.

Debbie: For instance, anything Paris Hilton will be huge and goes up immediately. And yesterday, Madonna broke her bone; that was huge.

Grant: Huge.

Debbie: Even if she's fine and leaves the hospital. People will totally click on it. Anything salacious. Anything scandalous.

Grant: What about the Pitt and Angelina thing?

Debbie: That's huge. Anytime, even if it's, most of the time it's like a non-update really but any sort of little . . .

Grant: Tidbit.

Debbie: Yeah, we post it. It's big. Um, so you know also kind of any offbeat stuff, anything weird like, um, like Britney Spears' pregnancy test found on eBay like . . .

Grant: Oh. Wow.

Debbie: Just anything weird. Especially if it has that online angle to it. Um, and, I mean, obituaries.

Grant: Any time they die it's huge.

Debbie: Pretty much any . . .

Grant: Johnny Carson.

Debbie: Pretty much any, and even if it's a slightly minor celebrity. Like when the inventor of the TV dinner died, I mean. So people click on . . .

Grant: They click it.

Debbie: Yeah, big stars.

## Appendix A (Continued)

Grant: That's great. Are celebrity stories, though, pretty much just profiles and court dealings such as divorce, criminal charges along with new movie and TV show advances or does *USA Today* try to do more with the celebrity stuff?

Debbie: Well, um, I mean in the paper it's definitely more featurey but the things that we deal with in dot-com are you know more breaking, sort of newsy bits. And um, so yeah, like for the Web site, we don't really post any sort of features because we just think that our staff (*USA Today*) does it best and so like if AP like ran a feature, we wouldn't post it on our site.

Grant: Right.

Debbie: And just more throughout the day, I think people will come back to see like more news and stuff . . .

Grant: They want to see if it's going to come, if they're going to get more angle or a different, ah, update. I see. That's cool. Um, this is a different thing. Have there ever been any reader surveys about celebrity news or online surveys like whether these types of stories are content people want to see more of? Have you guys done any?

Debbie: I'm sure there have been. I don't know if anything like extensive has been done. I'm sure there has been, but I don't know. But, you know, we have . . .

Grant: But what about the clips, the weekly thing? What were you going to say?

Debbie: Oh, well, I mean you can sort of gauge things by just, yeah, by traffic to certain stories.

Grant: Because I was told that a lot of these celebrities week in and week out, those stories are the ones that get the most hits. Do you guys track that stuff? Can you

Appendix A (Continued)

verify that?

Debbie: Yeah, I personally don't. But, you know, like Alison, definitely. (CHAN)

Grant: But you've seen some of the results. Yeah, she's going to do it.

Grant: This is kind of getting to the crux of my research of my thesis. How much does competition from TV, cable, the Internet and other publications, I don't know *US* weekly, matter when deciding what and how many stories to cover?

Debbie: Um, you know I do columns and a blog throughout the day. And with the blog, that does play a part because I do try to keep people feeling like they're the first to know and that they're updated on everything. So I do look at the competition when it comes to that kind of stuff and when I'm trying to figure out what I'm going to write about.

Grant: Yes.

Debbie: But then again, with my job, I also concentrate on younger people and new things, so I'm not, and I don't think we are, I don't know.

Grant: But if you guys don't give them this steady diet of celebrity news, then they'll go elsewhere.

Debbie: Yeah, but *US Weekly*, they don't have a Web site. That's they're only real avenue.

Grant: Good point. But like ah, Gawker.com. There's a million of these.

Debbie: But we still want to give people, um, you know, news, (laughs) you know, a higher quality.

Grant: Yes. A higher journalistic standard basically.

Appendix A (Continued)

Debbie: Right. And so, you know, we're going to, if the competition, if some other Web site is reporting a rumor.

Grant: Smokinggun.com

Debbie: Like we want to keep readers ahead, but we're not going to give them, you know, crap.

Grant: Yeah.

Debbie: Which is what some, I think. Some (inaudible) don't have the same standards that we do.

Grant: Keeping with that. Is there a thought process, though, to make sure *USA Today* has celebrity coverage so readers don't have to go elsewhere for it?

Debbie: You mean?

Grant: Do you want to be the one all, be all?

Debbie: I think that we want to provide a look at everything that is happening. But it's not going to be a stop for, I mean, *USA Today* is never going to be *Star* magazine.

Grant: Oh, OK.

Debbie: I mean it's not going to be a stop for extremely, pure rumor.

Grant: OK.

Debbie: You know, extremely salacious stuff. It's a family newspaper. But um . . .

Grant: That's a good point, um, so the goal is not to trump these other publications and Web sites. It's just make sure you have some good stuff.

Debbie: It's not like we won't scoop somebody, but if you're going to scoop somebody, you have to make sure that it's . . .

Appendix A (Continued)

Grant: Right.

Debbie: Yeah, right. I mean, you know.

Grant: Accurate and fair. All right. Um, I'm just going to make a laundry list here. Film and TV stars, musical artists, prominent pro athletes, politicians, like high ranking, and some authors. Is this a pretty thorough list of what the paper considers celebrities?

Debbie: I think so, although there is a whole genre of celebrities who haven't really done anything. (laughs).

Grant: Like Paris Hilton or . . .

Debbie: Yeah, like Paris Hilton.

Grant: Or even these reality stars.

Debbie: Right, right. They're not (inaudible), I think. Um.

Grant: (laughs). It does.

Debbie: But yeah, I think that's a pretty good list.

Grant: Um, so no one else. Someone mentioned like a CEO maybe, ah Gates, or someone like that I guess could maybe enter that realm, but.

Debbie: Yeah, I mean if you're talking . . .

Grant: A famous preacher, I don't know, um. But I'm just trying to get a good sense of it, but when we're talking celebrity, it's basically Hollywood style and rock.

Debbie: If you're talking about the Life section, than it's entertainment.

Grant: Pop and entertainment. OK. In general how often does the front page become a place where *USA Today* will publish a story about celebrity or celebrities?

Debbie: Oh, um, like how often. I don't know.

Appendix A (Continued)

Grant: Like “Desperate Housewives” in May comes to mind. You guys did a big piece on that trend, um, how hot it was. Ah, Steven Spielberg recently I remember it was on.

Debbie: Right.

Grant: The Michael Jackson verdict of course.

Debbie: Definitely if somebody dies, but . . .

Grant: So, so it (laughs).

Debbie: Gosh, I would say, I don’t know. I would say like once every couple of weeks. I mean, it just depends on so many things.

Grant: It depends on the stuff. OK. Now, ah, is there a feeling that these types of stories are widely read by other newsroom editors and writers, both here and elsewhere? Have you gotten any sense of that? It’s kind of ah, I don’t want to say guilty pleasure, but do people eat this stuff up?

Debbie: Other journalists?

Grant: Yeah. Even in the building.

Debbie: Oh, I think other people in the building probably like to read it.

Grant: Like sports guys.

Debbie: I mean I get e-mails.

Grant: I was going to say, how’s your feedback?

Debbie: I get a lot of feedback. I can’t really answer them all, but um, like today, just for my column, I’ll probably get, last week I probably got like 600 e-mails. So . . .

Grant: Man.

Appendix A (Continued)

Debbie: It's pretty huge.

Grant: And that's both inside and your fans.

Debbie: Yeah. Yeah. I mean it's mostly outside.

Grant: But don't you occasionally get a colleague that says "hey, I liked that column today."

Debbie: Oh yeah. But I think many people do.

Grant: But the celebrity stuff . . .

Debbie: Celebrity stuff in general, but yeah, celebrity stuff . . .

Grant: In general, what do you, um, I haven't read a lot of your stuff. What do you mostly concentrate on? Is it just the whole celebrity, um, stuff?

Debbie: Well my column kind of runs the gamut. Like anything going on in pop culture, but . . .

Grant: OK.

Debbie: I mean because it generally I think skews toward a younger audience.

Grant: Yes.

Debbie: Because I'm younger (laughs).

Grant: You're young, yes.

Debbie: And, um, this summer there's been a lot of movie soundtracks all of a sudden.

Grant: Right.

Debbie: Um, and then I may know something that happens and get a handle on it before AP does.

Appendix A (Continued)

Grant: The competition.

Debbie: Yeah. Yeah. I'll do that. And then they'll be bands that I've heard of that I want to talk about or movies that maybe the paper didn't cover. So it's kind of a mix of (inaudible).

Grant: Because getting younger readers, um, is crucial, and it seems like, like the dot-com celebrity stuff is where they're going to gravitate, toward your column, the pop culture.

Debbie: Yeah.

Grant: Um, there's this sense that the papers are becoming more and more irrelevant and the young readers aren't picking them up, but this might be their last shot at trying to bring them in, this celebrity, um, angle.

Debbie: Yeah. And I definitely hear from teenagers.

Grant: What do they say?

Debbie: They read my column and they like my stuff (laughs). And maybe they keep something that they want to show me.

Grant: More Britney Spears.

Debbie: But, ah, you know, younger readers also I think are more hooked on the fan sites and stuff like that.

Grant: Yes.

Debbie: And so maybe they'll hear about my stuff through a band Web site.

Grant: That's neat.

Debbie: But it just depends.



## Appendix A (Continued)

Grant: Definitely. Um, have you guys done any tracking to see what celebrity stories on the Web site get a lot of hits? I kind of touched on this.

Debbie: Oh yeah, every week, Chloe (usatoday.com Life editor) tracks all the stories.

Grant: You guys track that stuff.

Debbie: Yeah.

Grant: And celebrity stuff is usually one of the most popular areas to go? Is that generally the thought?

Debbie: Yeah, yeah, she'll track stuff in the Life section.

Grant: Nice, but yeah, the celebrity stuff I'm sure is trumping versus, ah, like a feature today on that, I don't even, have the paper today, but that old car, that guy who restores them.

Debbie: But you know sometimes it will surprise you, and you'll see one of those features, I mean, tons of just hits.

Grant: Will get a big click. For whatever reason.

Debbie: Yeah.

Grant: This is an interesting question. Historically I've found that celebrity coverage from about the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century through today has been a big part of newspaper coverage. Why do you as a journalist think that is? This whole longevity thing. Why it's so, you know, Hollywood and fantasy? What is it about it?

Debbie: That's a huge question. I mean.

Grant: It requires a huge answer.

Appendix A (Continued)

Debbie: I just think celebrity, I mean, of course we have to cover it because it's such a huge part of our culture anyway. I mean . . .

Grant: That fact is, I mean, 90 years ago they were sending reporters to Hollywood. And still today, it's like people never get tired of it.

Debbie: But I mean people go to movies on the weekend. I guess that's just not enough.

Grant: I guess it's not. I mean . . .

Debbie: They want to know more.

Grant: They want to know more about who these people are. I guess that's it. A simple answer. I suppose, but . . .

Debbie: And, I don't know. For *USA Today*, which is kind of a big traveler paper and perhaps (inaudible) . . .

Grant: Mainstream enough to appeal to the masses.

Debbie: Right and you know I feel like our celebrity coverage is more of a draw perhaps, than other papers, that might have something to do with it.

Grant: Can you expand on that a little bit because that's really why I'm doing this because you guys do, I mean, nobody else compares really, large papers, small papers, they don't do it as well as you guys do it.

Debbie: Well, also we're national newspaper. The only national newspaper, and so . . .

Grant: Right exactly. In theory.

Debbie: Yeah, well true, but um . . .

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Grant: Some other papers are sold nationally but this is the only one that kind of markets itself as that, I mean, the *New York Times*, *L.A. Times*, some of these larger papers, the *Wall Street Journal*, you can buy them anywhere.

Debbie: And they do the arts. I mean the *New York Times* definitely does a good amount of art coverage, but it's still a local paper in that you'll see a big concentration on theater. We don't cover that.

Grant: Yeah, local New York, right.

Debbie: Yeah, local New York stuff, so this is a national paper. It's expected in a way for us to expand it.

Grant: To do more.

Debbie: To do more, yeah.

Grant: And also that your competition is more like these national Web sites. Um, I see piles of *US Weekly* and *Star* and *In Touch*, all of these magazines up in the Life section of the print version. Um, it's phenomenal. I mean you guys are looking at this stuff. You gotta make sure you're on top of these things, I guess.

Debbie: Although I have to say I don't really look at those (laughs).

Grant: I see those right across from your desk.

Debbie: And, yeah, I don't read them because they're just. I mean, I keep up.

Grant: There's no curiosity?

Debbie: With that sort of stuff, but, well, I just think that. It's my personal belief.

Grant: No talk to me.

Debbie: I just think there are certain things that can get into my head, and I don't

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want to be, I think that we aspire to cover celebrity news and some of the things that we're obligated to do . . .

Grant: Right.

Debbie: But on a higher plane. I can easily, I can easily keep up.

Grant: So there's definitely a higher journalistic standard then?

Debbie: Well I think it's more of a duty.

Grant: News, yeah.

Debbie: Yeah, because a lot of it is (inaudible). And it's interesting too why people love that (tabloid/marketing ?) kind of stuff. And you know we love to do photo galleries and stuff like that, but a lot of it is pure infatuation. It's not news. So I mean I do look at it, and I'm fine with it.

Grant: Yeah, you've got your thumb on the pulse of what's going on.

Debbie: Right, yeah.

Grant: You're all about it. Now tell me this, um, does the fact that the *USA Today* reaches such a large national audience that you just talked about give you guys more leeway to give readers a daily dose of celebrity news?

Debbie: Um, what do you mean exactly, more leeway?

Grant: Just more of a license to you know hit them with this stuff. You don't see someone was mentioning yesterday like the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*. I mean, you won't see this stuff in those papers even though they are a large, large newspaper and could in theory dedicate the resources to it.

Debbie: They could, but it would be weird to have the Pittsburgh paper start to,

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you know, cover Hollywood. They couldn't dedicate the space to it, I think.

Grant: Right.

Debbie: I mean, the fact that we have the space and the resources allows us to do it well.

Grant: That's what I want to get at.

Debbie: Yeah.

Grant: When I say leeway, I mean your online site, you've got people dedicated to that between your column and other folks, and you're very aware of the celebrity stuff that goes on there.

Debbie: Yeah.

Grant: I guess the leeway, um, because this whole notion of *USA Today* is where people like to get it. If they read it in *USA Today*, well then they're like well this has got to be true if it's in *USA Today* rather than seeing it on some Internet site. Smoking gun or whatever some of these other sites are, you're more inclined to think this is legit.

Debbie: Yeah, right, right. I don't know about leeway. It definitely gives us the responsibility.

Grant: OK. You mentioned this earlier. Do you think readers are drawn to this type of coverage, celebrity stuff?

Debbie: Oh yeah, yeah.

Grant: Can you just kind of expand on that a bit? I guess it's because they grew up with the TV and they know these people if they're, you know 15 to 30. I guess they care about this a little more. That's what they like. I don't know.

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Debbie: Yeah, and , you know, the Money section of *USA Today* or any paper, they don't think it's directly affecting them. And, of course, a lot of news, they, I mean, I don't think they feel affected. At least with entertainment, they can participate in it. And really some of these subjects, I mean, Lindsey Lohan, I mean, she's 21. I mean, they're closer in age to the subjects than other . . .

Grant: Oh, yeah so they identify maybe more readily with them.

Debbie: Right, I mean that might be partly why I got interested in it when I was younger. I mean it just seems a little bit . . .

Grant: Yeah, I mean how did you?

Debbie: I don't know, I mean always was. I was very interested. (laughs) when I was a kid. So I think younger readers throughout the nation think it's fun and easier to understand.

Grant: That's a fair assessment, and I appreciate you expanding on that. I just got a couple other questions. Um, we kind of hit on this, but I want to talk about it a little more. How much does the public's want for celebrity stories play a part in your everyday decisions?

Debbie: Um.

Grant: Is it like "Well, we know what they want. We'll do it this way." Or do you kind of have a pulse on what they're thinking too?

Debbie: I think it's definitely a balance because and Chloe can maybe talk more about this, about figuring out the placement of what stories go where. It's a balance. We think we know what people want to read about, but kind of anything else that we have to

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deliver to them that they don't know about or aren't expecting.

Grant: Yes.

Debbie: So it's just kind of a balance, and I think about it throughout the day (inaudible). But you can't just always give people what they want.

Grant: Yeah, explain that. Sometimes you got to give them what they need to or what you think is important.

Debbie: Yeah, if we only gave them what we wanted them to see . . .

Grant: So you can't just give them what you want to give them, and you can't just give them what they only want. You have to balance it.

Debbie: Yeah, you do have to balance it.

Grant: Yeah, you have to be the *Star*, um (laughs). We're taking shots at the *Star*. Um, this is a good question. How does celebrity gossip find its way into mainstream media like *USA Today*? Now you talked about the sourcing and you can't just publish things that are rumor, but how does it find its way in. Sometimes, you know it's kind of a blurry, ah, gray area. Do you think it does even?

Debbie: Oh yeah. I think it definitely finds its way in. I mean the paper will run gossip stories. You pay attention to it, and I pay attention to it, but um . . .

Grant: Do you have more of a, um, ability to run . . .

Debbie: . . . it's hard to define.

Grant: . . . it online than what they would maybe in the paper. Is there a difference in what you would run versus them?

Debbie: Probably, well partly because of the fact that I'm writing a blog, so I can

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write something very briefly.

Grant: Yes.

Debbie: And link something outside, which I tend to do, but um, yeah I think that we have a little more leeway when it comes to that online, but there's still, you know.

Grant: Journalistic standards in place . . .

Debbie: Yeah, yeah.

Grant: . . . that preclude and policies that may preclude you from becoming too Starrish.

Debbie: Right.

Grant: I see.

Debbie: I mean, there still has to be some justification for it.

Grant: So it finds its way in because you can make an argument because of competition. Everybody, if someone's got a big story like that you can't just ignore it, or you look like you're out of the know. Even if it is a gossip, but if it's like juicy gossip.

Debbie: If it's terribly juicy, I mean, then yeah, I definitely think that it should go in the blog. I could link to another report, but we're still careful about it.

Grant: OK.

Debbie: I mean, yeah, we have our fair amount of gossip, but I think people love to read it.

Grant: People love to read it (laughs). That's right. All right, um, final question here. And it's been a great interview. Um, and this is kind of a thinker as well, kind of a philosophical, ah, journalistic, um, notion. Is there a sacrifice *USA Today* makes by



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publishing celebrity stuff in lieu of more of the more traditional forms of newspaper content, i.e. hard news, politics, health care and education?

Debbie: Oh, I don't think we're sacrificing news coverage for celebrity gossip. We're not sacrificing health stories or education stories. I don't think that those are directly competing against each other.

Grant: Uh huh.

Debbie: Um, I really I think that's kind of more of a print question because we don't have a spatial issue obviously online.

Grant: True. And so you run more celebrity stuff than print because of your lack of spatial constraints?

Debbie: Oh yeah, you mean more, yeah throughout the day we have. We add many stories, but every (budget?) has a story.

Grant: Right.

Debbie: But we do kind of add a lot of stuff.

Grant: More with it maybe. Um, that is kind of a question, but a lot of people would say "Well, why are you even dedicating this much either online or print, this celebrity news?" The purists would say you should be covering more of Iraq or the President or health care or why we can't afford to pay for gasoline anymore. Those are the stories that really matter to people, quote, unquote.

Debbie: But I mean still if you look at like the home front of the Web site . . .

Grant: Uh huh.

Debbie: You're going to see, you're still going to see I think, that appropriate

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balance. You're not going to see a celebrity news story. We'll have it there on our section.

Grant: Right.

Debbie: And then the paper will obviously have it there and display it, but the main page of usatoday.com, is gonna be, celebrity news is a small percentage of what's on there.

Grant: OK. All right so, they all kind of balance on each other on the print side and even on the Web site, you've got all of them equally dedicated to, you know, informing the readers. It's not just celebrity dominated.

Debbie: And I think, I mean, we do cover a lot of celebrity news throughout the day and add a lot of celebrity stories. But overall when you look at the balance of that compared with other, you know, breaking news stories and other types of stories, it's an overwhelming percentage.

Grant: Yeah. OK. Now tell me really quickly what you do at the paper, just your title, um, and your responsibilities.

Debbie: Of the Web site?

Grant: Yeah.

Debbie: My title is columnist.

Grant: You're a columnist for usatoday.com.

Debbie: So, yeah, and so my responsibilities are to keep an entertainment blog called Hip Clips throughout the day, every day.

Grant: Hip Clips, OK.

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Debbie: And also I write a weekly column called (inaudible) every week.

Grant: Awesome.

Debbie: And I do all sorts of random features and contributing to packages.

Grant: And tell me what major celebrities you've had the chance to interview either by phone or in person.

Debbie: (laughs) Oh man, I don't know. I've talked to Billy Idol a couple weeks ago. Or like, I kind of like the smaller types like ah, Ted (inaudible) from "Saturday Night Live." You know I went to the Oscars and talked to . . .

Grant: Yeah, who did you

Debbie: (Inaudible).

Grant: Cool. Have you ever talked to . . .

Debbie: Really all types of people.

Grant: Is there a favorite person that you've had the chance or really opened up to you? It wasn't like all guarded around the publicist and was able to open up a little bit?

Debbie: Yeah, I mean I just feel like I'm ah, I definitely prefer to talk to the smaller or kind of the oddball celebrities. So yeah, I've had long conversations with like comic book artists and stuff like that.

Grant: What about Hilary Duff?

Debbie: I've never talked to Hilary Duff. And also because the paper will cover. We'll do that kind of like big celebrity.

Grant: Paris Hilton.

Appendix B. Interview with Mary, Celebrity Reporter at *USA Today*

Grant: OK Mary, um, what are the paper's basic guidelines to decide what celebrity news you give readers.

Mary: I mean it's just, you know, what happens. The bigger the celebrity, I guess. You know divorces, marriages, things in the news, like Tom Cruise is in the news right now, so that's a no-brainer. You know people who have big movies or albums or TV shows coming out.

Grant: I see. That's kind of a follow-up here. Is it simply what editors and writers consider newsworthy and interesting, or is it more than that?

Mary: Yeah, I mean we have story meetings that we go over what we think would be interesting.

Grant: I see, OK. Um, are celebrity stories, and you just talked about this, are they pretty much just profiles, court dealing such as divorce, criminal charges along with new movies and TV show advances, or does *USA Today* try to do more with the celebrity stuff? Can you kind of explain that a little bit?

Mary: Yeah, I mean you know, we do brief leads on divorces, just run of the mill divorces or someone's being sued by someone else. I mean, we just kind of give it more of a broader cultural spin I think. You know, how, what is the bigger story here? So rather than saying, um, you know, Tom and Nicole split up, and you know the divorce was final, blah, blah, blah. I think we try to look at it more you know in a broader sense of what happens when a marriage like this dissolves. What are the factors that celebrities have to deal with?

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Grant: So kind of a whole, ah, you know kind of an in-depth, more than just this happened.

Mary: Yeah, sort of a broader look.

Grant: I see. Perfect. Um, Have there been any, I don't if you'll know this, but have there been any reader surveys about the celebrity news or whether these types of stories are the content people want to see more of?

Mary: Ah, I honestly, that I don't know.

Grant: OK. Because I didn't know if you guys or viewers if you have something on your Web site that people are saying yeah, we like this stuff or you know, if we could have a little more of this.

Mary: Um, no, I don't know. I mean, I don't, I haven't been to focus groups, so I don't know even if I can answer that question.

Grant: That's fine. Um, how much does competition from TV, cable, the Internet and other publications matter when deciding what and how many stories to cover?

Mary: Um, well we try if it's a cover, we try to have it first in print. You know, I mean we're not going to do, I don't know, I'm trying to give you an example, you know, um, Nicole Kidman, for example, after she's been on, in every newspaper, every magazine and on every TV show, because there's nothing left to say.

Grant: Oh so you guys, are what you're saying is you're trying to get her, them, to take a different angle or if there's something that you want to get first.

Mary: Well, we try to get the interview first and take a different angle because, I mean, would you want to read the same interview that's been published every other place? No. So, you know we have a big enough readership that, ah, we can, I think, you

## Appendix B (Continued)

know, get good access.

Grant: But it would seem to me that you guys would want, this competition drives what you guys are doing. I mean, you have to give you're readers something I guess, or maybe not.

Mary: What do you mean? I don't understand that.

Grant: Well, because of some of the other colleagues I've already spoken to and I posed this question about the competition from other sources, this kind of gets to the crux of my thesis. Um, that, TV, cable, the Internet, I mean it's everywhere this celebrity stuff, and I just want to know if this stuff factors in. I mean, you say you try to get things first, but is there anything else that, you know, you guys make sure you have to have a presence of this stuff too?

Mary: A presence? What do you mean?

Grant: Well of this celebrity stuff, what you just mentioned, like Nicole Kidman. I mean do you at least have to mention that it's happening?

Mary: Mention that it's happening to who?

Grant: Well you just gave an example about the Nicole Kidman movie . . .

Mary: Uh huh.

Grant: And if everyone else is doing anything else. I'm saying. I'm just under the impression that that, you know, a big national media outlet like the *USA Today* would be cognizant of what other people are doing and would certainly try to make sure they have it and then more.

Mary: So yeah, but you can't really be cognizant of what other people are doing if the stories have not run yet. I mean, you can get that information from publicists often

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times. They'll tell you who else is doing that type of story. Or I know people at various magazines and newspapers, so I can just kind of you know, get a rough idea of what they're doing.

Grant: Right.

Mary: But you can't, I mean, how do you know that someone is going to run a story? Do you know what I mean? Like *Time* magazine excerpted a Jane Fonda, and I think it was supposed to be a cover . . .

Grant: Yeah.

Mary: And her book came out and then breaking news essentially, um, um, dictated that it became an inside story. I forget what news event it was. Um.

Grant: OK.

Mary: So do you know what I mean? Like you can't, so we thought that was going to be a cover.

Grant: But I just. Exactly. I know what you're saying. And I'm just wondering, though, in your routine, I mean reading this stuff, I'm talking after it's already been out, just to keep on, keep up what the competition is doing to make sure that you have edge or you can take a different angle like when you get 'em. I mean, is that part of your, um, you know, like downloading a couple or looking at a couple sites each day or getting some other tabloids, um, delivered so you can look to see what's been written?

Mary: Um.

Grant: Or said on the TV and so forth.

Mary: Yeah, of course, of course.

Grant: So you guys do do that.

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Mary: Oh, of course, yeah.

Grant: I mean that's a no-brainer. OK, I think that's where we were going wrong here. I just was trying to solidify that, um. But there, kind of a quick follow, is there a thought process to make sure that *USA Today* has celebrity coverage so readers don't have to go elsewhere for it? So you can be like the voice?

Mary: Well, yeah, I mean of course we strive to do that.

Grant: I think it's a fair statement to say that *USA Today's* celebrity and entertainment coverage, you can put it up against any paper in the country.

Mary: Yeah. I mean I would hope so. We definitely try to, you know, have a pretty broad scope and, you know, do the big stars and the big movies. You know, it also depends on if their project is good or bad. You know if the movies are always horrendous, it doesn't do readers any service to, um, ah, you know, to promote it.

Grant: Exactly. To promote it.

Mary: And tell them, um, to see it or to buy something that is terrible.

Grant: Just for the sake of saying it's new.

Mary: Ah, yeah.

Grant: I see what you're saying. Really quickly, I want to nail something down. Film and TV stars, musical artists and professional prominent athletes, politicians even and some authors. Is that a pretty thorough list of what, ah, the paper considers celebrities? Is there anyone else that we didn't, um, or include in that?

Mary: Um, you know it just depends, like how would you file Paris Hilton? She doesn't fit into any of those really. I mean, she's just famous from a, you know?

Grant: Exactly. This whole notion of famous for being famous, I mean you guys,



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but you still nevertheless. It's hard to carve out kind of a news peg for them, but they, they're still in the news, right?

Mary: Um, yeah.

Grant: OK. Yeah, OK, so that's a good point. These ones that don't really have a niche, but yet they're still considered quote unquote celebrities. I just wanted to make sure that, ah, I understood that right. Um, OK. In general, how often does the front page become a place where *USA Today* will publish a story about a celebrity or celebrities?

Mary: Um, it depends again on news. I mean these are very general questions that I can't really answer.

Grant: Yeah, exactly. I'm not asking you to pinpoint specifics, but, for instance, the scandals involving O.J. Simpson and Michael Jackson and their trials, for instance. I mean I know they've been on the front. I know that that Eva Longoria, um, and "Desperate Housewives" craze.

Mary: I guess it's what people are talking about. That's probably, you know what people are talking about and can we do something different with it.

Grant: Because some of your colleagues again have mentioned that's it's pretty difficult to get out on the A section, um, in your beat.

Mary: Yeah, I mean, but, you know, I had when "Sex and the City" wrapped up for good, I had the 1A cover on that because that was such a, that show was such a kind of cultural, I mean I know this is a bad way to say it, but it was a cultural icon and people were talking about it, and it was, you know, mass hysteria that the show was going off the air. Um, so. You know we did a really big spread on it.

Grant: Yeah. Exactly.

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Mary: But we're probably not going to put, honestly 1A is, I have no idea on how that works. I have to be honest here or how the stories that they pick. I mean, we're just basically, um, if they tell us, you know like if they know the stories that we're doing, and they tell us if they're under 1A consideration.

Grant: Oh, OK. I see. Yeah, that "Sex and the City" thing was interesting. I mean, so you, kind of like this "Desperate Housewives" phenomenon, you actually examined, I do remember seeing that one I believe when it was getting ready to go off the air, ah, the big spread. But I guess that's when it reaches like a larger than life status is when you guys can certainly, ah, make your peg.

Mary: Um, yeah.

Grant: Cool. Um, is there a feeling, just in your opinion, is there a feeling these types of stories, these celebrity stories, are widely read by newsroom editors and writers themselves. I mean do you get any feedback like that?

Mary: Um, I'm sorry can you rephrase that. I'm sorry I was just distracted. I got an e-mail, can you . . .

Grant: Oh no, I'm sorry, yeah. Is there a feeling that these types of stories we talked about, celebrities, are widely read by newsroom editors and writers themselves?

Mary: I guess so.

Grant: I don't know if you've gotten any feedback like that.

Mary: I mean yeah if they like something, they definitely tell you.

Grant: Cool.

Mary: But I don't, I again, I'm, you know, each, of course, you know, we read the paper every day, so you read what your colleagues have written.

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Grant: Well, because it's kind of like this guilty pleasure thing. I mean a lot of people like this stuff, but they may or may not want to admit that they read it or engage in it.

Mary: Um, why?

Grant: Well, because a lot of people might say that it's not in the grand interest of things, you know, compared to other goings on in the world, maybe not quite as, ah, earth shattering if you will.

Mary: No, it's true. But I mean, I don't know. (laughs) I think everyone likes entertainment, really, I mean.

Grant: Yeah. That's what I'm kind of trying to . . .

Mary: They buy it, but . . .

Grant: Yeah, everyone likes it. That's what I'm kind of trying to get at. If you would be able to, ah, maybe expand on that a bit, I mean people, shouldn't feel, ah, you know, bad if they want to read this stuff. I mean it's a given that this stuff sells.

Mary: Yeah.

Grant: OK.

Mary: So I mean I'm not sure what you want, what, what the question is. That it's, you know, is there a stigma to reading entertainment stories? Is that what you're asking?

Grant: Well, no I'm not wondering if there's a stigma. But I mean, is it, is the fact that there's a big niche out there for this kind of stuff the reason that you guys are able to devote the resources to do so much of it?

Mary: Um, yeah.

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Grant: OK, um I was just asking this, now you probably don't know because we talked about something similar earlier. But has the paper, do you know, done any tracking to see what celebrity stories on the Web site get a lot of hits?

Mary: Yes.

Grant: Oh you guys have?

Mary: Yeah, we get, um, weekly, um, updates.

Grant: And is it in general safe to say that, ah, some of this stuff is probably better read than most things on the site?

Mary: Ah, you have to talk to online about that.

Grant: I am. I've actually got an appointment with both of the online folks. I just wondered if some of your stories if they've gotten, like, a big, ah, hits, if they would tell you that or . . .

Mary: Oh no, they do. But, um, as far as how that relates to other sections of the Web site, I have no idea.

Grant: That's fine. Historically, when I've done my research on this so far, I've found that celebrity coverage goes back to around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and has been a big part of newspaper coverage in general, you know, through today. Why do you as a journalist think that is? Just kind of explore that.

Mary: Um. Entertainment coverage?

Grant: Yes.

Mary: Um, well, I mean celebrities I would say are probably American royalty at this point, you know.

Grant: Yeah.

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Mary: And they're good looking, and they're fabulous, and they always do stupid things? And I mean that's what people care about. I don't know, I mean that's what people care about. At least I hope so, because if they don't, I don't have a job.

Grant: (laughs) That's exactly right. I mean so this whole notion of royalty, exactly, the Hollywood fairy tale. I mean this Tom Cruise thing is going beyond.

Mary: Yeah.

Grant: Does the fact that *USA Today* reaches such a large national audience give you guys more leeway to give readers more of this daily dose of celebrity news, do you think?

Mary: Leeway in what sense?

Grant: Ah, I guess leeway meaning that you will get like three days to work on a story, or you'll be able to uncover this is you see something in somewhere, even a tabloid, maybe trying to pull out an ounce of truth to it and try to validate it as a legitimate journalism story?

Mary: I mean, I suppose on the story, and also we don't use or we largely don't use unnamed sources. So I mean you know how the tabloids work.

Grant: Right.

Mary: They allege something, the publicist comes out and denies it and then you have to figure out, you know, short of actually talking to the celebrity about it, you know. It's often difficult to figure out who saw what where. I guess, but I mean in terms of leeway, yeah, I mean we definitely get enough time to do stories, you know. It's not one of those situations where you have half an hour to crank.

Grant: Leeway also meaning space.

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Mary: No, I mean we write pretty tight.

Grant: Oh, OK, so you guys don't get like you know . . .

Mary: We're not going to get three pages to write about Gwyneth Paltrow, no.

Grant: I see.

Mary: I mean you've read *USA Today*. It's, you know, brevity, and I mean it's a lot like I started out in TV news, and it's the same thing. You try to, you know, break down a 10-year war into 30 seconds or less using fourth-grade language. But, I mean, I'm not saying this is fourth-grade language, but it's definitely, you know, these are short stories and you have to get the information in there. So you read the *New York Times*, and there's a lot of, I mean, in my opinion, kind of more superfluous paragraphs that really set the tone and, you know, it will take a long time to describe something. You have to be able to do that in a sentence.

Grant: Yes, and it is kind of an art or a craft that you learn as you work there longer, I'm sure.

Mary: Yeah, I mean you just figure out what you want in the story, what the important things are, and you build it around it.

Grant: Do you think younger readers are drawn to this type of coverage?

Mary: Well, yeah, I mean, I don't know what kind of research you've done, but people don't read anymore, and the attention spans are getting shorter and shorter and shorter, so yeah. I myself, if I open up a newspaper, and there are two jumps, I'm probably not going to even get to the first one.

Grant: Yeah. And I'm just wondering in these younger readers, is it, it's kind of got to be a conscious effort to *USA Today's* part to use this celebrity and this, I dare not

## Appendix B (Continued)

say sensationalism, but, you know, just the glitz and the glamour to try and capture their interest, to bring them into the newspaper.

Mary: Um, yeah, we definitely, that's definitely a factor. We definitely want younger readers. And that's, you know, part of choosing what we cover is, you know, we cover lots of younger celebrities and a lot of the just, or I guess celebrity news that would, that's not stodgy and old and, do you know what I mean?

Grant: Yeah, so in other words, not like these long-timers that had movies back in the '60s and '70s, but just know not really doing anything, but more of the young up and comers, like, I'm trying to think of a good example, I don't know, Cameron Diaz or . . .

Mary: Um, yeah, what about her?

Grant: No I'm just saying as one of these younger, ah, celebrities that may be more appealing to these, ah, 20-somethings. I was just throwing that out.

Mary: Yeah, but they also have to be interesting, and a lot of these younger celebrities are also boring as hell and say nothing, so why would you, you know, give them space in which, you know, for a boring story that no one's going want to read?

Grant: Where would, where would Hilary Duff fall in in this?

Mary: How?

Grant: In terms of do you think, when you say, like, a lot of them are boring? I mean is she someone who has the potential to be, you know, quite an interesting, ah, personality?

Mary: Well we just did a big story on her, so yeah.

Grant: (laughs) A loaded question.

Mary: No, I mean I didn't do it, but I'm just saying that yeah, she's in the news.

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She's got a new boyfriend. She's got a bunch of movies coming out.

Grant: Exactly.

Mary: So yeah, you know, when I say boring, I mean like Cameron Diaz is boring because she doesn't, you know, she won't say anything about her private life. She's very testy when you bring anything up. You're not, this isn't for a story, right?

Grant: No, no, no, this is all anonymous.

Mary: OK.

Grant: And you will not be named in any way.

Mary: OK good, um, you know, so she's someone that it would be difficult to justify doing, I think, because she may be good-looking, and she may be, you know, pretty popular. But she says nothing, and she's very unpleasant, so therefore, you're not going to get a good story out of it. I mean unless that's what you want is to, you know, show someone for how they are. But that's not, we're not a mean newspaper, so.

Grant: Yeah, it seems like this, this whole notion of, of, the private lives and trying to get in, but you guys are doing this because you feel like you have a journalistic obligation to get more than, oh you're a star, and this is your latest movie. I mean people want to know more about these people. Isn't that a fair, ah, statement?

Mary: Well, yeah. But I mean they want to know about certain people, not all people.

Grant: Oh, I see what you're saying. So there's definitely, yeah, I mean a certain type of celebrities certainly are more appealing, I guess, and you want to figure out, you know, how they tick.

Mary: Yeah.



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Grant: OK. Um, I'm kind of wrapping it down, here. I just want to ask you a couple more things. Is there a sacrifice *USA Today* makes by publishing celebrity stuff in lieu of more traditional forms of newspaper content, you know, an example, hard news, politics, health care, education.

Mary: Um.

Grant: Or do you think that there's space for both in there? I mean, is there any sacrifice.

Mary: I don't really know how to answer that question since I write for the Life section. I don't know how that, how that balances out in terms of pages of paper.

Grant: But you see, you see the newspaper pretty much on a daily basis.

Mary: Yeah, and I mean hard news gets plenty of coverage in the news section. So I don't, I mean every newspaper out there has an entertainment section, you know, we split ours with health.

Grant: OK.

Mary: So, you know, most other, ah, ah, papers don't.

Grant: Because some of these purists, extremists if you will, would say, 'Well I don't think they need to be doing much more than maybe half a page of this stuff,' whereas other people would say, well this is...

Mary: Tell me a single newspaper, including, or, including the *New Yorker*, which is obviously not a newspaper that doesn't cover entertainment, and I'll show you a newspapers that doesn't sell.

Grant: That's (inaudible).

Mary: You know, I don't even know who these purists are because, honestly . . .

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Grant: That's great stuff. Um, yeah exactly, I think what some of your colleagues mentioned, there's room for everything in that paper, especially the way it's broken out, and nothing's being, um, I guess sacrificed, if you will, like the war coverage or something to find out what, what Tom Cruise is saying about his newest fiancée.

Mary: No, I mean that's, it's a different section, different, very different reporters. We're not, you know, as far as I know, pulling someone off of, ah, President Bush so they can go interview Tom Cruise.

Grant: (laughs)

Mary: That doesn't happen.

Grant: Yeah, exactly. I hear you. Um, last thing here I guess. Um, how much does celebrity gossip find its way into mainstream media such as *USA Today*?

Mary: Well, like I said we don't use unnamed sources, so not a lot.

Grant: But if you're able to validate it or verify something, then, then, a new boyfriend . . .

Mary: Well if it's newsworthy, then yeah, we'll put it in. But, I mean, a lot of celebrity gossip is bullshit, so, you know, and a lot of these stories, do you really want to be in the business of outing someone, you know what I mean? A lot of it is just unsavory. It's not something I would want, I mean on a personal level, it's not a question I would want to be asked, so why would I want to ask someone that question?

Grant: So there is kind of this sleaze factor, this, this personal ethics and journalism ethics that you kind of you and other writer and editors, for, for that matter, ah, struggle with on a daily basis when you decide what you're going to put in, and what you aren't.

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Mary: I mean, yeah, it depends on the story. But sure you know when you're interviewing someone, there are certain things, you know, that, you know. I interviewed Ellen Barkin, and we were just talking, you know, about her new movie, and she had mentioned that she had an abortion when she was younger. And at that point, you know, I hadn't seen that written anywhere else, and I could have started prying and asking her, you know, when, who's was it, how old were you? You know, what, what went through your mind? She didn't want to give away anything more, and it would have been invasive, so, you kind of . . . But you know, on the other hand, you have someone like Jessica Simpson who, you know, puts it out there, how happy she is and how the rumors about her and Nick aren't true, and that's fair game to me. You know, when you make yourself, when you make your personal life the news, then, yeah, you should be asked about it.

Grant: That's interesting because I just heard something today that those two are still under contractual obligations to do one more show in the fall on ABC, but supposedly the marriage is quite rocky right now.

Mary: Yeah, so, but that's the kind of thing where they have, you know, they have essentially sold or founded their image on couplehood, and, you know when you give interviews and insist how happy you are and how everything's great, then of course you're going to be asked about it. You know, I have more respect for people like Jodie Foster, who just absolutely won't talk about it. So therefore, you can ask all you want; they're not going to answer.

Grant: Yeah. Um, Tom Cruise, it seems to me, has been unveiling a little bit more than he used to on his personal life ever since this new love affair.

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Mary: Yep.

Grant: So, all right, well, well Mary, I, I can't think of anything else, we're kind of wrapping up here. Ah, but the competition factor was really what I wanted to hit on when we, when we talked about that. And you do acknowledge that, that you guys look at this stuff, but it's certainly not dictating your coverage. But you want to be able to give the voice, ah, of, of reason when it comes to celebrities so that these younger readers do have a place . . .

Mary: Yes. Yes.

Grant: At usatoday.com or, excellent. Well, hey, this wraps it up, pretty much.

Mary: Well call me if you have any other questions, Grant.

Grant: Thanks Mary . . .

Mary: Thanks.

Grant: . . . for all your time today. Bye.

Mary: Bye.

Appendix C. Interview with Julie, *USA Today* Reporter

Grant: Ok, Julie, basically, what are the paper's basic guidelines at *USA Today* to decide what celebrity news you give readers?

Julie: Well, um, in my case because I cover music, um, primarily, you know I've done some, you know movies . . .

Grant: Certainly, and when we're talking music, you know, any type of act like that, and artist.

Julie: Yeah, I mean we sort of look at what's, what's, you know, I mean's there's something like on the order of 30,000 records that get released every year, and there's a, you know, a great many number of tours on the road every year. So we have a huge pool of options to choose from, and we kind of have to, have to do more, um, illuminating than anything else, um, so it sort of goes by, um, who's available, who we haven't talked to in a while, um, what we think would be of interest to our readers, um, you know, kind of looking at what our reader profile is, also looking for a balance of, of things that you don't get too many baby-boomer acts or too many rap acts or too many, you know . . .

Grant: Yeah, exactly.

Julie: . . . too many of one age group. And then, um, and, you know, you look for pegs, I mean in our case the most obvious one is, is timing stories to the release of a record or to the start of a tour. Um, that's not always the case but in, in probably 90 percent of the times it is. Um . . .

Grant: Yeah, so it's basically . . .

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Julie: And then you're looking for people who have an interesting story to tell. I mean, a big, you know, part of it is you don't want just the same kind of dreary (inaudible) by some rock star who's just pushing an album, has very little else to say. You want somebody that's got a little bit of drama. You know (laughs).

Grant: Exactly.

Julie: And a little bit of back story.

Grant: Kind of as a follow to that, is it simply, though, what editors and writers and editors consider interesting, or, or is it more than that? Now you mentioned the scheduling, and you have a lot to choose from, and the interesting people.

Julie: Well, I mean obviously we're partly limited by what we're offered. You know, we, we because *USA Today* is, um, has a lot of stature and is, the, has the largest circulation in the country, and it's a very high profile newspaper. Um, we are certainly, ah, given a lot more opportunity to interview people than most papers, but at the same time, you know, you can't just pick every plum off the tree. There's some people that aren't made available to us, but um, yeah, in most cases, we can sort of pick and choose who we want to talk to. And it is, yeah, it's the news game. I mean, really, it really boils down to our limitations of space and the people we have to do the job. You know, we have a small staff and time limitations and space limitations.

Grant: Yeah, exactly. That's a good point. You're working within the parameters of your resources.

Julie: Yeah.

Grant: Now this next question, just, um, kind of apply it your beat or just your experience there. Are celebrity stories pretty much just profiles and you know, court

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dealings, divorce, criminal charges, I mean, along with a new movie or an album, TV show advances, or does *USA Today* try to do more with the celebrity stuff? Can you kind of explain that a little bit?

Julie: Well, I think that what you'll find in the pages of celebrity, of *USA Today*, is that, you know, it's kind of dealt with differently under different umbrellas. I mean, there's the people page that deals very specifically with celebrity and celebrity-hood, you know . . .

Grant: Yeah.

Julie: Just who, who is dating whom? What a celebrity is wearing and where a celebrity is seen and, and that sort of thing. And then when you go to specific areas of entertainment, it's more about their artistic endeavors and what they're doing. That's certainly the case in music. There's just less of a concern about, um, celebrity for celebrity's sake.

Grant: Sure.

Julie: You don't interview people simply because they're famous. Um, I mean obviously . . .

Grant: So yeah, not the Paris Hilton interview, on your, in your side of things.

Julie: It's just not going to happen, and I have to say there's very, very little interest in doing a story about Paris Hilton's album because there are very, very low expectations of anything artistically interesting coming out of that. Um, because those people are basically, sort of opportunists, you know, in, in, in the entertainment realm, in that they can get easily signed to do a record because it will get attention, ah, because of, because of, their, you know, high recognition . . .

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Grant: High persona, right.

Julie: . . . you know, in the world. Um, so, so I think kind of different rules apply, you know, for coverage and treatment, depending on what, um, what staff you're talking to. You know? (laughs)

Grant: Yeah, exactly.

Julie: In the paper, um, it's a no-brainer though for, for certain, I mean, when you're talking about somebody like the most famous, ah, musicians plural, among the better musicians like, you know, a U2 or The Rolling Stones or Paul McCartney. You want to do interviews with those people, but whereas the people page may be interested in, in, Mick Jagger's, ah, you know, social life.

Grant: Yeah, exactly (inaudible).

Julie: We would be more interested in what The Rolling Stones are either doing in the studio or how they're faring financially if you know, if they have the highest grossing tour of the year or whatever. You know, that's certainly, I'm, I tend to pay more attention to as a pop music critic, ah, and I don't really have to deal with that, the other aspect of it. Now in the case of somebody like, for instance, like Michael Jackson, you're dealing with somebody who at one time in his career was a real player in, in, in the music world, creatively and artistically, as well as, you know, commercially.

Grant: Certainly the media helped build him up, ah, to that, ah, perspective. But of course, he was very talented.

Julie: Yeah, but he has since then become someone who is simply famous for being famous and who has, you know, morphed into more of a sideshow. Um, who's artistic, um, you know, kind of contributions have, have waned and become less



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interesting and less important than, ah, you know, kind of the eccentricities and the legal problems and the money problems, and so that, that becomes much more of a focus, and obviously, with the child molestation trial, um, sucking up all the energy. You know (laughs).

Grant: Yeah, exactly.

Julie: In the media that, that just becomes all that, um, that we pay attention to for most of the time because there's really nothing else going on in Michael Jackson's life.

Grant: Yeah, that's a good point. Now, um, keeping in mind, again, when we talk about celebrity, you can apply it this to the music artist and, and your role, you know, as a rock and roll critic. Um, have there ever, that you know of, have there been any reader surveys about celebrity news or whether these types of stories are content that people want to see more of?

Julie: You know, to my knowledge, no. I don't really know.

Grant: Yeah, that's fine if you don't know.

Julie: I would say this, though, for the newspaper, I don't really know. I mean I think what we see, we do get reports back for the dot-com, you know the Web site.

Grant: Yeah, the online stuff.

Julie: And you get an idea that that is what people tend to gravitate to. They do go for the, for the, celebrity-oriented stories. But I think that's a very starkly different audience. It's much younger, it's much, they're in for like the quick reads. They look at the photos. It's, it's not people who are looking for any sort of depth or, you know, substance. (laughs)

Grant: But it's important for younger, it's important for the newspaper to kind of

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hang onto these younger readers. Isn't that right?

Julie: Well not necessarily, it's not really hanging on. It's sort of, ah, hooking . . .

Grant: Hooking, OK.

Julie: . . . you know, getting them to come in because we don't, newspapers across the board don't tend to have a lot of young readers, and they're trying to figure out how to get them. And the conventional wisdom is, ah, that, that celebrities, fashion, high-tech, you know, certain subjects are of interest to young readers, and they use those as lures, you know, to bring them.

Grant: Certainly. Now this is, this is kind of going to the crux of the thesis here.

Julie: Mm. Hmm.

Grant: How much does competition from TV, cable, the Internet and other publications matter when deciding what and how many stories, ah, to cover, you know, you and your colleagues?

Julie: Oh a great deal. And I mean the problem these days is that there is far too much, ah, media covering celebrity news. I mean it is just, it's reached saturation levels so that you have, um, not just all of the major dailies, you know, that have gossip columns and big flashy pages devoted . . .

Grant: Uh, huh.

Julie: to celebrities and celebrity coverage. You have all of the, you know, entertainment TV shows, and you've got celebrity magazines and tabloid magazines, and, you know, and they're all going after the same thing. And they're all highly competitive. And so, you know, our, one of our aims is to because we can't devote as much space, for instance, to, um, a celebrity profile as some other newspapers or a magazine can. Our aim

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is to get somebody first, for instance. Um, or to get a news item first.

Grant: Yeah.

Julie: Um, that is one way of kind of trumping, you know . . .

Grant: Yeah, competitively speaking, trying to scoop . . .

Julie: Yeah.

Grant: . . . with something like hard, like that.

Julie: Right. Or to get the only interview, you know, and that, or to be one of few, or to get, um, a unique situation. Instead of getting those, um, you know, ah, revolving door interviews . . .

Grant: Sure.

Julie: . . . hotel suites that are so often the vane of journalists who have to do these, ah, movie junkets. It's to try to get somebody in their home or to try to get somebody in an unusual location . . .

Grant: Unique setting, yeah.

Julie: . . . a city park or, you know, somewhere outside the stale environment that is so often, you know, set up.

Grant: Yeah, like totally, you know, just completely, ah, staged, if you will.

Julie: Right, yeah. And, and, yeah, and, and, and just sort of controlled, you know, by the publicist . . .

Grant: Right. Good point.

Julie: . . . and so forth. So it's become much more heated that way, and the difficult, the other difficult thing about it is it gives, it sort of empowers the, the record company or the studio in that they can say, "Well if you want so-and-so, this is the deal."

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You get them for half an hour instead of an hour. You get them at this place instead of where you want them. Or we want, you know, to use our own photographer. We want to use, ah, we want, you know, to run on such and such a date. They have (embargo?) dates, you know, and so forth. Um, you, you are not able to call the shots that you maybe once were when there were fewer people going after the same story. Um, but . . .

Grant: (inaudible)

Julie: . . . as one of the bigger players in that game, you can kind of put your foot down, but, you know, when it comes to some of the bigger stars, it, it, you know, people start to bend their own policies a little bit, and it, it, it just becomes quite ferocious. Um, I think with music, there's, there's probably a little less of that going on, um, and I've been in the really fortunate situation, to, you know, have built some relationships with, um, some, ah, you know . . .

Grant: Contact and sources.

Julie: . . . contacts and important sort of people that, you know, Bob Dylan's not going to do a lot of interviews. He's only going to do two or three, if, when, when his . . .

Grant: Tour rolls around.

Julie: . . . record comes out or a tour rolls out or when he wrote his book, for instance. He only did two or three interviews, so, and, and, ah, I'm one of the people he will talk to, so there's not, there's not a big fight, you know, that has to go into that. Um, and he's just not, you know, he's one of those people that's just not going to play all of those games. It just doesn't work that way with him.

Grant: Yeah. That's interesting.

Julie: Um, yeah. So there are people who just don't do those sort of song and

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dance, you know, ah, negotiations, which is a relief. Um.

Grant: Exactly, now just as a quick follow-up to this, do you find yourself, I know other journalists I've talked to, including, ah, one so far at the *USA Today*, I mean, do you actually as part of your beat coverage, I mean, look at what other people are doing, like the Web, some of the Web sites or, or these rock magazines or any of the other type of, ah, competition, if you will? Do you look to see what they're doing to kind of keep the edge?

Julie: Well, I mean if you've got a beat, and you're doing your job, you always look at what everyone else is doing. I mean not, I mean just to sort of stay current.

Grant: And even all those mediums, though, I mean Internet, ah . . .

Julie: Oh sure.

Grant: the publications, ah, TV.

Julie: Yeah, yeah. Ah, you know you can't do everything. I mean I cart home trade magazines and I, you know, as much sort of MTV and VH1 as I can stomach (laughs).

Grant: (laughs) Yeah.

Julie: You know, I, ah, keep up that way, and I certainly surf a lot of Internet sites because for one thing, it's a great way to, it's a great discovery tool. I mean, it's a way you, sort of, find out a lot of stuff that's kind of going on, not just media coverage, but just sort of grassroots things that, that fans and musicians themselves are doing and talking about. But, but just in terms of media coverage, I think it would be really counterproductive to not, kind of . . .

Grant: To not do that.

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Julie: . . . see how it's, how things are being covered, and, and to kind of stay ahead of the game, you know, and to, to, you know, you, you have to, um, it's also a way to kind of, ah, avoid not repeating things, you know, um, to get something fresh and . . .

Grant: Make sure you get your own angle, yeah.

Julie: . . . make sure you're not doing what everyone else is doing.

Grant: Yeah, now is there a thought process to make sure *USA Today* has this celebrity coverage, and, you know, music so readers don't have to go elsewhere for it? Let's discuss this a little bit.

Julie: Um, well, you know, I mean there's, there's always, I think that, that there's a discussion sort of at the editor's level where they will say, OK, we've seen this person everywhere, so let's not do it. That sort of thing. And there's this tug of war that goes on where they'll say, "We've seen this person everywhere. Let's not do it," and the other side says, "Yeah, but not everyone reads these other magazines, you know, or these other newspapers."

Grant: Oh yeah, I see.

Julie: You know, ah, so why shouldn't we do this person. And that, you know, you kind of have to debate that because, just because, let's say, um, you know, the band Lincoln Park has done, has been in *Rolling Stone* and *Spin* magazine. Our readers, who tend to be, skew a little bit older, they may not have seen those magazines, so do we not tell them about Lincoln Park? Um, and assume that they somehow, picked up those magazines through their kids. or do we tell them about Lincoln Park? (laughs)

Grant: That's a good point.

Julie: You know, so it's, it's, it's something that you kind of have to weigh

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on a case-by-case situation. But I think our job is, you know, with the limitations that we have . . .

Grant: Right.

Julie: with space and time and staff size is to tell as much of the story as we can, you know. Now I don't really tend to think in terms of like celebrity as you're putting it, you know . . .

Grant: Right.

Julie: . . . because it's really more concerned about, you know, sort of artists and the music that they make. I mean some of them happen to be quote unquote celebrities, you know . . .

Grant: Yeah some of the top names.

Julie: . . . thought of in that, in those terms, like I mean I think the perfect example would be Madonna, right? I mean there's somebody who's definitely a world-level celebrity who also is still is a vital artist who makes music and does other things as well. Um, so there's somebody who also, is, when she comes out with a record, is somebody that we have to kind of get of get in there . . .

Grant: Right. I mean . . .

Julie: . . . and uh, it's ourselves to get an interview with her and all that sorts of stuff. Find a way to make it different and, and fresh for our readers because she is going to be seen everywhere.

Grant: Exactly. And it would seem to me that *USA Today* would, would want to give people this coverage so that their readership isn't going to be fully, I mean, you know, even more eroded than, than newspapers have already become. Um, you know, to

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do anything they can, you know, in this realm, to, to make sure that people don't have to go elsewhere.

Julie: Yeah, yeah, and again, I think one of the ways that you do it, you know, you try to be, you try to ask, some of the, you try to ask some of the less, sort of, obvious, less frothy questions that you're going to see on *Entertainment Tonight* or the softball shows like Larry King, where they're just giving these celebrities a platform to sell themselves. You know, you have to be a journalist, and you can't be an extension of the publicity machine. That, I think, is the crucial difference between what we do and what some of these, um, sort of celebrity-driven shows and magazines do.

Grant: That's interesting, yeah. I never thought of it like that, but you're right. Um, *USA Today*, you know, journalist-trained, I mean the credibility has to be a little notch above.

Julie: I mean you have to call them on things. You have to say to Madonna, for instance, OK, um, you know, if you've written a children's book and it sold well, but one of the reasons that you get any attention for it is because you're a superstar in the music realm. Why should anyone think that you have any credentials whatsoever to write a children's book? You know, you got a free ride. How fair is that? You're not going to see somebody confronting her, challenging her on, you know, taking that kind of a shortcut, you know, on *Entertainment Tonight*, where there just going to say, "Oh, this is so fabulous!"

Grant: It's a good book, yeah.

Julie: (laughs).

Grant: I know what you're saying. Um, moving on here for a second, I just



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wanted to kind of nail this definition down real quick. Film and TV stars, musical artists, prominent professional athletes, ah, some politicians and authors. Is that a pretty thorough list of what the paper considers celebrities? I mean is there anyone else, now you talked about, not all music artists are celebrities, but is that kind of the big . . .

Julie: Yeah, I think that kind of covers, ah, the territory. I mean there are, there are probably ordinary people who become 15-minute celebrities like the runaway bride and things, but I don't think that really counts in, in what we would consider the day-to-day coverage of celebrities. You know, there are people that have kind of a lasting presence in the limelight. And by and large, for us, they're, they're entertainers, you know, um, in some way, but yeah, I think that sometimes politicians sneak into that category. (laughs)

Grant: Yeah, certainly some of them do. I think you could make the case.

Julie: Yeah.

Grant: But in general, how often does the front page become a place where *USA Today* will publish a story about a celebrity or celebrities?

Julie: OK, now you mean the front page of *USA Today* (inaudible)?

Grant: Yeah, the actual front section, not the front of life.

Julie: Oh, ah . . .

Grant: Because I know that Jackson, of course, the verdict, ah, was out there. . . .

Julie: Right. Right.

Grant: . . . and some of the other big cases, but I'm trying to think, I mean scandals involving O.J. and Michael Jackson . . .

Julie: Right.

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Grant: . . . are what comes to mind, but . . .

Julie: So, it's hard to say how often an actual story is, but I would say a presence is, is, is at least a couple of times a week. If you look at the top right-hand corner, it's almost every day because there is a, a photo or headline that refers to the inside of the paper, you know there's some sort of a promotional tag that tells people that there's celebrity coverage in the paper.

Grant: And I wanted to study that. Exactly. I was going to look at that as part of this, like, just maybe take a year's worth of, ah, *USA Today's* . . .

Julie: Yeah.

Grant: . . . and I often find in that upper right-hand corner, that, if there's a celebrity story inside, it's going to get some pretty good play out there.

Julie: Yeah, and, you know, regardless of, sort of what's in the Life section that day, if there's a celebrity story, it's almost always the one that's promoted on the front page because there's that recognition factor. People immediately recognize a picture of Tom Cruise. Um, you wouldn't necessarily promote a story about obesity, you know, in that corner.

Grant: Yeah. That is a great point.

Julie: Yeah. But for a celebrity story to be on the front page, there's got to be kind of a harder news peg. I mean, that, that is just sort of the rule of the front of the section. You know, um . . .

Grant: So you wouldn't see like a big *Desperate Housewives* phenomenon story. I know Tom . . .

Julie: No there was one . . .

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Grant: Yes.

Julie: but it sort of captured the imagination of the country. I mean the news was that this had, had become a show that, that sort of pervaded pop culture and become one of those water cooler, you know, shows that everybody talked about. Um, so now and then, and then that, those will very often run on a Friday, you know, when it's one of those stories that has, you know, kind of, ah, that will last through the weekend. When they worry about putting a story on, a big story on the Friday section that has to stay on the news stands through the weekend.

Grant: Oh, OK, so that's something that can kind of, um, hold . . .

Julie: That has a shelf life.

Grant: Yeah, shelf life, that's a good point for it.

Julie: Yeah.

Grant: Now, is there, now we can talk about celebrity stories again, is there a feeling that these types of stories are widely read by newsroom editors and writers?

Julie: Ah, you mean the ones in the paper or outside of the paper?

Grant: Inside.

Julie: Oh, yeah, I think so. I mean everybody likes this stuff, even if they say they don't. You know . . .

Grant: Exactly. It's all about the guilty pleasure.

Julie: Which the celebrities, I think, frankly, a lot of readership surveys aren't always trustworthy is because people do gravitate to celebrity news and gossip and, you know, um, it's just sort of, you know, it's, it's, it's trashy and fun.

Grant: Exactly, and it is. It's fun, and people, people like this stuff, I mean since

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Hollywood and rock music, ah, came along in the 50s . . .

Julie: Right.

Grant: . . . there's been a lot of journalism devoted to this type of stuff because people are interested.

Julie: Right.

Grant: Generally, real quickly, um, have, do you know if the paper's done any tracking to see what celebrity stories on the Web site or any music stories get a lot of hits?

Julie: Yeah, they, I mean we get, you could probably even check with our Web site.

Grant: Yeah, I'm definitely going to be interviewing as part of this project.

Julie: Ah, because they, they, I think they have a weekly list of what does well, um, and I think, you know, that the Life section stuff does a lot better than any of their news stuff. And I know that for instance this past season, like all of the *American Idol* coverage . . .

Grant: Oh yeah.

Julie: . . . did really, really well, and then anytime there was any sort of celebrity scandal, that got tons of hit, um, you know, somebody was arrested, you know, that would always get loads of hits, that sort of stuff. Um, but, ah, they definitely keep a close, close eye on that stuff.

Grant: Yeah, I'm going to get some of those numbers. I really appreciate that. Um, historically, I've found that celebrity coverage in my research, from about the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, has been a big part of newspaper coverage and continues to be today.

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Why do you as a journalist think this is, this perseverance, and, this you know, this persistence, that celebrity is still big-time?

Julie: You're giving people what they want. mean I think it's the same thing as sitting in a dark theater watching a movie. It's, it's escapism and people like to, and identifying with, you know, famous people sort of projecting onto them, their own, sort of fantasies and whatever. It's just, you know, it's, it's, it's, ah, it's something to take people away from their own sort of 9 to 5 lives, you know.

Grant: Yeah.

Julie: Um.

Grant: And I really, I think any answer, is, it's not something that you can really quantify, I mean it's . . .

Julie: It's hard to quantify or to pin down. I mean people have different reasons. You know, it's, it's almost a sport in and of itself in that people do sort of enjoy, you know, and, and, if you, in, in, in the cases, in the case of music, for instance, you know, um, people have very strong emotional connections to music, especially rock music, which is what I cover . . .

Grant: Right.

Julie: . . . the most, and then because of it, they, they, once they become connected to a certain band or an artist, they want to know more about them. They identify with them, they become, ah, part of a community of other fans who, who want to know more about them. They attend their shows, they join their fan clubs, they go to their Web sites. You know, and then, so, all of the movements of this person become of interest to them. They follow them. They feel like they know them. You know, it's, and

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I'm sure the same holds true for people who become fans of sports . . .

Grant: Sports teams?

Julie: . . . figures . . .

Grant: Figures, you're right.

Julie: . . . actors or whatever, um, it just becomes a personal connection of some kind, you know, and some of it is just more, kind of, is, is sort of less pure. It's more sort of trashy and salacious where you just sort of enjoy watching people, you know, fall or (laughs).

Grant: Yeah.

Julie: You know, whatever.

Grant: Taking pleasure on other people's shortfalls.

Julie: Yeah. Yeah.

Grant: Now does the fact the *USA Today* reaches such a large national audience, does that give you, um, reporters there, more leeway to give readers a daily dose of this celebrity and pop culture news?

Julie: Well, I just think it's part of the daily diet, you know. The, the, I mean if you look at the paper, you kind of get, you know, a, a rather broad buffet of stuff, you know, and there's a dash of celebrity coverage in that everyday. Um, and some of it is fluffier than other parts of it. You know, you can get a very kind of, ah, serious in-depth kind of celebrity interview with somebody who is very earnestly talking about their career and then you can get, you know, a comparison of Britney Spears' and Paris Hilton's Chihuahuas.

Grant: Right, exactly.

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Julie: I mean it could go from ridiculous to slime, so, ah, but you get, yeah, I mean I think that there's, there's, there's always, ah, space for it, ah. But it's, it's sort of balanced out with all the other kind of areas that are covered on a daily basis.

Grant: And, I mean we've talked about this before. But you, do you think younger readers are drawn to this type of coverage. I think you've already answered that.

Julie: Yeah, I think that, I think that they are. Now whether it's working in terms of luring new readers, I, I don't know. You know, I just have no idea. I mean, I think that's part of the plan, you know (laughs), but I don't know if any sort of research is, is, you know, holding up.

Grant: Yeah, that's fine. Now we're just wrapping it down. I just got a couple more questions, Julie. I really appreciate you taking the time.

Julie: Sure.

Grant: Um, this is kind of also, kind of going to the crux, just kind of examining this, is there a sacrifice *USA Today* makes by publishing celebrity stuff in lieu of more traditional forms of newspaper content, we're talking hard news, politics, health care, education.

Julie: Well, I, you know, I think there are, there are certainly days that I feel that way. And there are certainly days that other people feel that way, and I'm sure there are days that readers feel that way. You know, it's a very kind of personal call, and, um, I think as long as the serious news is addressed and is covered, you know, you can't really say that it's hurting anything. But, um, there will always be people who think that if any resources at all are devoted to these inconsequential, you know, events of people who are not doing anything important, you know (laughs) . . .

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Grant: Then it's a travesty. Yeah, exactly.

Julie: . . . then it's a waste of, of resources, and, you know, there is some truth to that. But on the other hand, you know, we don't really need to be eating Cheetos and we don't really need to be bungee jumping and we don't really need to be, you know, there's a lot of like superfluous, idiotic things that fill up our life that we do for entertainment . . .

Grant: Things that we do in society.

Julie: . . . for fun, and there's an argument that that's a necessary part of life, too. So, um, it's, it's sort of a judgment call. But um, you know, I'd say that if you started to see a seepage into the news pages or, you know, serious war coverage being obliterated so that we could get Paris Hilton's wardrobe, you know . . .

Grant: (laughs) Yeah, exactly.

Julie: . . . coverage. There would be real alarm.

Grant: But there does seem to be these fine lines with these sections in *USA Today*, I mean . . .

Julie: Yeah, yeah.

Grant: . . . and we talked about some of these celebrity are going to make it out on the front if they got a different peg, but for the most part, you know where to go if you want your stuff, and *USA Today*, you know, has tons of stories, um, you know, devoted to, um, news . . .

Julie: Right.

Grant: . . . and national events.

Julie: Right, I mean I think there's that there's a fairly careful balance. But you know, the thing is, there are a lot of checks and balances, you know, and I think that even



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within the paper, there's arguments every day, you know, among reporters, among editors and reporters, among editors themselves about how much is too much, and do we really need this, do we really need that? And, you know, it's, in the staff itself, you have probably the same kind of opinions that you have out there. You know, whether any of this stuff is, is important or necessary and how much of it, and what's a fair amount. And, you know, it gets hashed out all the time. Um . . .

Grant: Yeah.

Julie: . . . and we hear back, you know, you hear back from readers, too, who will tell you if you've crossed a line or if it's too much, and then you also, you see it in different hits you get online, that, oh God, you know, people want this. You know?  
(laughs)

Grant: Exactly. It's kind of validated.

Julie: You can, can hold your nose one day, but then the next day you can see that everybody wanted that and more. So, it's just trying to hit the right levels, I guess.

Grant: Exactly, now, kind of lastly here, I just was curious, how much does celebrity gossip find its way into, you know, mainstream media like the *USA Today*? I mean I know it does, and . . .

Julie: Well, it does, and, and not. I mean one of the, the issues, you know the wall we come up against in our own sort of policies on ethics and sourcing, you know, we can't just pass along every rumor that crops up online or in "Star" magazine or something because we have rules that we have to abide by. You know, there has to be, you know, there are libel laws, there, that you have to abide by, there are sourcing policies that we are very strict about, so, um, you know, gossip's very limited (laughs), ah, to what can

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get past those hurdles.

Grant: But even as one of your colleagues said, you know, he tells me he reads, you know, “Star” and a couple of other tabloids, and, you know, sometimes you can find an ounce of truth, ah, in there, and you then can kind of take that, ah, and run with it. And, you know, and validate it.

Julie: Yeah, sometimes, I mean if it’s very sort of harmless, and, and silly and it’s not, um, you know, it’s not, what’s the word, it’s not pernicious, it’s not going to hurt somebody, there’s probably more room for it. But you know, you can’t, can’t say that somebody has a disease or that somebody has a certain sexual proclivities or that somebody is, ah, you know, a bank robber.

Grant: Right.

Julie: You know, there’s just certain limits, um, and you can’t, you can’t just lift, um, things you hear in cocktail parties or whispered on the Hollywood circuit just because you believe there may be an ounce of truth to it. That just doesn’t pass.

Grant: But maybe kind of using it, and then going to try to dig and you know, seeing if there’s something to it.

Julie: Well, if you can get enough information from other sources, yeah.

Grant: Right.

Julie: Um, but, you know, I’d, I’d say there’s probably just as much fierce argument within our staff about that, too, because there’s a lot of people, myself included, who think a lot of that kind of stuff should not be in the paper. You know, um, I think sometimes, I think there, that we, there are people probably who sometimes regard celebrities as not human beings, but just as sort of, you know, wind-up dolls that are there

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for your pleasure (laughs).

Grant: Yeah, larger than life, yeah.

Julie: And then there are those of us who think, “Wait a minute, they do have private lives, and there should be some boundary and some level of respect and regard for that,” and, and, you know, there are clashes there.

Grant: Yeah, and I’m sure among reporters and editors and everybody who’s had their own experiences, and, you know, education, just has opinions about that.

Julie: Yeah.

Grant: But Julie, this has, this has been great. That kind of wraps it up.

Appendix D. Interview with *USA Today* Entertainment Reporters Blair, Monica and Bill

Grant: Feel free to open up, any stuff you want to share. But ah, just kind of, what are the paper's basic guidelines to decide what celebrity news you give readers. Is it simply what writers and editors think is important or is it more than that?

Monica: It's funny when Jocelyn McClurg was here, she used to say "If it's not Paris Hilton, I don't care." So, um, I do think there's sort of a young group that we're particularly interested in.

Grant: Mm. Hmm.

Monica: Such as when I mention Demi Moore, they turned up their nose.

Blair: Because I judge it. No, I turn up my nose because you know she tries to make a comeback. When she was in "Charlie's Angels" we wrote about it endlessly, and no one.

Monica: Because she's hot. She's hot.

Bill: There does seem to be, um, as in newspapers everywhere, this desire to attract younger readers and so to write about younger stars, so that if, you know.

Blair: We've never gotten any evidence I don't think that that work.

Bill: No.

Monica: Oh no, but that was Jocelyn's theory, you know.

Blair: Well but she had a different competition. And by talking about competition, ever since *US* magazine and *People* changed. I mean her competition were those magazines.

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Grant: Right.

Blair: And Page picked something up in the New York tabs or whatever.

Grant: (inaudible) editor.

Blair: But really, I mean it seemed like she' rather do it her way than try to do it our way because we can't, I mean, we can't run anonymous sources. You can't run rumors.

Grant: Yeah. That's the standard.

Blair: You can't run, yeah.

Bill: But we're far more interested in Pamela Anderson's breast reduction than in Angelina's broken leg.

Monica: I don't know about that.

Blair: But when they die we care. They may be old, but when they're dead, they seem to get a little more coverage. I think with the movie coverage, you know, it depends.

Grant: Sure.

Blair: I mean we would probably do a cover on Paul Newman. I mean he was in so many movies.

Bill: But I think that . . .

Blair: If Angela Lansbury came back in a new series, why wouldn't we do a cover?

Bill: But I think that if they are of that age, what they're doing needs to be, the standard that they are held to needs to be.

Blair: A little higher.

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Bill: Yeah, Paris Hilton's a stretch..

Blair: Doesn't do anything except have sex and, you know, talks on her cell phone.

Grant: Right. Talks on her cell phone (laughs).

Bill: And Angela Lansbury . . .

Blair: If she lost her phone, really would we care? (laughs).

Grant: Are celebrity stories though pretty much profiles and court dealings such as divorce, criminal charges, new movie and TV advances or do you guys try to do more with the celebrity stuff?

Blair: I think I try to get an angle first. I write movie profiles mainly, and we try to find a new way to present it. There's so much now that to just do a straight profile. For somebody to just be a straight profile, I try to find a newer angle to make them stand out and get other voices in there .

Grant: OK. From just the canned stuff. Yeah.

Monica: It also depends on how you package it. We do small briefs on newsy things. And find things to write about for the fall season.

Grant: Yeah.

Monica: You know, it really depends.

Blair: We like our packaging, and I think visually we try to also choose. I think other people try to use photos and (inaudible).

Bill: I think that. I do think that people, I mean we're from TV, and I think that we, we tend to try to tie our celebrity reporting to a project and to someone who a project and a person we think is worth writing about. Movies and TV as opposed to the people.

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Blair: They do something like get married or you know, I mean, we'll mention that, but it's not usually our crux.

Grant: Crux.

Blair: Of our.

Monica: It tops our celebrity page. It's still part of our section.

Blair: I mean the people we write about get in those pages too.

Bill: I mean, I would not write about Paris Hilton because I don't think she's worth the space,

Blair: But you never wrote about "The Simple Life."

Bill: But the people, I write about the show, but I would do a, I would not do anything on her.

Blair: No.

Bill: But the People page will.

Monica: But the People page would do it, and they'd do it this big and so, it's still *USA Today*. It's there.

Blair: And when she was in *House of Wax* you know, I mean it was more People page.

Grant: That's right, dealing with the movie.

Blair: Than the movie was here.

Grant: Yeah, this is good. Have there been any reader surveys. . . no you're getting great stuff.

Blair: We do it any which way we want to do it. (background laughs).

Grant: Absolutely. Have there been any reader surveys about celebrity news and

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whether these types of stories are the content people want to see more of? I don't know, just generally, have you heard anything about this and did they tell you this?

Blair: Have you? You talked to Jack (1A Editor). (laughs).

Grant: Yes.

Monica: We never know.

Grant: Especially the online stuff.

Monica: Well, I do know what, that they're getting hits under, and it's only celebrity news.

Blair: Yeah, and not even stuff we've written. If it's breaking news, you can get it from the Web site.

Grant: OK. That's fine. I just wanted to get a taste of that.

Blair: I think we have some sense. I mean after, we've all been here awhile.

Grant: People want to see this stuff?

Blair: Yeah.

Grant: Um, now this is kind of getting, kind of the crux of my thesis, so we can talk about this. How much does competition from TV, cable, the Internet and all these other publications, *OK*, *Us Weekly*, matter when deciding what and how many stories to cover? I mean do you guys look at this stuff everyday?

Monica: A lot. Yeah. When I'm interviewing Martha Stewart, I have to find out where else is she going to appear. Where is she going first? Who will have it first? Where can we fit into that scheme. I mean all of those. Not even just are you doing this or that. Everything about our competition.

Grant: In this new age, it's a matter of making *USA Today* still relevant as a



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newspaper in this whole blitz of . . .

Blair: Well it's interesting because when we first started it like way back when, nobody covered TV like we covered it initially and really went after TV the way *USA Today* went after it.

Grant: Oh. OK.

Blair: And before the Internet, that was our motivating electronic medium because of the coverage.

Grant: Right.

Blair: And, you know, we still, I think, are on top of that because I don't think other publications put as much time towards it to cover it. We have a big and hardworking news staff, but it's grown. I mean the universe of TV, I mean, there's what fives times as many shows or maybe 10 times.

Grant: Yeah.

Blair: So I think, you know, we have to be choosier in all areas. There's more movies opening than when we first started, probably, you know.

Grant: Absolutely.

Blair: There used to be weekends when one would open. That never happens anymore. It's just our jobs are harder, but we have people here at the newspaper who meet the challenge, but it kind of makes it fun too. So we can put our own name on it.

Grant: So the competition is a big focus on everything, so you can come with a different, a better.

Blair: Well, I don't think we have to focus on it. We don't have meetings and say, you know, but I think our editors are looking to see where we're at, you know. But we

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were worrying about that in the beginning too. I mean we worried about staying alive.  
(laughs).

Grant: Sure. Yeah. OK. So now a follow to that. Is there a thought process to make sure *USA Today* has celebrity coverage so readers don't have to go elsewhere for it? Kind of like be the one all, source all.

Monica: No. Because being a national newspaper.

Bill: Well, I think for one thing we've, we've decided under this administration that there's certain kind of celebrity news we're not going to do. If you're not.

Grant: Can you talk about that?

Bill: Well if you're, if you demand sources, and you won't base things on anonymous sources and we no longer will, it used to be that we couldn't put a story in with anonymous sources, but we would run it after someone else printed it. Now we don't that. Now we don't do that. We won't run those, and we won't run rumors. That's the whole world of you know, Nick and Jessica breaking up.

Blair: Right. Blind items. We never do blind items. We never got the (money).

Grant: So there's a higher journalistic standard almost than some of these tabloids.

Blair: But we try.

Bill: Or a different journalistic standard. I mean, we have basically banished gossip from the paper.

Grant: I'm going to get to that.

Bill: Now I know the counterargument, the counter argument to that is like 95 percent of gossip stories coming out of Hollywood are true.

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Grant: (laughs).

Bill: Because they're not, they're not like Joe Schmo gossiping on the street. They're coming from sets.

Blair: Leaks.

Bill: Right. They're coming from the people who have worked with these stars and have seen them and are telling you what they saw.

Blair: Sometimes, sometimes the rumors takes on a life of their own and becomes the news, so to me, you know, you don't get to say it's true. You can just say people are saying this about this person.

Monica: But that's what we can't do. It's gossip.

Blair: But we can't do that anymore, and it's bizarre because of the Internet and everything. I mean, I read Gawker all the time, and they have every rumor in the world, and I mean they don't care if it's not true. I mean they do from their lawyers. But they don't often get sued. Sometimes I think their editors don't mind how they've slanted themselves, so.

Bill: I mean, I think, I mean, a lot of it I think is good. I think the banishing of allowing people's own spokespeople to speak anonymously as many newspapers do and it's silly. I mean the idea of an anonymous spokesperson is the most absurd thing on earth. But it also gets us into the ridiculous position of printing things that we know are untrue.

Blair: Printing innuendo.

Bill: Like these celebrity weddings that we all know are, you know, the homosexual marrying the weird.

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Grant: (laughs)

Bill: And we treat them as if they were actually happening because we can't yeah, we can't run the countervailing comment which is, you know, many people in Hollywood have long known to be gay, and wonder what the bride is thinking.

Blair: Or what she's getting paid.

Grant: Right. This is just a laundry list. I want to make sure though. Film and TV stars, musical artists, prominent pro athletes, some politicians and maybe big-time authors. Um, is that a pretty thorough list of what the paper considers celebrity?

Monica: We don't do sports. And we don't really do stuff on politicians.

Grant: It doesn't really apply to you guys, but . . .

Bill: Lance Armstrong has to date Sheryl Crow to get in the paper. But we don't write about it. But I mean in general.

Monica: Pop culture is kind of what we do.

Blair: When they enter pop culture or they show up on TV or something.

Grant: That's when you guys will pick it up. OK. In general, how often does the front page become a place where *USA Today* will publish a story about celebrity or celebrities?

Monica: You mean 1A or the front of Life.

Grant: Yeah, 1A.

Monica: I think it's rare.

Blair: We used to, but we rarely do. It has to be sort of like . . .

Monica: A certain type.

Grant: *Desperate Housewives* was on the front cover, I remember.

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Blair: Right, but that wasn't.

Bill: (inaudible).

Blair: Dying yeah. Death will.

Grant: Yeah, Johnny Carson.

Blair: We cover them more when they die.

Bill: No. We did, I did a cover story when (inaudible) was still alive.

Grant: Oh, OK.

Blair: But we used to do more, but we've also changed a lot of things and priorities. You know, and I think each regime have their own agenda. So it used to be a lot fluffier and lighter and that's what we were then. I think now we've kind of found a middle ground between overly dry and not taking ourselves so serious. Now we are so much, but they seem to stock at least the front page with news. I mean personally, a new (inaudible). (laughs).

Grant: But that skybox, the billboard or whatever is almost always a celebrity in there.

Blair: They'll promote, yeah, they use that. Yeah. That's what you can ask Jack's baby. You can ask him about what he does with that.

Grant: OK. So, but the goal then is not to try to get out front. It's tough for you guys to pitch a story that will have a national focus.

Blair: Well, I don't know if we're so much try to get out front because there's drawbacks to that too. Because you have another layer of editing to deal with. And I like it, but.

Monica: I've always thought it was screwy. But now people pitch to 1A; we pitch

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to 1D.

Grant: Right.

Blair: That's our home. Everyone once in a while, they'll get in the mood, and 1A will pick up something we wrote.

Monica: Well it just reaches critical mass once they get it.

Blair: It's the big show, but you have to write in a way a little different than you would for our section.

Bill: But I mean it's like, you know.

Grant: And like the Jackson verdict.

Bill: Well, I was going to say that journalism is not. It isn't an academic. There is no academic exercise every day where there is some great discussion of journalism. Sometimes, it's just practical consideration. You know, sometimes we'll have celebrity news could happen today that we wouldn't have had yesterday because there's space today. And I don't.

Blair: If we have nothing else. Because then when there's a glut in fall for us, we need the space because we have big movies, big TV shows, big stuff, you know.

Monica: Yeah.

Grant: Right.

Bill: And some of us write for 1D rather than 1A because if you write for 1D, you'll get a photo in your story. If you write for 1A, you may not.

Grant: That's a good point. I have to deal with that as a reporter as well. Ah, all right. Is there a feeling that these types of stories, celebrity stuff, are widely read by other newsroom editors and writers? I don't want to say guilty pleasure, but can I get your take

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on this?

Monica: I've gotten e-mails from elsewhere.

Blair: You get hate mail.

Bill: Well for, I mean, for me. We get um, if we, from other newsrooms, if you have gotten someone.

Monica: Well, Charles (last name inaudible) the international editor e-mailed me yesterday saying something about Tommy Lee that I had just written about.

Grant: Oh that was great.

Monica: I don't think, I mean. I think it's just whatever your personal interests are. Blair: We do chat, so we get feedback that way.

Bill: If we get, I mean from other newsrooms.

Blair: Oh other newsrooms.

Bill: If you have gotten someone, if you have gotten someone first or someone that other people wanted.

Monica: Oh you mean like in the (inaudible). Oh yeah.

Bill: No I mean like from other newspapers.

Blair: Like getting e-mails from other.

Grant: Both in house and out of house.

Monica: Well, yeah, I mean.

Bill: I mean out of house, if you have someone they didn't have or you got something out of them no one else has gotten.

Blair: Right.

Grant: They'll give you your props.

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Bill: Yeah. Or what we've done, um, you know kind of agenda story.

Monica: Like something that stirred the debate somehow.

Bill: Yeah.

Grant: Oh. OK. Yeah I'm, I'm just curious on the whole culture of this, um.

Blair: No we know we're copied. I mean you know, they copy, you know, other publications can see when we do something first.

Monica: That's true. Some of the magazines and Web sites.

Grant: You're the leader, yeah.

Blair: You can see, you know there's certain, like somehow some way I was the first one to write about the "Million Dollar Baby," you know, debate over the ending and all that. And I don't know, you know, it's rare to be able to do something first. I just noticed it first.

Grant: Yeah.

Blair: And then, you know, everyone was following us for awhile. And that's a compliment because you can see it's good to set the agenda. You know how, I hate following other people. I try not to, you know, not do that.

Grant: Avoid that.

Blair: But some things you can't because we're all after the same top thing.

Grant: Right. Absolutely. Um, OK. Historically I've found that celebrity coverage from about the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century has been a huge part of newspaper and continues to be today. Why do you as journalists think that is?

Blair: Because we like to live vicariously through them (laughs).

Grant: Is it this whole fantasy.



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Blair: Well yeah. Well you know, there's the whole theory, you know, we don't have the Gods up on Olympus, so we look for them down here. You know, and unfortunately sometimes they're a little tarnished, but you know.

Grant: The American dream.

Blair: No, because we do, I mean. And I think.

Monica: And then you're going to say "No one cares, no one cares, no one cares."

Grant: (laughs)

Blair: No, no, I'm kidding. No, there's a level of caring.

Bill: Well I think that any newspaper, I mean a newspaper is a product.

Grant: Right.

Bill: Um, you give people what you think they need.

Grant: Yeah.

Bill: Um, but to get them to buy that you also have to give them some of what they want.

Blair: You gotta entertain.

Grant: Good stuff.

Bill: To the extent that people want celebrities, we can write it. That's why celebrity faces are in the ear, like you know, to get you to read about.

Monica: To sell a newspaper.

Blair: You know it's very funny when what's his name came in, after (inaudible last name).

Monica: (inaudible name)?

Blair: Yeah. Yeah. He, um, I mean he had, ah, an edict to make us more serious,

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but he made the mistake of, you know, instead of putting our people in the ear, that right one, he would look towards Money stories. Because the trouble is they're all white, fat bald guys.

Grant: Yeah (laughs).

Blair: These CEOs, and it soon became even apparent to him, it didn't work because, I mean yes, people do care about money news deeply. But it's not as people driven and as base-driven and as celebrity-driven.

Grant: Exactly.

Blair: I mean there's Donald Trump.

Bill: Not that this matters, but, I mean, my problem with the Internet and people getting news from the Internet is that it, it, removes all the journalistic news you need. Now they are only picking, they're only picking and choosing what they want.

Blair: Right.

Bill: And not reading, you know, not reading anything.

Blair: They're getting they're things confirmed over and over, and they're not like opening themselves.

Monica: Yeah.

Grant: That's a good point.

Bill: Whereas if you read, like you know, if you bought the paper because of, you know, Paris Hilton in the ear.

Blair: You might find something else.

Bill: You're still looking at the front page and saying "Oh. Look what happened in Iraq."

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Blair: But we do have a hook that other publication newspapers don't have, and that is, and if you travel, you know this, you know, when I'm in a city, I don't necessarily want to read the local paper. I want to get a broader spectrum. You want to find out about the weather. You want to find out about your sports teams. Whatever.

Grant: Yes.

Blair: You're going to pick us up. I think that's what we were meant to be initially with the traveler, business traveler newspaper. That people liked the paper and started increasing circulation, which was a bi-product. I mean as the paper got older. You know because I think people really like our paper.

Grant: Oh. Absolutely.

Blair: I mean, and they always, you know, I know, they tend to hate the hometown papers. They don't have, I mean a lot of people may get upset at individual stories, but, I mean, the choice to buy us different than having your life in the local paper. I don't think they get upset. (laughs).

Grant: I just have a couple more questions. I really appreciate your patience.

Bill: Your patience, don't you mean.

Monica: I know.

Grant: No, this is fantastic. (laughs). Does the fact that *USA Today* reaches such a large national audience give you guys more leeway to give readers a daily dose of celebrity news?

Blair: Not leeway but we get a lot more yeses than nos. I mean.

Grant: More space, more resources.

Blair: I know the minute I would leave here I wouldn't get half the people and do

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what I do as much.

Bill: I mean one of the reasons we can enforce that, um, no rumors, no, everything must be sourced policy is because we can sources.

Grant: Yeah.

Blair: People will talk to us.

Bill: I mean, we can get the star on the phone. If you're at the like *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, you're not, you're writing rumors because A you're picking up stories from other people but you can't get it yourself.

Blair: I mean Tom (Keck), I mean, Tom, you talked to him.

Grant: Yeah.

Blair: He can go up to somebody on the red carpet. They know him, they know it's *USA Today*. And he'll ask a question that other people, they won't let in. You know.

Monica: But it doesn't afford us more space, I don't think. You're talking about.

Blair: Space?

Monica: No you said.

Grant: I said the daily dose because I know that you have more space to dedicate to it, than even my paper or most papers.

Blair: Well because entertainment.

Monica: Is that true? Your whole feature section compared to our life section?

Grant: I'm talking about celebrity dedication.

Monica: Just celebrity news hole?

Grant: Inside, yeah. Celebrity news hole, it's like a half page inside, like you know news.

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Monica: Well I think that's all we get.

Grant: Like celebrity buzz. Well, no you guys got "Amazing Race." See the whole celebrity news is not just your People page, it's everything.

Bill: Well, I mean, even if when we, even if you compare it to, um, if you take a section like.

Grant: (inaudible).

Bill: Well no, if you take a section like the *L.A. Times*, which has a lot more space.

Grant: Mm. Hmm.

Bill: Like three quarters of that space is all those movie ads, not content, and half the content is picked up from other places, not provided by their own staff.

Grant: Their own people.

Bill: So I think if you took like story counts from our paper as opposed to pages, you'd find that day after day, our Life section . . .

Blair: Yeah.

Bill: . . . is providing more information than almost any other section like that in the country.

Grant: Probably.

Blair: It also helps when, you know, we used to have to put health stories with our entertainment stories.

Grant: Ooh. A downer. (laughs).

Blair: And it was always kind of a not-a-good mix. We know now they break them up, so they got the second front page inside of that.

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Grant: Yeah.

Blair: Which unfortunately, I mean, it makes us a little crazy because you know we have to put out the Friday section plus have something every day. That's why you hear Melissa (assignment editor) going "What's the strip, what's the strip?" Because it has to be something, I mean features could provide it to, but they tend to turn to our area.

Grant: You guys. Sure.

Blair: Because it's newsy.

Grant: Do you think younger readers are drawn to this type of coverage? Celebrity stuff, I mean it seems like papers can't get them to pick the habit up, and this might be the best shot.

Blair: Yeah, but there's so many places to get it. Who knows? I mean they could go on their computer and get it for free, and I think, you know, I would hope Harry Potter teaches them that reading isn't bad.

Monica: It's that coveted 18 to 49s. Just like everybody wants them in movies, everybody wants them in TV, we want them too. We're writing about what their interested in based on what's the hottest TV show among 18 to 40, you know.

Grant: Yeah. All the way down the list.

Bill: I think we can get those readers who are interested in TV or movies or records or books or theater. And there are a lot of 18- to 49-year-olds who are interested in those things.

Grant: Those types of things.

Bill: The ones who are just interested in celebrities are going to get it elsewhere.

Blair: The magazines.

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Bill: Where they can either get like lots of pictures, lots of glossy pictures of their celebrities or they get gossip, neither of which we're giving them.

Blair: See we're not going to do anything that's juicy like junk in a grocery store.

Monica: No.

Blair: I mean, never. We're not going to run those titillating headlines. We're not going to get it all, you know, it's not that kind of hyper (inaudible).

Grant: Yeah.

Bill: You know also, also the other part of it. We don't do outrageously mean stuff.

Monica: That's right.

Bill: We won't run the like ooh, look what has happened to like, you know, Star Jones is fat again, look at this fat picture.

Grant: Oh. So you don't mess with that.

Bill: We don't do the, we don't do.

Blair: Well, when we cover Lindsay Lohan, we didn't overly cover her boniness.

Bill: Yeah. I mean we don't run like picture after, week after week, like you know like.

Grant: So you're not trying to embarrass them and kind of this whole, um, ambush mentality.

Blair: Well, we try to have a standard. I mean.

Grant: And this is a great, um, segues into this second to last question here. How does celebrity gossip find its way into mainstream media like *USA Today*?

Monica: Well Britney Spears being pregnant, I mean, it really wasn't until she

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finally announced it that we . . .

Grant: That you even went with it.

Monica: I think so. Wasn't that right.

Blair: Well, we did (inaudible), I mean we did speculation on that, I mean.

Monica: We wrote around it for weeks. Kind of hedged around it, right.

Blair: But we would call their person, and they would deny it.

Grant: Like the whole Angelina/Brad thing.

Monica: Well, unless you pick it up. This is what we did for years, pick it up.

Here's what *People* magazine said.

Grant: Yes.

Monica: We were like an information clearinghouse. *People* would send us stuff, and we'd kind of.

Blair: But we can still use *People*.

Grant: *People* still does that.

Blair: Well, we interview their editors.

Monica: Oh God I know.

Blair: It's weird.

Monica: It is weird.

Grant: Oh I see. OK.

Blair: I don't know. We find ways around it.

Monica: We try to find ways to package it.

Grant: But is it fair to say that, other people have said, though that because of this journalistic standard that it's ahead of many other publications that do this stuff. You



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don't have, it's so stringent that you can't always just say, you know, blind sources in the paper.

Monica: No. That doesn't happen.

Blair: No, see we don't do that. I would think you'd be very hampered, and Leo is not here, and, you know, he deals with it on a daily basis. So, you know, um, we're not as hampered because what our approach is doesn't have to be that kind of gossip. We're not just choosing those stories.

Monica: But it was a battle when they enforced those rules. I mean Annie was very upset because we typically would say "People" magazine reports this and we'd call the publicist.

Blair: Oh yeah, Annie was unhappy.

Monica: *People* magazine reports somebody is breaking up, for example. We'd call the publicist, and they'd say "No they're not. No they're not."

Grant: Right.

Monica: And that afforded us a way to get the gossip in along with being fair to the publicist, you know, the star. You had denials from each.

Blair: Right.

Grant: Yeah.

Monica: Now you can't, I mean, if you're not going to print that initial thing because they've backed off on that to a degree of publishing a rumor somebody else has published without sources. You see what I mean?

Grant: Yeah.

Monica: Unless *People* had it sourced, we weren't just going to pick it up just on

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the basis of it being in *People*, which we had done. So that's really complicated it, but, the bottom line is we did it in the beginning, but now we just don't do it.

Blair: We do it a little different.

Grant: Right. You don't, you don't even mess with that. This, we, I think touched on this one. Then I have one last thinker for you. Um, how much does the public's want for celebrity stories play a part in the decisions you guys do? I mean, it seems like you've said, what they want, give them what they want.

Bill: Um, yeah, I mean, I think that, I think that that is a large part of it, and even in that, you know, you make some decisions that, um, you may want, you may want to know this, but we're not, we don't have a (inaudible). We just think it is like beneath, you know, the standards of *USA Today* people talking about that. Um, so that goes to the things like you know, weight gain.

Grant: (laughs).

Bill: Or fashion mistakes and that kind of thing. But in the end, yeah, you know, we're a consumer product. I don't have any trouble with that.

Monica: Well we are writing about the top-rated TV show. Kind of what people want. They want to watch "Survivor" even if it's season 10.

Bill: Yeah.

Grant: Yes.

Monica: We're sick of writing about it, but we have to find some fresh way into it. You know what I'm saying? It's true.

Bill: We're not running. We're not running a movie section that only talk about, you know, Japanese language films at art houses.

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Monica: Because they're good quality, no, we talk about the (inaudible).

(background laughs). No, it's true though.

Bill: No, I mean, we're like, you know, we talk about, like mass market films that are marketed for TV.

Monica: Right.

Blair: We do some of these things, but no, that's our main thrust. But we do, I mean, I can tell, I see movies early, you know. I'm not going to do directs necessarily unless, you know, I mean, if Adam Sandler ever talks to the press again, I'm sure we'll talk to him no matter what kind of answers he gives.

Bill: But what I mean is, if I were . . .

Grant: Why did he shun the press?

Blair: Yeah, there are certain celebrities who don't do the media, Mike Myers, Eddie Murphy. They really tend not to do print, print.

Grant: Wow.

Blair: They'll go on TV because they feel we'll filter it for our own kind of purpose, and on TV, you're announcing it, and supposedly it doesn't get edited.

Grant: It gets run.

Blair: Although Tom Cruise didn't do himself any favors. (laughs).

Bill: But if I decided to just skip all the networks' fall premieres because I wanted to focus on . . .

Blair: (laughs).

Bill: You know, French documentaries on Bravo, I would be fired.

Grant: Right.

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Bill: And a People writer who turned down an interview with Tom Cruise because, he did the, you know, he was busy talking to the host of *Trio*, the talk show on *Trio*, would be fired. I mean, there is some recognition.

Blair: But every once in a while you can something that is intriguing.

Monica: And you particularly can, and you should point out to us what was in (inaudible).

Grant: Right.

Blair: Because if you're just confirming what people like over and over and over you're not really being.

Bill: But that's part of that mix of giving them what they need and giving them what they want.

Grant: Right.

Bill: And you can't, you don't survive in this industry only giving them what they, you think they need and you never give them what actually like.

Blair: And we also often find people who we think they'll be interested in that they don't know about.

Monica: Yeah right, that's what I'm talking about.

Bill: Yeah.

Grant: God forbid (laughs, Monica laughs).

Blair: You know we'd like to be first in doing that. Sometimes it's a bigger struggle, though, I mean, I remember I had to fight to do (inaudible name), covering that, he was only in like eight films.

Monica: You have to fight a lot for stuff like that.

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Blair: And then a year later everybody else, but at least they let me.

Bill: But I mean the flip side is, Monica can tell you, I can't, I can't banish, you know, interview, I can't like say "No we're not doing a story on 'Six Feet Under' because I don't like it." I mean it isn't up to me to always decide.

Monica: Well, oh, oh, other people, yeah.

Blair: But you could choose not to get it.

Bill: But I mean at some point you have to say like you know "I may not watch, I may not watch 'Jag,' but a lot of people do."

Monica: Yeah.

Bill: And if they want a story on David James Elliott, I can't say just because I don't think he can act and I don't think the show's any good, we're not going to do it.

Monica: (Laughs) right.

Blair: Because sometime interest, you know . . .

Bill: Interest wins.

Blair: Wins. And you know, we are just showing what the public wants, and if they want it, they can have it.

Grant: Yeah, absolutely.

Blair: Occasionally (laughs).

Bill: Occasionally.

Grant: My last question, this is kind of a thinker.

Monica: Hasn't he said that like five times.

Blair: I know. (background laughs). You're like setting us up.

Grant: I'm sorry (background laughs). I'm wrapping it up.

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Blair: You're lying to us (background laughs).

Grant: You guys are so, you guys are so in tune. No but this is it, I promise. Is there a sacrifice *USA Today* makes by publishing celebrity stuff in more, in lieu of more traditional forms of newspaper content, i.e. hard news, politics, health care and education?

Blair: No. We give them all of that.

Monica: No we have our allotted space and they have theirs, you know, and we strike a balance.

Grant: But some purists, yeah, that's what I'm saying, but some purists would say "Well why are you dedicating all this space to this stuff that's so fluff and so when the people are dying in Iraq or their daycare for kids are.

Monica: No because we still cover that, and we have a staff covering all that.

Blair: We need all that. We need a relief valve. I don't people just want to read that.

Grant: That's a good point.

Blair: You know, I know gas prices are going up, and that's important, because I follow it, but I don't just want to read that.

Monica: There's a lot of sections in the paper (laughs, Robert laughs).

Blair: I want to know where I can go to a movie or see on TV, or you know what's the hottest show?

Monica: The back of the book (Life section).

Blair: I want to know when, you know, the next poker showdown is.

Grant: OK. So.

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Monica: But wait nothing is sacrificed. It's not like there's no space for this other stuff.

Blair: No. No.

Monica: We have a format. It works in that format.

Grant: You get that. Exactly, four balanced sections.

Blair: I think that they strive to let people know what to expect every day, I mean, you don't want to shock them suddenly with maybe more pages of celebrity coverage.

Grant: Good point.

Bill: I mean, there are like, you know, there are magazines.

Blair: They know what they get when they pick us up.

Bill: Yeah. There are magazines like *In Touch* that only do celebrity and like, you know, there's the *Wall Street Journal* that only does financial news and business. Like you can make your choice. Or there's us that does a little bit of everything.

Blair: Right.

Bill: Um, everybody has their own, you know, niche in the market.

Grant: That's a good point. Yeah.

Monica: We do try to be all things. We do.

Grant: All things to all people. You are the universal source, um.

Monica: The nation's newspaper.

Grant: Absolutely.

Blair: CNN.

Grant: Yeah, and that's what the whole thing is, I mean this whole irrelevancy, um, paper's dying, circulation and trying to use online.

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Blair: We're different.

Grant: All I have to say is the name.

Bill: That's the difference. That's also part of the difference of our celebrity coverage, in that like, you know like the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* writes about celebrities with Pittsburgh angles. Which we don't, we don't have those angles.

Grant: You don't have those shackles.

Bill: But we also don't have, you know the *Washington Post* writes with consistently snide tone assuming that their readers all have the same snide attitude.

Blair: Even though they're reveling in it at the same time.

Bill: Yeah.

Blair: They want to take that stance that we're above it.

Bill: But that is, that's their tone and their readers. We don't

Monica: *The Post* does have some really good bigger stories even if their news hole may not be as long.

Blair: Yeah.

Grant: Yeah.

Bill: But I mean the point of that is like we can't, we don't assume that all our readers think country music is, is corny because many of our readers in the South like it.

Grant: Appreciate it.

Bill: And, you know, we, we don't make those kinds of assumptions about like all of our readers think this. All of our readers, they don't have a consistent opinion.

Blair: You cannot, that's the one thing we don't have. You can't say "People in this community tend to think that way."



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Bill: Yeah.

Blair: We're also international. I mean, we're all over the place, so you do the best you can and represent a different, you know, broader picture rather than that kind of attitude that only maybe hanging around certain people in Washington.

Bill: Yeah.

Blair: Which actually I, I find it nice, I mean not nicer but . . .

Grant: Right.

Blair: . . . just more pleasant to be able to write for a larger audience and try to grab them differently because I think it's the easy way to take the.

Monica: (Inaudible).

Grant: Yeah.

Bill: The other thing, and this has nothing to do with your thesis.

Grant: No that's fine.

Bill: We used to cover high arts.

Blair: Yeah we did opera and the dance.

Bill: Opera, classicals, and all that.

Appendix E. Interview with Todd, Photo Editor of *USA Today*

Grant: What do you think are the paper's basic guidelines to decide what celebrity news you give readers? Is it just what editors and writers think is important, or is more than that?

Todd: I think it is. I mean they work really hard to find, you know to be on the cutting edge to see what's going out there. Our reporters have, you know, a lot of good sources and good relationships with those people.

Grant: Right.

Todd: They're in the know. They really know the trade, the craft, you know, if there's something definitely brewing, you know, they'll ah, we try to be there from the beginning, not just follow. Try to ask them whatever, you know.

Grant: In other words try to be set the pace and, ah.

Todd: Yeah. Yeah.

Grant: And get the different angle or . . .

Todd: Yeah, we always want to do something a little bit different to bring the reader something that they might not see somewhere else. Just a little bit different angle if we can do that.

Grant: Yeah. That's cool. Yeah, you guys are golden. Um, are celebrity stories, though, pretty much just profiles and court dealings such as divorce, criminal charges and new movie and TV advances, or does *USA Today* try to do more with the celebrity stuff?

Todd: We've done a lot of different celebrity stuff, um, beyond that, you know

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profiles and that sort of thing. And we do profiles, we do, um, we cover the big events, you know.

Grant: Yeah.

Todd: We um, one of the things that's always a challenge is when we get to a big event that's also covered by all the wires and that sort of thing, sort of credentialed and pinned in so to speak to certain areas.

Grant: Mm. Hmm.

Todd: And where I'm speaking from, photo, definitely.

Grant: Sure.

Todd: We always try to find something different to bring the reader that, you know, they're not going to see everywhere else. And that's a huge challenge, especially at these big events because they're so many people, and they're all, you know, pinned in the same places. It's sometimes difficult.

Grant: Yeah exactly, I mean everybody's just kind of . . .

Todd: It's certainly.

Grant: . . . shepherded in there and then you.

Todd: Yeah, it's a big pack. You're allowed to photograph without seeing anything, and that sort of thing. So, you know, looking for something to go beyond that in a story, on the periphery or . . .

Grant: Sure.

Todd: You know, ah, some prep work is fine, like . . .

Grant: Now, are editors and reporters good with you guys in saying "We want a neat shot about this because we're doing a story about this person."

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Todd: Yeah, I mean you know we try to, like last year at the Golden Globes, we photographed from the idea of ah, you know, the Golden Globes is an event where there's a red carpet for the show, there's a trophy room, you know, there's a lot of photographers there getting the same kind of thing. You know, there's different moments, but since you're shooting the same situation . . .

Grant: Right.

Todd: So we, we worked and finally were able to put a photographer in a limousine with one of the stars for the last couple of blocks that arrived to the show. So we got something different than everyone else had to lead off the page, you know, and augment the coverage of the rest of the stuff.

Grant: That is neat, yeah.

Todd: So and we did that through, ah.

Grant: Do you remember what star it was?

Todd: It was, ah, Nicolette Sheridan from *Desperate Housewives*. She was in the limo with her fiancée.

Grant: Wow.

Todd: I mean we worked with um, one of our reporters out there, you know, has a lot.

Grant: Tom? Good guy.

Todd: Tom, yeah, has a lot of good contacts with, ah, everyone out there, and ah, we basically wanted to see if we could put someone in a limousine with one of the "Desperate Housewives," you know. It didn't really matter who.

Grant: That's fantastic.

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Todd: And they, they were fine with it. They, ah . . .

Grant: So that's kind of the examples of what you guys try to do, um.

Todd: Right, something like that. Something a little bit different. Something that the readers might not see a thousand times over, you know, different Web sites, different things, you know, the wire stuff.

Grant: Exactly. Ah, have there been any reader surveys that you know of about celebrity news and whether these types of stories are content people want to see more of? Have you heard anything about that in the paper?

Todd: Um, not personally. I mean there could be, and I could have missed it.

Grant: I know the Web site has like the hits.

Todd: Yeah.

Grant: And those celebrity stories are like the highest week in and week out.

Todd: Celebrity stories are a really popular, you know really popular draw.

Grant: Yeah, exactly, I mean it is the hook it seems.

Todd: Look at all the news magazines racks now. They're full of celebrity mags, and . . .

Grant: Yeah what are those magazines. Like *OK*, *Us Weekly*, *Star*.

Todd: Is it *OK* or *Hello* that's got a U.S. version now?

Grant: *OK*.

Todd: Something that just came out, yeah. Yeah, *Star* is trying to go, in my opinion, trying to go legit, you know, they got like a glossier publication.

Grant: I think they are, and you could make an argument they're probably the most legit as far as having the most truths or kernels of truth in there.

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Todd: I guess, yeah, still though in my mind, coming from journalism school, you know, tabloid journalism is not.

Grant: Yeah, it's a different. There's a difference.

Todd: It's different. Always.

Grant: What do you mean?

Todd: Well, you know, I always, when I read something in a tab or whatever, there's always that thought in the back of my head, you know, is this legit?

Grant: Are they making it up or . . . ?

Todd: Exactly, yeah.

Grant: Wow, OK, yeah. And that's kind of getting to the next question here., which is the crux of my research really. How much does competition from TV, cable, the Internet and other publications that you just talked about matter when deciding what and how many stories to cover?

Todd: That's probably a better question for one the content editors that actually decides the stories, you know, as far as the coverage, I mean, I ah . . .

Grant: But you were just mentioning the competition and how you guys try to do stuff different, I mean. Does the *USA Today*?

Todd: Well, yeah, we try to give the readers something different, yeah, we don't, ah, I guess.

Grant: Do people obsess about other, um, ah, TV shows and magazines. I mean I see stacks of them out here.

Todd: Yeah, well you have to keep, you have to know what, you know, everyone else is doing, you know, that sort of thing. I don't know how. I mean if there's a big buzz

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about something I guess, you know, we'll, we'll cover it.

Grant: Pick it up.

Todd: Yeah. Pick it up news wise. Or you know, other reporters will try to find, you know, a different angle or, you know, something like that.

Grant: Sure. Is it, ah, so it's, it's more like you need to be aware of what they're doing so that you can get different things and make sure you're not just feeding the public the same stuff.

Todd: Yeah, yeah in a sense. And know what's old news. What's been out there for weeks.

Grant: I see.

Todd: You know, and what's, what's, what's new. I mean, you know, our reporters, I think, are pretty tuned in to what's going on. So I mean, ah, I can't think of a specific example, but I know, you know, if someone here's a rumor out there or whatever, you're big to hear about it, and one of the reporters is like "oh, that's, that's nothing. Yeah, we know."

Grant: We've got that covered. It's not a big deal.

Todd: Yeah.

Grant: All right. But is there a thought process to make sure *USA Today* has celebrity coverage to make sure readers don't have to go elsewhere for it? Like you could be the one all, be all.

Todd: Well, I mean we have you know, the pages every day that are dedicated, you know, to celebrity. You have the People page, you know, I mean you have television and movie content.

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Grant: But I mean it makes its way on the front a lot, like here the promo and then sometimes the cover story will be about a celebrity, Spielberg.

Todd: Yeah, yeah. Well, it's the life section.

Grant: But kind of like if people pick up this (holds up *USA Today*), that means they don't have to go anywhere else. Is that the goal of this paper?

Todd: Um, that would be like a Susan Weiss (managing editor, Life section of *USA Today*). I mean certainly if you look at the size of our paper and the news hole, it's not as big as, you know, a magazine.

Grant: That's a good point.

Todd: So you know, we, you know, we can't fit everything into this because, I mean, we got so much space. We got, ah . . .

Grant: And so many other things competing for space in this section.

Todd: Right, we've got the health news. You know a formatted section, the cover story and the entertainment stuff are in the front of the book pretty much so to speak, you know, it's always entertainment.

Grant: Right.

Todd: And then the health and behavior science stuff is toward the back of the section.

Grant: The second cover, yeah.

Todd: Right. But you know, there's a lot of, ah . . .

Grant: So the *USA Today* is not trying to, um, they are carving out a niche, but they're not, they definitely know that people are going to try to get this stuff elsewhere. But if you don't give them anything, then it seems like you run the risk of losing readers,



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you know, by the droves.

Todd: Well, I mean it's the Life section, so I mean, that's, you're going to have entertainment stuff in the Life section, celebrity stuff in the Life section, along with other lifestyle-type stories, so . . .

Grant: OK. Cool.

Todd: That's where those types of stories go in our paper, and sometimes, they make their way to the front page

Grant: Depending on the angle, sure.

Todd: Stories from the Lifestyles section.

Grant: Um, I'm going to do a laundry list here now. Film and TV stars, musical artists, prominent pro athletes, politicians and authors, um, high-ranking. Is this a pretty thorough list of what the paper considers celebrities. Is there anyone else?

Todd: Um, celebrity, um.

Grant: Someone mentioned maybe some stage, high-ranking actors, or.

Todd: I guess so. We do cover Broadway. We cover plays and that sort of thing, you know.

Grant: Right. I guess some certain Broadway actors could be considered celebrity, although most of them have either come from TV and movies.

Todd: Yeah.

Grant: And if they're doing something, it's big news.

Todd: It depends on the niche. In New York, it's bigger than it would be in, you know, Peoria, I guess.

Grant: But a CEO could be a celebrity, who knows, like Michael Roth.

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Todd: Oh that's right it could be, I mean if you go talk to the guys in the Money section, I'm sure, you know.

Grant: I'm sure they have their own, um . . .

Todd: (laughs). Yeah in their own way they're celebrities, but yeah, I guess I would see those people as celebrities or public figures anyway.

Grant: Yeah, I'm trying to get a good working list. All right. In general, how often does the front page become a place where *USA Today* will publish a story about a celebrity or celebrities?

Todd: Um, we do it pretty often, I think. You'll see, um, entertainment stories on the cover, um.

Grant: The Michael Jackson verdict immediately comes to mind, um.

Todd: Yeah, that was a big, that was a big news story, a news and celebrity story, um.

Grant: Sure.

Todd: Um, what else have we done on the front page entertainment wise?

Grant: The "Desperate Housewives" package in May was a front-pager.

Todd: Yeah, that was. Um, there's always some sort of, anytime there's a big show, you know, like Grammys, Emmys, Academy Awards.

Grant: Ah yes, the Oscars, the Super Bowl of the Life section as they call it.

Todd: Yeah. I mean, if it's, you know there's always a presence. A photograph or a promotion or something like that.

Grant: Yeah. Exactly.

Todd: Just to show when readers are looking at the paper on the rack, then, what

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else is in the paper.

Grant: Exactly. I don't have it today, ah, the front section with me, but Madonna, right there with that accident.

Todd: Mm. Hmm.

Grant: I mean so you're right, the celebrity face.

Todd: A lot of those people are interested in Madonna, and that, you know, it's a refer, you know, it tells people what's in the Life section.

Grant: But a refer using a recognizable face that can pull you in.

Todd: Yes.

Grant: I mean you're not going to see a refer out there about health and whatever else.

Todd: Well, sometimes you do. I mean it just depends on what the cover story. Sometimes it's a refer to the cover story in Life. You know, it's, the 1A editors decide on what's called the ear.

Grant: Yeah Jack. They call it the ear. I call it the skybox for purposes of my research but same type of idea.

Todd: Yeah.

Grant: Um, is there a feeling that these types of celebrity stories are widely read by other newsroom editors and writers and photographers?

Todd: Um, I don't know. I mean I've talked to a lot of people who, I've got friends in different lines of work all around the country, and it seems like it's, the celebrity stuff is kind of the water cooler talk, you know.

Grant: Yeah.

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Todd: Everybody's interested in it. It's, you know, I guess it's fun to talk about.

Grant: It's true.

Todd: You know I come from sort of a hard news background, and I do a lot of health and behavior stuff, so sometimes, and I'm not all that interested in, in celebrities.

Grant: Personally.

Todd: In general, personally, yeah.

Grant: Right.

Todd: I mean I see it's value, and I know a lot of other people are . . .

Grant: Like it's value, can you kind of expand on that.

Todd: Ah, well I see how other people are interested in it. You know, there are a lot of huge movie fans and TV fans and people out there who like a certain actor or actress, you know, and follow them.

Grant: Absolutely.

Todd: You know everybody has different areas of interest, you know, whether it be music or, you know, film.

Grant: Sure. Some big stars.

Todd: Yeah. But my friends, you know, they're all, all my friends are like "It's all you know, what about Britney, that's just crazy." And I'm like "Whoa, what's going on?" You know?

Grant: What's going on with Britney? (laughs).

Todd: Yeah, you know, you know, there's stuff on the wires or whatever.

Grant: Yeah.

Todd: They think you know so much more than they're reading. It's funny.

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Grant: The um, historically I've found that celebrity coverage from about the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, um, through present has been a big part of newspaper coverage. Why do you think that is as a journalist? This longevity?

Todd: Um.

Grant: You know, 80, 90, 100 years, it's still, you know reporters going to Hollywood covering these lives of these larger than life people.

Todd: Well, that's just it. Larger than life, you know, they're interesting, you know, ah, back at the turn of the century, I'm sure many people were just as fascinated by . . .

Grant: Ty Cobb.

Todd: Ty Cobb or.

Grant: Some of the baseball athletes, um.

Todd: Yeah the baseball players, and you know, there were stages and theater back then, you know.

Grant: Musical acts and stage, yeah, that's true.

Todd: So, and um, back then it was probably even more of a publicity machine, you know, when, you know I'm sure the publicists made up stories and planted them and that sort of thing just to create buzz and that kind of thing. Things weren't bedded as carefully as they are now.

Grant: (laughs) Yeah. And when silent movies came along in the 1920s, that really kind of . . .

Todd: Yeah.

Grant: Escalated the whole, ratcheted up a notch.

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Todd: Yeah, I think people are always interested in celebrity and, you know, fame and that sort of thing.

Grant: Fame, yeah.

Todd: They have some sort of idea in their mind what it is, and they're interested in knowing more about it.

Grant: And as a journalist, I mean, we, it sounds like we have a responsibility to give these people that coverage and tell them about this stuff if they want it.

Todd: If readers are interested in it, yeah, then we should, you know, give our readers what they're interested in. You know.

Grant: Yeah.

Todd: If it's Britney Spears or if it's (inaudible name) or Condoleeza Rice.

Grant: Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie.

Todd: Yeah, if they're interested in it, you know, it could be similar.

Grant: It's as simple as that. All right. Um, does the fact that the *USA Today* reaches such a large audience give you guys more leeway to give readers the daily dose of celebrity news?

Todd: More leeway? Um, well it's a national paper, so I mean every story is a local story to us I guess, I mean, you know.

Grant: That's a good . . .

Todd: We're not (inaudible) to.

Grant: A city council meetings in McLean, Virginia.

Todd: Yeah, I mean we're not. Our audience is you know, from, you know, Miami to Vancouver, and we have an international mission, too, so ah . . .

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Grant: It's mainstream, um, the celebrity news stuff captures a lot of, um, different interests and a lot of people across the board seem interested.

Todd: Oh yeah.

Grant: So it's almost a can't-miss formula.

Todd: Yeah, I mean, I think everyone is interested in celebrity, I mean this celebrity stuff.

Grant: But this daily dose, I mean, not giving them this daily dose of celebrity. Let's pretend that the Life section was just like features and you know like this guy (points to a copy of *USA Today*) with this car and a couple of other things, um . . .

Todd: Mm. Hmm.

Grant: Maybe some stuff about books, I mean, that obviously is not a formula that the *USA Today* thinks will work. I mean they've, they've basically built a reputation since the '80s on this celebrity news.

Todd: Well, it's one of our areas of coverage, and we, we, we do it very well, so . . .

Grant: Yes.

Todd: You know.

Grant: That's what I want to get at.

Todd: We have a good reputation for news coverage and sports coverage as well, so, I mean they're, you know, we have reporters who cover all different beats. There's one reporter who just covers cancer, and she's very good at it.

Grant: Right.

Todd: So I mean it's just another coverage area. But, you know, we try to reflect,

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you know, broad spectrum of interests of the country, the people and it's hard to do, and, you know, in just a few pages.

Grant: Yes. Definitely, um, do you think younger readers are drawn to this type of coverage? Celebrity? Because there's this kind of thought . . .

Todd: I think so.

Grant: . . . of, you know, trying to lure these readers in. It's such a hard thing to do.

Todd: Yeah, I think so. Yeah, I think, um, younger readers, they'll probably go to the celebrity stuff first before they hit anything else.

Grant: Yes. That's a fair, um, thing.

Todd: When I was young, I did the same thing, you know.

Grant: Yeah, I mean, if this is the stuff you've grown up on, and you see these people on TV. It's a natural curiosity maybe.

Todd: Right. If you're 18 you'd probably be more interested in that than gas prices at the moment, but that changes when you get a little older, but yeah.

Grant: (laughs). Yes. It sure does change. But, ah, a lot of these people, they keep the habit. You know, they're always are going to be interested in this. I just got a couple more questions, Todd. I appreciate your time.

Todd: Sure. Sure.

Grant: Um. OK. We talked about this a little bit, but how much does the public's want for celebrity stories play a part in the decisions that you guys make and what to photograph, what to, you. I mean, do you guys always have the reader in mind, or is it sometimes?



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Todd: Yeah, we always have the reader in mind. I mean, if we know there's a lot of interest in, you know, the show "Lost," for instance.

Grant: Yeah.

Todd: For example, you know, we'll, you know, find different ways to write about that, cover that.

Grant: In fact don't you have, um, someone out in Hawaii now that you were talking about right now.

Todd: Tom is out there right now. Um, doing some profiles. And he's making a set visit, and then one of our freelancers that's based in Honolulu, he's going along with him to, on a set visit, so . . .

Grant: To shoot some.

Todd: Some behind the scenes, and so.

Grant: Nice.

Todd: You know, the, the crew and the stars doing what it is they do out there, you know, on the set.

Grant: That will be fascinating. Um, so, and obviously the public, that's a big part of the formula, I mean.

Todd: Yes.

Grant: Their want and desire for this stuff.

Todd: Yeah.

Grant: You gotta give it to them, or they're going to turn to the *Star* or *People*.

Todd: Hope not, but yeah. (laughs).

Grant: Exactly.

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Todd: We write about what's the top thing I guess at the moment. You know.

Grant: Indeed. Now this is an interesting thinker. How much does, or how does celebrity gossip find its way into mainstream media like *USA Today*?

Todd: Hopefully gossip doesn't. I mean, you know, to me gossip means you don't know if it's factual or not.

Grant: Right.

Todd: You know, it's just hearsay or whatever. I mean we have so many policies, sourcing policies and that sort of thing, you know, one person says something you can't report it as a fact.

Grant: Oh.

Todd: They have to confirm it and everything, so . . .

Grant: It has to corroborate.

Todd: Right, right, so I mean it has to be attributed and that sort of thing. So you know, I wouldn't think or hope that just pure gossip would make it into the paper. I mean, that's what the tabs do, you know, they speculate and formulate and that sort of thing.

Grant: Right.

Todd: You know, and try to make.

Grant: You guys have a different journalistic standard then obviously.

Todd: We have a journalistic standard. (laughs).

Grant: Yes.

Todd: That's it. (laughs). We have a journalistic standard, you know, and I think some of these other (inaudible), if the sales go probably, you know, like the *Star* or something.

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Grant: And like these Internet sites. I mean they don't have to, ah. There's a lot of competition.

Todd: Well, yeah, just because it's out on the Internet doesn't mean it's true, I mean. It's just . . .

Grant: Right. But if you read it in the newspaper someone told me yesterday, you're more inclined to believe it. If I read it in *USA Today*, it's probably true.

Todd: Yeah, I mean just read the story, you know, things are attributed, and, you know, you should talk to someone about the sourcing policy. Reporters have to deal with it a lot so they know it word for word.

Grant: A lot yeah.

Todd: You know we don't use anonymous sources and . . .

Grant: The blind sources.

Todd: Yeah.

Grant: You guys don't work with that. All right, um, final question, another philosophical, um, thought here. Is there a sacrifice you think *USA Today* makes by publishing celebrity stuff in lieu of more traditional forms of newspaper content, i.e. hard news, politics, health care, education?

Todd: Well, no, I mean, if you look at our newspaper, there's the News section, the Money section, the Sports section, the Life section.

Grant: Right.

Todd: The Life section is where celebrity news goes, and . . .

Grant: And sometimes bleeds out front.

Todd: Right, sometimes it does, um. But no, I mean that's just part of the broad

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spectrum of interests in the whole country, so you know.

Grant: A purist. A news purist though would say why are you even dedicating all of the space that you do for this? Why not have someone going out doing more news? Let's talk about more about Iraq. Let's do more about the President. Let's do more about this. But you say, no there's a place you can get all this stuff in the paper and we're not sacrificing anything.

Todd: Of course I wish the paper were bigger, and we could do, you know, every great story that, that, that we want to do. You know, but, I mean, um, there's a place for everything in the paper, and the Life section is where the celebrity stuff usually belongs. Now sometimes it goes out front. It depends on how big the story is (inaudible).

Grant: Right.

Todd: But, but ah I can see that point, the news purist's point, but, ah, the readers want to know a little bit about everything, you know.

Grant: They want to read about P. Diddy and Madonna.

Todd: They want to read about Iraq, but they want to know why P. Diddy is dropping the P. for some reason.

Grant: Yes. (laughs). It's true.

Todd: You know, personally, you know, I don't really care, but readers do.

Grant: People do.

Todd: And this paper is for the reader. It's not, it's not my paper. It's not my personal art gallery or photo gallery, you know. It's, it's a reflection of what's going on in the world today, you know.

Grant: It sure is.

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Todd: You know, we give our readers as much as we can.

Grant: And you guys do it very well. There's no question. That's why I'm here.

Ah . . .

Todd: Well, it's, it's very interesting. The study of journalism is very interesting.

It's an animal, a unique animal, so . . .

Grant: In what way?

Todd: Well, you know, there's the whole. This, um, just from the photography point of view, you know, if it weren't for celebrity journalism, you wouldn't have the paparazzi, the stalkerazzi and that sort of thing.

Grant: Yeah, I was going to say.

Todd: We had some issues with that.

Appendix F. Interview with Tom, Celebrity Reporter for *USA Today*

Grant: I guess the first question, what kind of are the paper's guidelines to decide what celebrity news you give readers?

Tom: What are the paper's guidelines?

Grant: Yeah. Just in general.

Tom: I think it's, um, you know, a combination of what um, is being buzzed about, but it's also what we feel is worthy, um, of, ah, reporting. For instance, I was, we were talking to, I was doing an interview with Nicole Kidman this weekend for *Bewitched*, but I saw the film last night. And it's just not very good in my opinion, so we decided it would irresponsible for us to do a big cover story on *Bewitched*, ah, and you know trying to let people know about a film is just not very good.

Grant: Yeah, that's interesting. Now, is it simply what writers and editors consider newsworthy and interesting, or is it more than that?

Tom: Um, well, that's a lot of it, obviously, what we think is going to be, a lot of it is predicting what's going to be big. Because I mean there's so many movies to chose from. Ah, but also it's tapping into pop culture. I mean early on, I, ah, kind of, um, you know, got attached to the *Desperate Housewives* people . . .

Grant: Oh sure, yeah.

Tom: and I probably did 18 *Desperate Housewives* stories over the last season, ah, you know, culminating with a big front page, you know, 1A cover story, which is unusual to do a TV show on the front of the whole paper.

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Grant: And that was a great read. I did read that.

Tom: Oh, thank you. Thanks. It was fun.

Grant: Fantastic.

Tom: So, you know obviously when something becomes a phenomenon like that, like *American Idol* or *Survivor*, than you know, we, ah, we really specialize in that and devote a lot of pages to that.

Grant: Certainly. Exactly. Now, this is kind of what we just talked about. Are celebrity stories pretty much just profiles, and like court dealings, divorce, criminal charges, new movies, TV show advances or does *USA Today* try to do more with it, ah, with the celebrity, ah, angles? Can you kind of explain that?

Tom: Oh yeah. We definitely do a lot of things that I guess you could say like “People” or “Us Weekly” kind of do in terms of couples watches and, um, I mean you know, ah, obviously, there’s a lot of obsession over Jessica Simpson and Nick Lachey, and that’s part of what I have to do as a People section reporter. You know there’s obviously movie people like Scott Goals and Anthony and then there’s the TV people like Quincy, and then I, Mary and Leo. We are the People section people who cover, you know, more celebrity news.

Grant: Exactly. And so you pretty much have to get into all that. And even if it’s a little bit on the gossipy side, isn’t that right? Um.

Tom: Well, you know, there’s a fine line because we’re not allowed to print rumors, where as *Us Weekly* and *In Touch*, all they are is rumors, pretty much. You know secret sources. We don’t, you know, use secret sources. Ah, and we don’t print gossip. We’re not even really, we’re discouraged from using the word rumor in the paper, so we

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really, unless it's confirmed, ah,

Grant: Yeah.

Tom: You know, that's kind of a challenge for us, you know, because they want to break news, but we have a policy not to, ah, exploit what is rumor.

Grant: Fine line being a journalism, news-gathering organization that, you know, you don't like to cross, ah, when you don't have to.

Tom: Well, I mean we're a newspaper with, ah, integrity as opposed to just a fanzine that can kind of play around more and gossip, and you know, um, rely more on hearsay.

Grant: Oh I see. Great. All right. Getting to the next question, have there ever been any reader surveys that you know of about celebrity news or whether these types of stories are content that people want to see more of?

Tom: Ah, you know, I don't know a lot about that, but I would probably, um, refer you to some of our online people. Are you talking to them?

Grant: Yes, I'm going to be talking to the online folks, too, so I'll probably get. Yeah, either online or any type of, ah, surveys you've conducted. Either, um, maybe focus groups or whatever, but I can get into more of that with some others.

Tom: Well, we conduct our own surveys a lot of times, so, ah, they always have surveys up on the page, so that would be a good one for them.

Grant: OK. Yeah, that would be fantastic. I'll ask them. Um, next thing, this is really kind of the crux of what I'm trying to investigate. How much does competition from TV, cable, Internet and other publications, both print and online, matter when deciding what and how many stories to cover?



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Tom: Well, um, I think that if something's been covered to death, ah, we're less likely to do it, especially if we're following the others. I remember one of my first assignments when I joined the paper was "Charlie's Angels," and we had a piece set to run with, um, Lucy Liu, Cameron Diaz and, ah, Drew Barrymore, and it was probably considered to be a cover. But they were just everywhere, and they weren't saying much. They just kind of giggled and played with each other and kind of avoided personal questions, and so we felt it wasn't worthy of a cover. So it was bumped to a smaller inside piece.

Grant: I see.

Tom: So, um, yeah, I mean there's a lot of competition out there. We want to try to be, if not first, among the first.

Grant: Exactly, and is there kind of a, I guess, the question I have, is there a thought process to make sure *USA Today* has celebrity coverage so readers don't have to go elsewhere for it?

Tom: Um, well obviously, yeah, we want to be the leading, ah, supplier, but I mean in reality, you know, *USA Today* is a lot of people who are traveling, you know, hotel people, and so, ah, I think we're relying more on the online aspect to reach out to younger viewers.

Grant: Oh, I see.

Tom: Rather, so I mean, ah, every once in a while, Donna, Leo and I will do these, ah, chats with readers, like once a month. We're on rotation. And that's a chance to find really find out what they're interested in and it seems like the younger people really want to know about Jennifer Garner and Ben Affleck and Jessica Simpson and Paris

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Hilton. And, you know, these are people that we don't want to overly spotlight because we also want to reserve time for I guess more legitimate, ah, actors and actresses and performers.

Grant: Yeah.

Tom: But we can't ignore the younger audience and what they want. And no one is doing that. If you watch *Entertainment Tonight* and *People* magazine, it's so much more about these people as opposed to the established veterans.

Grant: Yeah, that's very interesting, now...

Tom: People who are famous for being famous.

Grant: Paris Hilton comes to mind.

Tom: That's right, who you know, is not that much different than who Zsa Zsa Gabor was in the 1960s. She was more of a personality than an actress.

Grant: Yeah, I guess you're right. That was a little before my time, but , yeah, I've seen some of her stuff.

Tom: Yeah well, me too, um, yeah, but I mean, ah, but Zsa Zsa and her sister Ava, they were the socialite sisters who were kind of known for their husbands and their money and their wealth.

Grant: OK.

Tom: So, yeah.

Grant: Yeah, that's fascinating. Now we talked about this a second ago with the *Desperate Housewives*, but in general, how often does the front page become a place where *USA Today* will publish a story about a celebrity or celebrities? I mean, scandals involving O.J.

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Tom: Very very rarely. I remember they did Mel Gibson for the *Passion of the Christ*. Ah, I think they did a Tom Cruise one, maybe, ah, I'm not sure about that, but perhaps for *The Last Samurai* you'd have to double check on that.

Grant: OK. So like big movies.

Tom: It's rare.

Grant: Yeah, exactly, I was going to say, it's pretty rare, now scandals or trials, I don't know if the Michael Jackson trial, I read the paper as much as I can, but I don't know, I'm sure the verdict will probably be out front.

Tom: I would think that would be out front. We're not covering that, but that's news.

Grant: Yeah, that's not your ball of wax.

Tom: There are little diversions of things in terms of the celebrity people who have been testifying and things like that, but mainly the news.

Grant: It's mainly a news story, I see. So there is kind of a fine line of departments with that.

Tom: Yeah.

Grant: OK. Is there a feeling that these types of stories, celebrity now, are widely read by newsroom editors and writers?

Tom: By other newsroom editors and, our stories?

Grant: Yeah.

Tom: Ah, well I certainly get that feedback when I go to premieres and such with other. I also see my stories. You need to get that?

Grant: No, you can continue.

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Tom: I also see my stories, versions of them appear on “Extra” and “Access Hollywood.”

Grant: Oh, I see

Tom: Yeah.

Grant: Interesting. Now.

Tom: Lots of times they’re attributed. I’ve actually talked with the editors about how we should try to beef up our publicity to help sell our brand as *People* magazine does, I mean, for instance, I have a story in today’s paper where I was asked to just kind of do a version of *People’s* interview with Britney Spears, like a cross promotional thing, you know, so, according to *People* magazine, Britney Spears says she’s having morning sickness dah, dah, dah. And, you know, I mean it’s a no brainer for me.

Grant: Right.

Tom: It’s giving *People* publicity for their magazine, but I think you know, we need to actually work on getting our scoops out there as well so we get credit for things that we break, and we do break things.

Grant: Yeah, exactly.

Tom: We break a lot of things.

Grant: Now historically, I’ve been researching and found that celebrity coverage from about the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century has been a huge part of newspaper coverage and continues to be today. Why do you think, you know, as a journalist, this is so fascinating and continues to be?

Tom: Celebrity news, you mean?

Grant: Yes.

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Tom: Well, I think it's um, personally, I just think it's the thing that we all have in common. I mean, you know, if you look back to, um, the grand days of the kings and queens of Europe, you know, those were the people gossiped about. Cleopatra was gossiped about. Leo was gossiped about because he was the one powerful person that everybody kind of had in common and yet they were shielded from what happened in the palace, so there was a great curiosity effect as to what's going on and who's having affairs with whom and where do they spend all their money? Um, and that applies very easily to celebrities, the same kind of thing. You know, they're who we all have in common. It's easy conversation that we can share. "Hey, what do you think about Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie?"

Grant: Yeah.

Tom: And, ah, same thing with money. They have a lot of money, ah, they try to protect their private lives. We're curious how they spend their money. It's like being in a soap opera, too. These are soap opera characters, and they have these lavish weddings and these grand funerals when they pass away and we're interested in what goes on between the wedding and the funeral.

Grant: Yeah, what about that Renee Zellweger and Kenny Chesney. That kind of took some people by surprise.

Tom: Uh, yeah, I mean she's somebody who's pretty private, ah, and the more private celebrities are, the more we want to know about them. When somebody flaunts their life. You know, I guess, I mean me, Paris Hilton has lasted much longer than any of us thought that she would because she's somebody who flaunts it. And, I mean, she gives everything, every aspect of her life. There's not a lot of curiosity factor yet.

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Grant: Have you ever interviewed Paris?

Tom: Yes I have, a few times.

Grant: So she's pretty open and doesn't, ah, like hide, like oh I don't want to talk about anything personal.

Tom: No she can be that way. In fact, I did a cover story with her and Nicole Richie, and she didn't feel, she wasn't feeling like talking that day. She was pouty and irritable.

Grant: I see (laughs)

Tom: Yeah.

Grant: I'm sure you have to deal with that sometimes. Getting beyond this now for a second, does the fact that *USA Today* reaches such a large national audience give you guys more leeway to give readers a daily dose of celebrity news?

Tom: Oh yeah, that's a great advantage. Um, I mean, we really can beat *People* magazine to the punch. However, with my (inaudible) of stories, I'm battling "Access Hollywood" and "Entertainment Tonight" because if I cover a premiere, say Wednesday night, um, we've already closed the Thursday paper, so my Wednesday premiere coverage can't get in until Friday morning, whereas "Access Hollywood" and "Entertainment Tonight," they're scoops, they report on the premiere the following evening, Thursday evening.

Grant: OK so.

Tom: We have to find a new way, a different way, ah, a more inside way to present the information that I get.

Grant: Do you sometimes have to put a couple paragraphs or half a version of a

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story online the next day to make sure that, you know, at least the online has it or don't they make you do that.

Tom: We don't do that. They don't do that. No, we don't. It does actually go up online. It appears in the evening, the day prior. Stories do come up, you know, around 9 o'clock or 10 o'clock in the evening before the paper comes out.

Grant: Yeah. And obviously, we talked about this a second ago, but do you think younger readers are drawn to this type of coverage, and it's a way of *USA Today* to stay relevant in their lives?

Tom: Online?

Grant: No, the um, just the general celebrity coverage to the national audience.

Tom: Well everybody cares about celebrities, I mean, you know, among those people who do follow that, but I mean the younger people care more about a different set of celebrities.

Grant: Oh, OK so it's like an age, ah . . .

Tom: (inaudible) stars. You know whereas some of the older readers probably care more about the Tom Hankses and the Julia Roberts, you know, that kind of thing.

Grant: Right, so yeah, I see what you're saying, and I'm sure you guys, and I'll talk to others, surveys kind of show this out, that the younger audience wants whoever or . . .

Tom: Yeah, I mean that's just the impression I get from talking to people, the questions I get from young, ah, readers online. Um, and just you know, basic knowledge.

Grant: As far as just defining a celebrity--film and TV stars, musical artists, prominent professional athletes, politicians and authors. Is that a pretty big, ah, I mean I

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guess is it a pretty thorough list of what the paper considers celebrities? Are there some others that I'm not thinking of?

Tom: Well, I mean, um, in terms of what our section does, I would say it's 90 percent movie, and maybe 80 percent movie and television people

Grant: Uh huh.

Tom: And then 10 percent music, and then the rest, ah, you know, I mean sports and, and, and . . .

Grant: Sure.

Tom: We don't do very much on sports figures at all.

Grant: Because, of course, you've got the own, ah,

Tom: Sports section.

Grant: Yeah, and I'm going to be talking to the editor and maybe a writer or two about that whole aspect of sports.

Tom: Yeah, I mean David Beckham has tried to cross over and become more of a personality, but so far, he hasn't really made much of a splash in the U.S.

Grant: Here's an interesting question I kind of want to examine too really quickly.

Tom: Let me just put in one more thing.

Grant: Sure. Please.

Tom: If a sports star all of a sudden gets involved with a music star or a TV actor, then they become of interest. And of course, I'm talking about someone like Lance Armstrong. Since he's dating Sheryl Crow, he's now somebody we cover.

Grant: Oh, OK, yeah when they cross over into your realm then, I see.

Tom: Right, and David Beckham has a much better chance of being covered



## Appendix F (Continued)

because he's with, ah . . .

Grant: Posh.

Tom: Spice, yeah, Victoria.

Grant: Definitely. Um, one thing I want to examine really quickly here. Is there a sacrifice in your opinion *USA Today* makes by publishing celebrity stuff in lieu of more traditional forms of newspaper content. You know, for example hard news, politics, health care, education. Where do you draw the line on that?

Tom: Well, I mean we have sections. I mean the front section is the hard news, and that's, that's what gets priority. It's actually kind of frustrating to us entertainment people who would actually like to see more of our stories on the front page, but, you know, we understand that *USA Today* has a reputation to uphold as a hard news paper, and that's what it provides chiefly. Um, but, you know for the people who care about sports, we have a sports sections, the money people have the green section, and of course, the people who want to know about entertainment, have turned to the purple section first. So I mean it's specialized. Um . . .

Grant: So everybody does have a thing, and so it's not like *USA Today* is, I guess, ah sacrificing space in the name of Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt. It's just a matter of there's a place for it in the paper.

Tom: I mean there have been four sections since the paper began, and, um, you know I mean, ah, again very rarely does entertainment become a front page story, but I mean with "Desperate Housewives," the one that, you know, the one that I did, it really was becoming a phenomenon where, you know, Laura Bush was calling herself desperate housewife.

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Grant: Yeah, that's amazing. (laughs)

Tom: And it's a pop culture thing. So, ah, yeah, I think it's fare every once in a while do a story, and it's become less less so. I think in the early days of *USA Today*, and you gotta double check this, but I remember when I had a subscription in college that there were a lot more entertainment stories on the front.

Grant: Yeah, so that's why I was asking that question earlier, just if celebrities still make their way to the front.

Tom: Yeah, it's top editors and chiefs choices. A lot of the copy is what Max views, ah, as appropriate for the front of his paper.

Grant: I wanted to just ask as far as the public's want for this stuff. When you're out covering these stories, can you tell at some of these premieres or do people really eat this stuff up in your mind?

Tom: Oh yeah. I mean of course there's people who don't care at all about this this stuff, but um, the people who, ah, are into entertainment, they want it more now than ever. I mean if you just walk around any pool at a hotel, you'll just see everybody, mainly women, ah, reading *Us Weekly* and *People* and even the tabloids, and they have piles of, of, of these magazines covering the same stories. Um, but they just can't get enough of it. Even if, if Jessica Simpson's on the cover of *People*, *Us* and say *In Touch*, a lot of people will buy all three just because they want to absorb this, and it's easy to read. It's little paragraphs in those magazines. And *USA Today*, you know, is known for having shorter articles that are easy to quickly read on air or in transit.

Grant: Yes. That's for sure.

Tom: Yeah.

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Grant: Now the other thing is as far as the other competition. Do you have to you mentioned a little earlier, but let's talk about them a little more. These other competition, ah, publications. You talked about *People*, *Us*. Are these places that you are constantly looking at to see what they're doing?

Tom: Yes.

Grant: And tailoring. Like can you just talk about a couple of those?

Tom: Yes, I mean I do. I should read them all every week. But I mean, I, I get busy obviously with my own stories, so I don't always have time. But I think between all of us, we're all aware of what's being covered. Um, I believe the, ah, *People* magazine and *Us Weekly* will actually send us press releases of their big scoops that are coming up, ah, giving us a chance to promote them in advance of their on-sale date, which is what I just did today with the Britney Spears article, so that keeps up to date as to the big stories, their big scoops. But yeah, I mean we flip through them, and you know, I even read the tabloids because even though . . .

Grant: Yes.

Tom: their, a lot of the stuff is questionable, there could be a grain of truth somewhere that I could end up following up with somebody when I talk to them in a big interview. And, and you know it could be the seed of a legitimate bigger story. So I try to read, I try to keep track of it all.

Grant: When you cover out in L.A. I mean, do you kind of write like, well this will play well in the Midwest, but you know, in our papers here in Southern California, you know, may be a different viewpoint than the other people that don't live in that fishbowl.

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Tom: Ah. No, I think that um, I mean what comes to mind with that is that during the, ah, presidential campaigning, there were a lot of celebrity events obviously 99 percent in favor of John Kerry, and so we were careful not to cover so many of those it would be unfair to, ah, you know, bipartisan representation. Um, you know I mean there just weren't that many George Bush celebrity fund-raisers going on.

Grant: Right.

Tom: So I had to miss out on some great events because we felt it wouldn't be fair, um, to cover that. Um, in terms of the question you're asking, um, I think it comes into play with my writing where I'm ah, try to be a little risqué, you know, I think that, ah, what people in L.A. could consume easily perhaps people in the Midwest and South would raise an eyebrow to. So my editors, part of their job is to keep, ah, a certain taste and tone that's appropriate for the entire country.

Grant: I see, and again, with such a large paper and a huge audience base, it can be, um, a challenge sometime to find that line.

Tom: Yeah, you know I mean sometimes I think, you're kidding. You're cutting this? But to them it's a no-brainer that it has to be cut.

Grant: Yeah, now as far as, ah, the Internet. Just really quickly let's talk about these Internet sites that you know, this celebrity. There are a lot of these sites that tone to this. I'm talking legitimate publications, but just even, I can't think of them offhand but they've cropped up where you can just go on there and look for celebrity dirt.

Tom: Yeah. I think the person you should talk to about that is Leo because that's kind of his specialty. He combs those, those, ah, sites daily and always knows what's going on and finds little stories on "Smoking Gun" or "Defamer."

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Grant: Yeah, those are the ones.

Tom: It's really his specialty, so I think you should talk to him about that.

Grant: That's fine. I can do that. Um,

Tom: Great guy.

Grant: I guess, is there anything else we didn't touch on. I think we've, ah, run the gamut here. It's been fascinating talking to you about this.

Tom: Yeah, and if you have anymore questions that come up, feel free to ask me. You know, if you find some new angle you want to talk about just give me a call.

Grant: Excellent. I'll certainly do that, Tom, and I appreciate your time on this to help me get this project out of the way. I'm looking forward to it.

Tom: What do you want to do once you, ah graduate? What do you think you want to get involved in?

Grant: Well I'd love to maybe break into some of this celebrity, but I've been a reporter at a newspaper now for eight years.

Tom: Oh wow.

Grant: I started going to college. Yeah, basically. (taped interview ends)

Appendix G. Interview with Jack, *USA Today* High-Ranking Editor

Jack: *USA Today* was part of a new wave of journalism that began in the early 1980s that included CNN, MTV, *People* magazine, ah, and *USA Today*.

Grant: Right.

Jack: All kind of began at the same time and all carved out different areas of, ah, of coverage and how to handle coverage. Ah, what *USA Today* did, um, and ESPN also came at that the time, what *USA Today* did was not treat everything equally but realize that readers' interests were just as much about sports and their own finances and entertainment as it was about world events and national problems, and, ah, you know, news of the day.

Grant: Uh, huh.

Jack: All newspapers have always covered celebrities and sports and . . . and business, but always in the back of the book in a way.

Grant: Right.

Jack: Uh, what page 1 of *USA Today* has tried to do is not give everything equal play but to show that there is more to a newspaper than just news of the day. There is also a reflection and content that is of, ah, is of interest to all readers and all points of their personality.

Grant: Yeah.

Jack: Um, now when it comes to celebrity news, it's been interesting because we have not . . . we've always stopped at going too overboard.

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Grant: Right.

Jack: Um, on the front page are two display features called ears: one on the right side, one on the left side, which are promos. Um, the one on the right side, it's not written down any place, but just de facto has become the Life for entertainment ear. Um, and usually we'll have news about, ah, Britney getting married, latest films, those kinds of things.

Grant: So more celebrity-prominent than anything you would promo.

Jack: Yeah, we will, um, proudly put that on the front page, and it seems to have some kind of sales impact. If there is major celebrity news, um, we can see a bump in sales.

Grant: That's fantastic.

Jack: At the same time, we don't play it as big as we could . We still are restrained about it. Um, I may get the (inaudible) wrong, but in the early '90s or late '80s. It was a celebrity breakup, there was a divorce, and I forget who it was.

Grant: OK.

Jack: And whoever was editor at the time, the page 1 editor at the time, did a strip story across the front.

Grant: Oh, wow.

Jack: That, um, somebody breaks up with somebody.

Grant: Mm. Hmm.

Jack: Um, which was the talk of the nation at the time, but we all kind of looked at each other the next day and said we thought we had crossed the line, that, um, that isn't quite, um, the best use of space, and there are other ways to communicate that to the

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reader. So we've been, even though our reputation is that we are the celebrity newspaper and the, you know, pop newspaper, when it comes to page 1, um, I still think we're more restrained than people, um, than our image is.

Grant: Fantastic. If you don't mind, ah, I'll just kind of go to these questions, then. That was fantastic. Um, what are the paper's basic guidelines to decide what celebrity news you give readers. Is it simply what editors and writers consider newsworthy and interesting, or is it more than that?

Jack: Ah, I think the combination of celebrity and television...

Grant: OK.

Jack: ... is a pretty potent combination. So, when *American Idol* or *Survivor* or, ah, some of the early reality shows were at their height...

Grant: Right.

Jack: There was a confluence of television and . . . and personality that almost naturally, ah, led to coverage. Not so much on page 1, although we did a lot of it on page 1, but certainly the Life section has embraced the reality format as, ah,

Grant: As a place where people want to read about this stuff.

Jack: Yeah, because you know everybody kind of knows about Brad Pitt and Jen, but you don't really know who the, ah, winner of the *Amazing Race* is and things like that, and I think people do want to read that.

Grant: Good point.

Jack: Ah, so even though me as an editor or as person, I . . . I except for *Survivor*, which I kind of like, um . . .

Grant: Me too.



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Jack: don't really connect with these shows with the recognition that a lot of readers do, and we try to fill that. Um.

Grant: Yeah, this whole new era of celebrity stuff.

Jack: It's interesting when, um, when one of the bigger dichotomies is age. Um, everybody knows the stories back in 1980 when John Lennon died, and I was, I remember I was in a newsroom and had to sort of convince my older editors back in wherever I was that, "Hey, this is a big deal." Um, similarly when Kurt Cobain died . . .

Grant: Yeah.

Jack: . . . um, some of the younger journalists here had to convince people like me that, "Hey, this was more than just . . .

Grant: Inside . . .

Jack: . . . some rocker died. This is a major person, and we played Kurt Cobain as a cover story very big. Um, when somebody like Bob Hope died...

Grant: Right.

Jack: ...it was interesting because, you know, he's been gone for a long time, and while he is hard-wired into a whole generation of older people, if you're 30 or younger,

Grant: You didn't really . . .

Jack: you know who he is, but you've had really no one-on-one contact with him, media wise . . .

Grant: Exactly.

Jack: So, ah, and that's the challenge, to . . . to tell old readers why Jack Lemmon mattered or why, ah, Katherine Hepburn mattered or why Bob Hope mattered or why even Johnny Carson mattered.

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Grant: That's a great, um, analogy.

Jack: At the same time, we need to kinda be hit on the head by our younger staffers that some of these younger stars, um, are influential, you know, whether it's, ah, well I'll sound stupid if I try to list them.

Grant: No, that's fantastic.

Jack: You know, um, that, that ah, especially newspapers, newspapers are an older editorial mix of people. Older than most media people who work there. So you really need younger people to say . . .

Grant: To kind of balance it out or say what's relevant in their lives.

Jack: Right. Right.

Grant: Interesting, now real quick, are celebrity stories just pretty much profiles and court dealing such as divorce, criminal charges along with the new movie and TV, ah, reviews and advances, or does *USA Today* try to do more with the celebrity stuff. Could you sort of explain that a little bit?

Jack: Oh, I think we try to do more with it. Um, it's funny, as someone who's covered politics and sports. Two worlds which are very controlled.

Grant: As, as have I, yeah.

Jack: The entertainment world is even more tightly controlled, I mean, it's almost easier to talk to Hilary Clinton than it is to talk to Hilary Duff.

Grant: (inaudible)

Jack: Um, there is so much surrounding these people.

Grant: Protection, yes.

Jack: Um, and they are very savvy. There is no, there's nothing to gain for a

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celebrity to be honest about what happened on a set or how they feel about a project, so it's really tough to get beyond the celebrity picked at their salad, and, you know, the kind of profiles where we get wonderful detail. But we don't really get to the essence of what the project was all about.

Grant: Right.

Jack: Um, *USA Today* tries very hard to take the celebrity . . .

Grant: Take a different angle, yeah.

Jack: Without being (inaudible).

Grant: Yeah.

Jack: Um, there are some publications that will write around the celebrity, talking to friends, and we almost never do that. We either get the celebrity or we won't.

Grant: Exactly. Now, do you know if, um, there have been any reader surveys about celebrity news, whether these types of stories are content people want to see more of?

Jack: Yeah, it actually scores quite high, um, not to be stereotypical but more with women, um, want to read about that. And so we have it statistically and we also have anecdotally, you know, um, people will say I turn to the Life section.

Grant: The purple section.

Jack: Not so much for the titillation of it, but it's almost like a reality check on what they've seen on the Internet or heard on some of the trashier tabloid shows during the day. Um, and if you read in *USA Today* that Julia Roberts is going to have twins, then there's a lot more credence to the readers, I think then if they see it on some trash Internet site or something like that.

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Grant: Yes. That's very interesting. Now, this kind of gets to the crux of my thesis, and you kind of just hit on it. How much does competition from TV, cable, the Internet and other publications, like "OK" for instance magazine, matter when deciding what and how many stories you guys cover.

Jack: Well that's changing like even as we speak. I mean the Internet is so lightning fast. Um, you know we are assessing as are all newspapers, but especially *USA Today* . . .

Grant: Right.

Jack: . . . how real time to get. If were to get that Britney, is going to have twins, let's say or something like that . . .

Grant: Sure.

Jack: . . . should we wait for tomorrow's paper, which is like, ah, you know, 18 hours from now, or should we put in online right and say [usatoday.com](http://usatoday.com) reports that Britney's going to have twins, and, you know, the brand gets the credit. I think that's the world we're headed for.

Grant: Right.

Jack: Um, but it's something that newspapers and journalists struggle with. Um, at the same were not so competitive that we will go without corroborating, um, you know we won't just put something out there, cross our fingers and hope.

Grant: So and so said that this is true.

Jack: Yeah, I mean our sourcing rules are pretty solid. In fact, more solid, more stringent than almost anybody in the industry lately. And it goes, I mean it goes to entertainment news as well. We also are, an old trick in journalism is a publication says it

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so therefore you can print that a publication says it. And do no reporting at all, but you'll drive home thinking we did the journalistic right thing. We're not said she's having twins, you know, but Drudge says she's having twins or whatever. We increasingly don't do that, um, and either try to confirm it ourselves or let things circulate a little. Things are almost moving too fast, and you can easily fabricate an entire news cycle of stories, um, if you use the Internet right. Um, and we're quite aware of that and try to avoid that. Um, so I think in competition, everybody loves a scoop, and it's great to break something.

Grant: Right.

Jack: But, um, I think what *USA Today* has, what newspapers have, is there's sort of a real deal to a newspaper. If you see it in a newspaper, I think it has more credibility than it does if you read it on the Internet or if somebody says it on television. I . . . I think people do believe something if they see it on television. I'm not sure they believe it too much.

Grant: But is it a matter of having to give, on the other hand, give them a sense of celebrity news and a steady diet of this stuff or risk becoming irrelevant where they're going to have to go to these other places to get that fix or to get these stories about these celebrities?

Jack: Yeah, but I mean . . .

Grant: Do you have to stay up, I guess, with the Joneses.

Jack: Yeah, yeah, but we're not moving away from that. I mean our celebrity coverage, ah, is pretty ratcheted up, and we're working like as we speak on projects with online . . .

Grant: Right.

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Jack: . . . and to try to be more . . . hotter.

Grant: This is an interesting thing. Is there a thought process to make sure *USA Today* has celebrity coverage so readers don't have to go elsewhere for it? I mean do you want to be the uniform voice so they don't have to go get their "Extra" and . . .

Jack: Yeah, in its highest form, we'd like to create an environment online where we become almost an exclusive place for celebrity news. Um, and that's a high goal.

Grant: That's a great goal, though.

Jack: You know. We're not there yet. Nobody has that. Right now, if you want to know the score, you go to *Sports Illustrated* or "ESPN." If you want to know the news, you go to *USA Today* or CNN. If you wanna know if Britney had her baby, you go a lot of places. There's not that one hard-wired place yet. I'm not sure that will be done, but it would be cool if it were done, so um . . .

Grant: That's a very interesting aspect. Real quick, film and TV stars, musical artists, prominent pro athletes, ah, some politicians and authors. Is that a pretty thorough list of what the paper considers celebrity, or am I leaving someone out.

Jack: No, I think TV is Number 1. You know movie stars and music.

Grant: Yeah, like the big rock stars.

Jack: Music isn't what it used to be. Um, and there's that whole other world of, you know, celebrities without portfolios who, um, we don't really cover them that much. We'll deal with them when they're on the celebrity shows.

Grant: Sure.

Jack: And reality shows, but um, and we've also, I guess (inaudible) like what we've talked about, like we won't run, ah, perform-lens paparazzi shots or ah, we

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actually have a rule against that. We don't deal with some of these.

Grant: In fact, I'm, um, talking to John tomorrow. Now this is your expertise, Jack, and we talked about it a little bit, but in general how often does the front page become a place where *USA Today* will publish a story about a celebrity or celebrities? Um, like I said, Michael Jackson, I mean, it has to be something, it has to to be something that, ah, a trend or, or, a big breaking news story about their, um, their criminal history, I don't know.

Jack: Um.

Grant: I know *Desperate Housewives* was out there.

Jack: Well, we always want some celebrity. It's rare if I don't have a celebrity on the front page in some way. And not just, I don't mean celebrity like blonde celebrity, but some kind of . . .

Grant: Right, I know what you mean.

Jack: you know, personality. Um, it's not that I haven't looked. It means that, you know, we're short that day. But almost every day we have the world of celebrity represented. It actually comes to the page as a story maybe only once every two weeks, if that. Um, usually it's a cover story of a major movie, an interview with Spielberg we had out there.

Grant: That was good, yeah.

Jack: Um.

Grant: The Jackson verdict of course.

Jack: Yeah, the Jackson verdict. Um, the Blake verdict we might have had that out there.

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Grant: Yeah, that may have been, right.

Jack: Um, but we will not, just regular celebrity news or a celebrity scandal, we won't take that out unless it is the absolute moment.

Grant: Thank you much. (phone rings). We were talking about, ah, the front.

Jack: You know we had the breast incident from the Super Bowl.

Grant: Oh, the Janet Jackson thing.

Jack: We ran a photo of that, not the photo, but the Monday after the Super Bowl . . .

Grant: Yes.

Jack: It wasn't me, but the night side was quick enough to realize this was going to be something we have on the front page and then we do something the next day, um . . .

Grant: So they do get out there.

Jack: You know, once something, yeah, if it's the talk of the nation. Much like sports. For sports to be a story out front, it needs to be steroids or something

Grant: Rafael.

Jack: that brought changes in the landscape.

Grant: Exactly.

Jack: And not just, ah, you know . . .

Grant: Is there a feeling, ah, that these types of stories are widely read, these celebrity-type stories, by other newsroom editors and writers? I mean, kind of, I don't want to say guilty pleasure, but do you get feedback like that that these are or nothing like that (inaudible).

Jack: Ah, no yeah, I think, I think sometimes, and I've heard this, that, you know,



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Janet Jackson's a perfect example.

Grant: Right.

Jack: You know I heard that *USA Today* knew that was a story and how come we didn't? Um, now you wouldn't hear that the *New York Post* or the *Daily News* or, um, in L.A. where, you know, they are pretty fast and sure-footed on those things.

Grant: Right.

Jack: But for most of the newspaper industry, they are sometimes slow to recognize phenomenon. And, ah, you know, it isn't guilty at all. I think we lead the way on recognizing, ah, you know, glitzy stories that have legitimate content. And, um, you know Michael Jackson, for as, you know, unpleasant as it was, and as big a circus as it was . . .

Grant: Yes. (laughs).

Jack: You know that story had actual content in it, you know, about the justice system, about race, about . . .

Grant: Just like O.J.

Jack: Right. The music industry, about, um, power. About, ah, sex (laughs).

Grant: Indeed.

Jack: Drugs and even rock & roll. So, um.

Grant: Has *USA Today* done tracking to see what celebrity stories on the Web site get a lot of hits? Generally, do you track that stuff?

Jack: Oh yeah.

Grant: I'm told they're one of the most popular.

Jack: Yeah, I mean they would, they can give you actual numbers.

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Grant: Yeah, I'll get those, um. (brief pause) I just have a couple more questions, Jack. Do you need to stop?

Jack: No, no, no (inaudible).

Grant: Um, historically, I've found that celebrity coverage in newspapers from about, oh, 1920s to present day has been a big part of newspaper coverage. Ah, why do you as a journalist think that is? Is it just this whole American dream, you know they're larger than life some people can't get enough of them or what do you make of it? Why is this, you know, 80, 90 years later, still, you know, you sending people to Hollywood?

Jack: And if you look back into the 1800s and the, you know, the smaller, but, you know, even those theatrical . . .

Grant: Ty Cobb around 1900. He was a celebrity of his time.

Jack: Yeah. Even those theatrical stars. Um, well I don't know, you know, ah, I don't know. Um, I think people like to live bigger or different than the way they live, and you can both aspire to be a celebrity and say "wow, what a nice house," but you can also, when they stumble, feel superior to a celebrity.

Grant: Yeah.

Jack: And um, so you can, you know, you can aspire to be a Michael Jackson and you can also like ridicule Michael Jackson. And, ah, I think it's all those things. Um, I personally, you know, I think attaining celebrity is not an easy thing. I mean, you know, for all the cheap celebrities and, and things. I think if you're a pop star or if you're a Britney. Or if you're, ah . . .

Grant: Jessica Simpson.

Jack: . . . on a sitcom, you know, you may be scorned by a lot of people, but you

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really usually worked pretty hard, and ah, are pretty driven. And I think that drive leads to excesses of both talent and behavior, and I think people are just fascinated to see people who are living so fast intellectually and physically and mentally and sexually . . .

Grant: Yes.

Jack: . . . and all those ways, emotionally. That is, ah, you're watching something very special even if sometimes it's a car wreck. And, ah, you know, it's just a sure-fire human story.

Grant: Cool. Does the fact *USA Today* reaches such a large national audience give you guys more leeway to give readers a daily dose of celebrity news? Like what maybe other newspapers don't have?

Jack: More leeway. Um . . .

Grant: Or more space.

Jack: Well, it's part of our success. It's part of our journalistic formula.

Grant: Yes.

Jack: I mean, um, *USA Today* is, is four sections, and we don't sometimes have a food section or sometimes have real estate. We every day have four sections.

Grant: Yes.

Jack: And readers might miss that we don't have real estate every day, but they sure know what we do have every day. And one of the things we have every day is entertainment and celebrities. And, ah, it isn't like whether we'll cover it that day. It's what kind of celebrity coverage we'll have that day.

Grant: Yeah.

Jack: And I think it's just built into the structure of both the newspaper and the

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product. I think our national reach just gives us more, more clout.

Grant: Yeah.

Jack: The negotiations that go on are just unbelievable.

Grant: Do you think younger readers are drawn to this type of coverage? I mean, your surveys again.

Jack: Ah.

Grant: To try to stay relevant, in other words, do you have to, is this a way to kind of get them into the newspaper habit, this celebrity stuff?

Jack: I would hope so. It doesn't, you know, younger readers are not reading newspapers almost no matter what we do.

Grant: Uh huh. It's sad.

Jack: So, um, but sure it's an entry point, and if they're going to read any section of the paper, I would, I would hope the Life section would be part of it. Um, we had an editor here once who, um, use to wave away the young problem and say "you know young readers have the same concerns as older people." They care about money, they care about where they live, they care about relationships.

Grant: Yep.

Jack: And if you cover those things well, they will always come. Um, I still believe that. I think newspapers are becoming more of a niche. Upscale by kind of the legitimate end of the, the, spectrum. Um, and I think they can survive. I think prices will rise and readership will fall, but I think it's still the core reader in the country. (phone rings).

Grant: Yeah, so like you said. Younger readers, it's not, ah, a critical end, but, but

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it's tough to bring them in anyway.

Jack: Well on Friday, we did, um--I'll be critical--we did something on best driving songs.

Grant: (laughs). OK.

Jack: And, we asked different people to name their best driving song. And for good or bad, it was kind of the list you would expect. Ah, "Freeway of Love" by Aretha Franklin, ah, probably "Born to be Wild" was on there.

Grant: "Born to be Wild" (laughs).

Jack: Those kinds of songs. And I couldn't find very much that was a little bit younger, now having a daughter, I remember in the '90s there was song called "Dim" by Dada, which was, um, again this car going fast...

Grant: Yes.

Jack: which is, you know, is a really cool song. But there's nothing like that on that list, and I just wonder if I'm 22, you know, and it's a cool concept, songs to sing while you're driving,

Grant: Oh, I know.

Jack: . . . that we didn't reflect anything that's happened since 1981 musically.

Grant: (laughs). Oh man.

Jack: You know.

Grant: Certainly there had to be a few.

Jack: Right, and, you know, I didn't look at the list, and I'm sure it could be disproven if we looked at the list. But, you know, it was clearly...

Grant: Vintage. Yeah.

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Jack: Old time rock and roll. Which good for them. Good for that era, but you know, at the same, we just have to skew younger. We have to done it with celebrities. We haven't quite done it in some of the areas we cover.

Grant: Now, Jack you mentioned earlier about how there are stricter guidelines and journalism ethics in *USA Today* versus, like the tabloids for instance or even the TV talk shows and things. But how does celebrity gossip find its way into mainstream media such as *USA Today*?

Jack: Well, it's tough. I mean there's a lot we just don't print because we can't, um, ah . . .

Grant: Corroborate it?

Jack: Yeah, corroborate it to our satisfaction. Ah, we certainly in old stupid newspaper tricks, if, if, you know, if a Web site or an Internet site prints something, and well it's up to them to prove it or disprove it. But we, we, have a higher standard than that, whether it's an unnamed administration source or someone saying that some movie star stormed off the set. Um, we need to reach the star's publicist. We need to get somebody on the record. We need to have a sense of, ah, how the story was gotten. You know, if *People*, reports something, that has more credence than if some Internet site reports something. But even in the case of *People*, they have run stuff, they've had exclusives on marriages and things that we felt, you know, comfortable chasing because *People* said it online, but when it came to printing it, we really pulled back in a lot of the quotes, the blind quotes and things like that, ah, we didn't run. Ah, when Jennifer Aniston, if I have her name right, spoke to *Vanity Fair*, ...

Grant: Uh. Huh.

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Jack: I think we did pick up the quotes and told *Vanity Fair*. But if *Vanity Fair* had said Jennifer sounded devastated and was crying or something, we definitely wouldn't simply put that. Once we had, you know, we're confident that Jennifer Aniston had actually spoke to them. So you have to pick and chose, but in the end it's all credibility and our relationship with readers. And, um, better be late and right than early and wrong.

Grant: A great saying.

Jack: You know . . .

Grant: Exactly, two more questions. How much does the public's want for celebrity stories play a part in the decisions that you guys make on a daily basis. I mean, do you always keep them in mind, um, do you have a pulse on what people want, or is it pretty much just the journalistic formula, this looks like it's going to be good, we don't need the public's, um . . .

Jack: Well we don't . . .

Grant: We think it will play well in Peoria.

Jack: We know generally from surveys that people want celebrity news, um.

Grant: OK. So you feed that desire..

Jack: I don't think, ah, ratings matter, if a TV show is hot or you know we're always going to write more about *War of the Worlds* than we are going to write about *The Island*.

Grant: Oh sure.

Jack: If *The Island* had been a big hit, we'd write more about Scarlet Johansen, and, you know, and her first action role. But because that wasn't a hit, um, you know

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(inaudible) even though Scarlet Johansen in an action role might have been an interesting story.

Grant: Uh huh.

Jack: Um, so you do sort of bounce off ratings and box office receipts and (inaudible).

Grant: That's interesting.

Jack: Um, at the same time, you know, a story's a story. And, um, you know, we probably don't write some things that we should just because, maybe it isn't (fast or advanced or fresh) enough, but that may get back to your question about being a national, you know . . .

Grant: Yes.

Jack: We don't really have the luxury sometimes to do just something that's interesting. It's gotta have a show or

Grant: It's gotta have an edge.

Jack: you know, so we're not big on whatever happened to stories or, ah.

Grant: Oh I see whatever happened, you know, 20 years later. Um, the last question, it's something I really think you can shed some light on. It's kind of a fundamental question. Is there a sacrifice *USA Today* makes by publishing celebrity stuff in lieu of more traditional forms of newspaper content, i.e. hard news, politics, health care, education.

Jack: Um, I don't think so. Um, if we put Britney on the front page, you see her more than you see our story on health care even though we have three times more coverage of health care than we do of Britney, it's hard to see.



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Grant: Ah. So . . .

Jack: So I think casual people look at us and say, “Oh, they cover Britney. That’s the paper that covers Britney Spears.” Um, and I think it’s more of an image thing than reality. I know it’s more of an image thing than reality. Um, you know, we’re a good, solid, um, very traditional newspaper. And we cover all the issues of the day, ah, with limitations just on our expertise and our space. And we also cover celebrities, um, and if we look more of a celebrity newspaper than everybody else, um, I think it’s because we simply recognize that readers have an interest in that. The day Peter Jennings died, we made him lead art. And did two stories. Every other newspaper had him on the front page, but very few had him as lead art. *New York Times* had a story under the fold. *Washington Post* had a story maybe over the fold but not very boldly. Um, I’m sorry Peter Jennings dying is a moment . . .

Grant: In time.

Jack: . . . in both the culture and, you know, and media history, and ah, but we, we had plenty of other coverage that day. So I think we may pay the price in image. I don’t think we pay the price in actual coverage. Um, and I’ll take a few, ah, I don’t know, traditionalists rumblings if we can engage with the reader more and maybe get people who wouldn’t usually read a newspaper to read a newspaper.

Grant: That’s a great analysis.

Jack: It’s ah, you know, we have plenty of gray news in *USA Today*.

Grant: Because purists would say, you know, they’d rather have all of this and maybe one page of that celebrity stuff, ah...

Jack: Right.

## Appendix G (Continued)

Grant: But that's kind of an extremist point of view. People who I've talked to so far said there's a balance in all four sections that build off each other. And if you want the hard news stuff, go to the front and you're gonna get it, you're gonna get in-depth, ah, coverage.

Jack: Um, and again, I don't think this argument, people get it because they just see a picture of Britney where she's pretty and she's bright and it's all colorful.

Grant: Mm. Hmm.

Jack: Um, but you know those stories are not on the front page as stories. But you know, they're certainly what I'm trying to attract people's eyes to. And, you know, our biggest sales are not Britney but when we have, you know, traditional journalism, when there's a big news story, when we break a big story. Um, if we have something nobody else has, that's where the value is in the media today. News is cheap. You can get news anywhere now. You can't just go out and cover the news anymore. You can't just go to a hearing, write it up, write a story about it and call that newspapering anymore. Because, you know, you have to bring something new to the table. And, that's what sells, actually. When we have a scoop or when we have a story that's an exclusive, our interview with, ah, Eric Rudolph's mother . . .

Grant: Oh.

Jack: A couple weeks ago, maybe a month ago, um, sales were very robust on that. Why? Because it wasn't, you know, the cable news miniseries of the week, it was only *USA Today* had talked to Eric Rudolph's mother. Only we had his letters from prison. And, you know, that was quite a buzz reflect that.

Grant: Compelling. And even Steven Spielberg, the fact that he talked about, you

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know, how all of his movies mattered, and that's an interesting angle.

Jack: Right. Right, it wasn't an empty the making of *War of the Worlds* by Spielberg, but it was like what family meant to him . . .

Grant: Yes.

Jack: And why he'd redo *Close Encounters* if he could, and, um, that's why we took it out front because he was actually saying something.

Grant: Yes. (laughs) exactly.

Jack: Um.

Grant: OK, um I cannot thank you enough Jack for taking the time with me. This is going to be a great project.

Jack: And that worked (the cassette recorder)?

Appendix H. Interview with *usatoday.com* Editors Fred and Eileen

Grant: What are the paper's basic guidelines to decide what celebrity stories you give readers? Is it simply what editors and writers consider newsworthy or is it more than that?

Fred: Let me. This is helpful, let me step back before we answer that question . . .

Grant: OK.

Fred: And kind of paint the picture. To some extent, we're largely dependent on decisions, ah, that the paper makes . . .

Grant: OK.

Fred: . . . and then we augment that with wire and some of our own content. Um, so that's kind of a mix that's going on. The other thing is that we started out 10 years ago being largely a reflection of the Life section. And about five years ago, we made the decision that we were going to pull out all the Better Life stuff and focus Life online, ah, strictly on entertainment and celebrity and so forth.

Grant: OK.

Fred: Um, having gripping cancer stories side by side on the same home front didn't work very well.

Grant: Yes. Indeed.

Eileen: Most of the, Better Life just for clarification is all the health and education and all the other part.

Grant: Is the second cover, yeah. The inside parts.

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Fred: And we actually moved that into news. I mean it's just, it's a reflection of the fact that, um, I think online particularly, although the sort of four brands, sections, um, have a great deal of brand, um, they work as more narrowly focused, ah, when it's online. Um, part of the interactive experience is that you come expecting a certain type of thing. If it includes too much variation you know, day to day, they can't quite, you know, if it's different than the last day they came to it, it's potentially alienating.

Grant: Oh, OK.

Fred: So, that's kind of an overarching thing that's guided our news judgment. Um.

Grant: That's fascinating.

Fred: It stays pretty consistent with . . .

Grant: That totally answers this.

Fred: Um, I think beyond that we try to reflect the same values as the paper does.

Grant: Sure.

Fred: Um, It's a little tricky. You may want to address this how we, the way wire stories, you know, we're put in the position of having to make a judgment that otherwise when reporting your sources, as to whether to go with something from the wires, depending on how well sourced it is and so forth. Um, but we're trying to stay aligned with the way the paper would treat it. With one exception, um, and one that's going to be coming increasingly important, and that is the whether the referential. Um, the newspaper can draw four walls around its content and say this is what we choose to publish and what we're willing to stand behind.

Grant: Yeah.

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Fred: We have to recognize that our audience is out there surfing a bunch of different sites and may well be aware of things, and we look a little clueless if we sort of refuse to acknowledge that it's out there. So part of what we're learning how to do is how do we, um, how do we clue people into that information without attaching our credibility and our brand to it? And that makes it hard.

Grant: Right, and I know this blog has been a way to kind of hint at these things.

Fred: Right, yeah, yeah, so, that, that I would describe as still a work in progress.

Grant: OK.

Fred: Our view is if it can be done without undermining the confidence and trust in the brand, as long as we're clear about what we're doing, and finding the right words, the right graphic presentation to distinguish between the stuff we've absolutely confirmed and the stuff we're saying somebody else reported.

Grant: Yes. Said *Us Weekly* or something.

Fred: Yeah, yeah, and it's, it's not even, you know there are things the paper wouldn't attribute to *Us Weekly*, I mean.

Grant: Right, yeah, you have a different journalistic standard when it comes to sourcing policies, I know. And that's kind of the crux of the thesis as well.

Eileen: Ah.

Fred: But not.

Grant: It's different.

Eileen: I'm sure if that's, ah.

Fred: That's not entirely accurate. I mean, we, we have the same standards with regard to sourcing. So for example, if we're . . .

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Grant: Oh, you do with the paper, with the print.

Fred: We have the same standards as print with sourcing if we're writing the story

Grant: What I'm saying is *USA Today* as a brand has a higher source than *People*.

Fred: Yes.

Eileen: OK.

Fred: Yes, yes, yes. Right.

Grant: That's the clarification. Are celebrity stories pretty much just profiles and court dealings such as divorce, criminal charges along with new movies, TV shows, who's pregnant, or does *USA Today* try to do more with the celebrity coverage.

Eileen: Yeah. Oh, that's a great question actually because I think *USA Today* does do more. And one of the things we have realized, um, and have articulated a little bit is where do we stand in relationship to other people.

Grant: Yeah.

Eileen: And I think what the paper does well is to um, a couple of things. One is to, um, bring things down to a level where it means something to you. So last year for instance, "Desperate Housewives" was a big phenomenon.

Grant: Yes.

Eileen: And so then paper did a story about, um, moms, real moms who dress like those desperate housewives and picked up on the outfits and things like that.

Grant: Yes.

Eileen: And that's what, you know, everyone else is going nuts over *Desperate Housewives*, and we're now then saying here's what that really means to you or, you know, why your next door neighbor could look like a desperate housewife and how she

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feels about that.

Grant: So taking a neat angle like that is really what (inaudible).

Eileen: So it brings it down to, um, gets what called hot housewives, and that's become sort of our code word that sort of takes a national trend if you will . . .

Grant: Yes.

Eileen: . . . and really personalizes it. And then I think the other thing it does is to try to get as much as possible to sort of the real person behind celebrity. So a lot of other places seem to be heavily focused on, the, you know, I'll give you an example.

Grant: Sure.

Eileen: Jennifer Garner and Ben Affleck.

Grant: Yeah.

Eileen: Pregnant, getting married, blah, blah, blah. We had that, but one of the other things, that, again the paper's approach to it and our link to the Web site is that, um, we learned that she's from a small town in the Midwest. And every week she goes to the farmer's market in Los Angeles.

Grant: OK.

Eileen: Which is this big open-air market, and it's very casual and so the reporting delving in one more time the same old same old got the exclusive access because they trust us to be fair and accurate to sort of spend the morning with her hanging in her favorite haunt at this farmer's market.

Grant: Wow.

Eileen: Because that was who she was. And so I think that one thing you can see is that for a newspaper compared to a celebrity-oriented magazine such as *Vanity Fair* . . .



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Grant: Right.

Eileen: . . . is that we have an enormous amount of access because they know us and they trust us. And yet we have it without having to give up the things that magazines, for instance, will give up, which is, um, approval of photos, approval of who gets to write the stories, things like that. So we sort of carved . . .

Grant: Paying for paparazzi photos that may have put the celebrity in a little bit of a disadvantage.

Eileen: Yeah. We've, we've carved our own niche by, um, staying true to kind of going back to your original question about sourcing. That we're going to be accurate and we're going to be fair about them just the way we are about everything or striving finally to be that, and we've taken that, leveraged that and created a niche for ourselves and celebrity, um, journalism.

Grant: And it's totally apparent. Um, have there been any reader surveys or in this case online surveys about celebrity news and whether these types of stories are content people want to see more of?

Fred: Yeah, I mean we do, um, I'm trying to think what the last survey that we did. We do, um, we have access to a couple different kind of data. One is, um, an (At Plan), which a plan owned by (inaudible) . . .

Grant: Uh huh.

Fred: um, and potentially does one of the surveys where they can find out the types of activities and interests that your audience has, including certain age.. We do pop-up surveys on the site. From time to time, we poll people.

Grant: But what about um, even Chloe said these weekly, you guys have the

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charts on what getting the most hits.

Eileen: Yeah, we do.

Grant: She says top five almost week in and week out is something celebrity.

Fred: Yeah.

Eileen: There's no question about it.

Fred: It has a resolute with readers. I (inaudible) in the polling, but Life is now No. 2 behind News, um, on the yeah, based on readership and popularity. It used to be sports. Ah, in 20 year . . .

Grant: So you've recently overtaken sports with Money probably a distant fourth. Wow.

Fred: We've seen the corollary of that online. We're now one of the top five, in a very highly regarded poll, one of the top five entertainment news Web sites.

Grant: She must mentioned entertainment, ah, Web sites.

Fred: You know, it seems to be the combination of coverage we're describing and I think the overall sense of brand and how people encounter it. You know where they pick it up when they use it and things like that.

Grant: The overall formula for success is definitely there then.

Eileen: And I think what the Web site does is do what the paper did at its founding, which was then sort of radical. They listed stories on the front page that people would want to read about, and, but do them in a way that doesn't leave you sort of slimy.

Grant: Right.

Eileen: I mean, the, the, the, you know Life section of the *USA Today*. You know, it's like a lot people wouldn't be caught dead reading *Us Weekly* in front of their friends.

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Grant: Right.

Eileen: But it's perfectly fine to read *USA Today Life* either online or in print because it covers things that are interesting, but they do it in an appropriate way, and also you can trust it as a filter. We're gonna say no they 'no can come and get the stuff that's interesting, keep them clued in.'(?)

Grant: Incredible.

Eileen: Yeah.

Grant: And you're gonna get that stuff, but you're gonna get it in a way that's maybe more responsible or?

Eileen: As opposed to rolling around the gutter like everybody else.

Grant: Right.

Fred: It's also as, um, and why I talk about this, is, in terms of trying to find the identity and certain positioning of some of these other competitors is to win and stay clean at it. On popular culture, what's going on, do I care without being totally immersed in it and obsessed and make them feel like a tawdry *People* magazine reader.

Grant: Yes.

Fred: You know, you want to know enough to be able to banter to somebody in the hallway or at the water cooler, but um, it's not your first obsession.

Grant: Now this is kind of the crux, this next question, of my thesis. I'm just curious about this. How much competition from TV, cable, these Internet sites, other publications, *Us Weekly*, *OK* magazine, matter when deciding what and how many stories you guys cover when it comes to celebrities? Is this a daily thing where you're looking at these other sites and figuring out "Oh we didn't get that," or "Oh they beat us on this, but

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we beat them on this”? How much does competition play into all of this?

Eileen: I mean, I would say we're certainly aware of it, but kind of like going back to what we discussed, um, who we are works well for us and as we look at it, the initial ideals that form the brand at the outset and have become very successful for us, we think really works. So again, you look at an *OK* magazine. They are, um, flat-out admittedly paying for that content. How much of that can you trust? So, it's interesting that there's more and more stuff in the space, and in a way it's almost bolstered what we are able to bring a different spin to it. So, it would worry me more if *The New York Times* decided to get into celebrity in a big way because then they would bring formidable journalistic, um, troops as well as ethics and policies to it.

Grant: Right.

Eileen: One more celebrity magazine doesn't worry me that much.

Fred: So much of what you're describing, so much of what drives the competition is fundamentally, is this total information of, of, volume and wanting to know everything that's going on.

Grant: I see.

Fred: And we're as much subject to that onslaught as they are. So, you know, once you know how they play these things, and you know what coming over the pass, the amount of unexpected original stuff that shows up in their pages is pretty low.

Grant: But isn't it a matter, though, the philosophy that if you don't give them a steady diet of celebrity news, they're going to be going elsewhere for it, and you're going to become perhaps even more irrelevant? More on the print side when I talk about that, but I mean still.

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Eileen: Yeah, because they're . . .

Grant: If you don't give them a diet of this stuff, they won't come to you.

Eileen: Well, we've always given them the steady diet, and that's what made us work. I mean, I'm serious.

Fred: (laughs) Yeah.

Grant: OK.

Eileen: That was the founding of the newspaper.

Grant: Twenty-five years.

Eileen: Which, unlike most newspapers, where it was, you know we used to call them spinach stories, dull but important, you know, *USA Today* actually said "We gotta . (inaudible), pretty interesting, a talker in 14 paragraphs, and people want to know that."

Grant: Yes, 20 years.

Eileen: And so, it's what the paper has always done, and it's almost like the times have caught up to the newspaper, in a way. Not the paper *The New York Times*, but the, the era we live in has caught up.

Grant: But we're in a new Internet age, though, where cable TV and everybody has come out, E! Online, and it's just inundated. You guys did it 30 years ago when it was perhaps, you were the innovators, but now, it seems like you've got to continuously improve this product because there are so many places to get it.

Fred: There are, but they're doing it on the cheap. And the difference is, is we're putting reporting substance against it.

Grant: OK.

Fred: And so sure we reflect whether we, whether it's a wire story or a (inaudible)

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story or a brief. We will give, and this is talked about news more than any place else with coverage, is what we're trying to, um, do with our stories is take those, and then have, there's a different kind of voracity to them.

Grant: Creative angle.

Fred: Yeah or angle. A different view in on celebrity, that um.

Eileen: Or just to go on what Fred was saying or to even expand beyond, you know, purely journalistic approach to looking at it. What *USA Today* also did was to present things um, in, um, digestible packages.

Grant: Yes.

Eileen: To do it in a creative way, in a fun way, and so what the Web has allowed us to do is to take like a quick question that is written in a sassy way that goes right to the heart of what it is. It's kind of fun to play in. Um, just like the newspaper was colorful, and that alone made it seem kind of interesting and different.

Fred: In order to do like recap on reality TV, which originated on here . . .

Grant: People love that.

Fred: . . . as well as downstairs, and, you know, it's something that we started that they picked up.

Grant: It's a popular site.

Eileen: So it's less about, "Oh, there's *OK* magazine coming out. We have to do something." It's more about the Web allows us to take what the paper has done and expand on it or to take their approach and do original things that they want in this environment.

Grant: OK.

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Eileen: So it's not fueled by the competition. It's fueled more by the possibility and the ability to extend the brand, whether it's our journalistic, um, ah, ethics or its our visual approach, or it's our very clear tone. It just pushes it out further.

Grant: Excellent.

Eileen: I wanted to make that point.

Grant: I'm glad you did. But is there a thought process to make sure *USA Today* has celebrity so readers don't have to go elsewhere for it? Like you can be the one all, be all?

Eileen: Um.

Grant: Or do you guys kind of, I don't know, if it's them or realize that people will go.

Fred: I don't, I don't think there's . . .

Eileen: There's never going to be a one all, be all.

Fred: . . . ah, one-stop shopping. That's a safe bet.

Grant: But you guys don't have that goal.

Fred: What I think you have to aspire to is a kind of distinctive edge. Um, whether it's a large audience or small-type audience as your target, you have to identify something that sets you apart. And you build your content . . .

Grant: Around that.

Fred: That brings people back. Um, ethics, you'd want to be one of three places they go, hopefully. Um, but trying to be all inclusive comprehensive and provide them with everything is a difficult possibility.

Eileen: Or you could look at Yahoo and my favorite example.

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Grant: A reputable entertainment site.

Eileen: Yeah, it's OK, I mean. But what they do, for instance, if you look at their photo gallery, they'll go, they'll go and pick up stuff on the wire and something like that, and it's, you know, every single shot of Angelina Jolie walking on the red carpet. That's totally inclusive. There's 40 pictures of her. Three of them are good.

Grant: OK (laughs).

Eileen: The rest of them blurred, head the other way, not a great shot, blah, blah, blah. You can argue that Yahoo is trying to be the be all, one-stop shopping, but I as a busy person might really rather just see the two great shots of Angelina Jolie.

Grant: Yes.

Eileen: And you know, maybe, so that was more where we were going with it. That's what we were bring to the party there, and sometimes less really is more.

Grant: Uh huh. That's a good point. This is just a laundry list, but you guys can help me with. I'm trying to further define this whole celebrities. Film and TV stars, musical artists, prominent professional athletes, some politicians and authors, is that a pretty thorough list? Am I missing something, maybe some preachers.

Eileen: Famous for being famous.

Grant: Oh yes, this whole new concept of reality stars that are all of a sudden.

Eileen: Yeah. But there is this whole phenomenon now of people who are just, they just, there is really no reason for them to be famous if you look at it. Paris Hilton is a perfect example.

Grant: All right. And that's what you guys focus on. I mean you don't do much with the you know, famous politicians or even, like someone mentioned the CEOs like



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Bill Gates. You don't really focus on that stuff much. It's mostly the Hollywood angle, right.

Fred: Authors we do.

Grant: Authors yeah?

Eileen: Although it's interesting because I hadn't been here that long, and, um, when Bill Clinton had his heart attack, and Chloe had it on the Life section, and I went to her and said, why are you, this is a news story. She said "He's an author. He's a best-selling author." And I went you know what, you're absolutely right.

Grant: (laughs).

Eileen: And I thought about it, and I talked to Manny about it and said you know, and he goes, he had a (inaudible) response to it. He said it didn't bother him to have it there, so it was OK to leave it up.

Fred: But the other thing too with Clinton is he was a rock star.

Eileen: He was a rock star.

Fred: First he was a rock star. He was the ultimate celebrity.

Grant: He was, definitely.

Eileen: Now will George Bush be there, I don't know. But you may argue that (inaudible) might be, for instance.

Grant: Moving onto a different subject area. You guys have a news online focus, but in general, how often does the front page become a place where *USA Today* will publish a story about a celebrity or celebrities? The Jackson verdict comes to mind.

Fred: Well constantly, but it goes back to the paper's content from the day it was founded is sports, entertainment, money and news.

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Grant: I know the promo is, Jack told me it's almost a conscious effort to get a celebrity up there every day, upper right. But as far as the *Desperate Housewives* trend, the Steven Spielberg story. Yeah, there's been some covers that have been celebrity, but I don't think you guys do it that often. Maybe three or four times a month.

Eileen: Way more than any other newspaper in the country. I can pretty much guarantee that.

Fred: On the Web site, by and large the main centerpiece is the hard news, and the sports and entertainment stuff . . .

Grant: Builds around it.

Fred: . . . is on the periphery.

Eileen: The one thing that we have that the paper doesn't is 24/7, which includes Saturday and Sunday. So for instance, um, we blogged Live Aid with correspondents here and in the bureau, and that, um, was on the weekend. The paper might have if they had published on a Saturday or a Sunday, had that blog front and center with the art and everything.

Grant: It was huge.

Eileen: Yeah, so I mean.

Grant: Is there a feeling these stories are widely read by other newsroom editors and writers. The celebrity stuff?

Eileen: Internally or . . .

Grant: Both. Like do you get feedback from sports people about stories you guys do or from outsiders, someone in business says nice job this week. Um.

Fred: I don't know does Debbie hear about that? It's more likely that print.

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Grant: The print reporters hear the feedback. That's fine.

Eileen: Although I would say as a newcomer here, I will say there's a certain amount of respect at the newspaper for that beat unlike other newspapers, and the paper is widely regarded as doing a good job and also here the entertainment section is outstanding when compared to other Web sites. That's the quality we share.

Grant: Yeah. Now historically in my research so far I've found that celebrity coverage from about the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, maybe the '20s a little bit, has been a big part of newspaper coverage and continues to be today? Why do you as a journalist think that is? This whole longevity. Why are people so fascinated by this stuff? Is it just like an escapism? Is it fantasy? What is it that keeps people coming back?

Eileen: I have another story for you . . .

Grant: Sure. Please.

Eileen: . . . from the *New York Times* and it ran on Tuesday, and it's a little related to this. Their headline was a little misleading. It talked about gossip. So of course I thought it was celebrity gossip.

Grant: Yeah.

Eileen: But it was a very interesting, um, kind of an ah, (inaudible) biological approach to it. It talked about gossip and the purposes that it has on our society, which is to sort of, um, clue people in in an informal way about what kind of behavior is acceptable and what isn't. And it's a very, and a lot of it talks specifically about office politics and if it was a company that was very into trying to be on time, and somebody was perpetually late and not on top of it when they arrived, there was a lot of gossip going around what that was doing was signaling to other people our value is to show up

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to work on time and be prepared. So I think on a larger level one of this reasons behind this is it's society's way of saying what's acceptable and what isn't. Whether it's carrying your little dog in your bag . . .

Grant: Right.

Eileen: . . . to a night club opening or, you know, having an affair with somebody that I mean, look at how that's treated now versus 20 or 50 years ago.

Grant: But this whole notion of wanting to learn about the stars. It's not a new concept from what I've, where we were sending reporters to Hollywood 80 years ago to cover this stuff.

Eileen: Well, I mean, it's human nature.

Grant: Yes it is. Curiosity. It could be a bunch of things.

Fred: Um, movies and books and you can look at these things. They're reflective of our culture. They play off and speak to us about our culture. And in turn, writing about them is a sort of reverse of that mirror. So how many of us, the coverage of that, celebrity, is a kind of way of trying to get the whole picture. You may in your own, particularly in cultural issues, be much more selective of what you want. But you still want to have a sense, sort of a referential sense, of what's happening to people around you. I don't know. Maybe that's too high-brow.

Grant: Yeah. And this stuff, this stuff is fun.

Eileen: And I'm going to go even more high-brow because I mean if you look at it.

Grant: Go for it.

Eileen: Going back to ancient Greece, you know, people would talk about the

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Gods and who they looked up to.

Grant: Yes.

Eileen: And then you had the royalty and you cared about them. You always want to sort of have somebody to look up to a little bit, and you want to know what's going on. And more to the point, um, people who are attractive, and there's hundreds of studies that show we are just naturally attracted to them.

Grant: Yes.

Eileen: And we can't help it. We're biologically, somebody that we think is attractive, we look at them and want to know more about them. I mean, were modeling ourselves. There's absolute biological reasons why we do that. Because those people usually survive and have it better.

Grant: Yeah.

Eileen: So I mean John Adams, in, in the biography that James McCullough wrote a couple years ago, complained bitterly at one point about George Washington and saying that he got all the attention because he looked good on a horse. (laughs).

Grant: Wow.

Eileen: So this goes back literally to the founding of our culture.

Grant: Even. Exactly.

Eileen: I mean, that's high-brow.

Grant: That's incredible. Because even wanting to even get a little bit of a kick out of when they fall off from their high horse.

Eileen: Well, there's an ancient, there's a German word for that, and I know I'll mispronounce it. But it's (inaudible).

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Grant: Yeah. Like Ah hah.

Eileen: And it's people, there's that too.

Grant: Like you're human just like me.

Eileen: Yeah, that's human nature. Yeah. That's human nature. A lot of things you're talking about are just hard-wired into us biologically. That's what I feel.

Grant: It's good stuff. I just got a couple more here. Um, does the fact that *USA Today* reaches such a large audience give you guys more leeway to give people a daily dose of celebrity news?

Fred: I don't know if it gives us more leeway. It certainly helps with access to go after those kinds of stories.

Grant: Resources, I mean you have the resources to do it.

Eileen: But I would also say the success of the paper and the Web site allows you to say to yourself, gosh we must be doing something right. If you're critically acclaimed and the audience likes you, what's not to like about that?

Grant: OK. So this celebrity stuff. I mean because you don't see Pittsburgh or the St. Louis paper devoting a lot of time to Hollywood coverage.

Fred: I think that's reflective of the paper.

Grant: Because you have to have a local angle. The whole country is your playground.

Eileen: Yeah, I mean they do, but a lot of those papers in the last 10 years have put on page 2 or page 3 . . .

Grant: Celebrity news.

Eileen: . . . which traditionally used to be your hard news, and it's a little celebrity

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roundup, modeled very much, by the way . . .

Grant: *USA Today* does it.

Eileen: . . . on the rail in the newspaper. And I was deputy managing editor at the *San Francisco Chronicle*. And I used to look at the *USA Today* every single day, and so did my editors. And they'd be freaking out about why *USA Today* had that story and why didn't we have reporters who would do that kind of stuff. So I mean that sometimes it's not that they don't want to. It's because they're not able to execute it.

Grant: They don't have it. Do you think younger readers are drawn to this type of coverage, and do surveys show that? Everybody keeps saying, "Oh you can't get younger readers to get into that habit of picking up the paper." You guys are online. It sounds like.

K: The younger reader problem that newspapers are facing is . . .

Grant: Not a problem you guys are facing online.

Fred: Well, I think I don't think it's tied to one particular topic. I think publishing it and foundation of stories is a way that brings them in. That's a long-term structuring problem. For us . . .

Grant: But celebrity news is kind of that last-ditch effort to try to hook them because they have more of an interest, you could argue, in the celebrity stuff.

Eileen: I would argue that there's a backlash against that. And when some of those big city papers tried to get younger people, they would go too far with it. It would come off like they were taking the *USA Today* concept of it's OK to write about celebrities in the proper context and going totally off the deep end and saying "We're just going to do celebrity stuff, and it's going to be short, and it's going to be this and that."

Grant: Yeah.

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Eileen: And a lot of people were turned off by that, for starters, and two.

Fred: They saw through those papers, and it didn't work. It was too superficial. They were pandering to younger people.

Eileen: Yeah.

Grant: But isn't it fair to say that celebrity news can attract younger people? I mean you've got the younger celebrities like Paris Hilton and Lindsay Lohan, um, Hilary Duff.

Fred: Yeah, but I think the interest goes across the spectrum. I mean that's what we've found in the surveys.

Grant: Oh, OK. So it's not just the young.

Fred: It's not just the young audience. I think, what is, and again, subject base in order to change it in a way. What a younger audience in this case likes is the comfort with finding entertainment news and news coverage and sports and moving seamlessly through these things and not having Walter Cronkite telling you this is news, and now I'm moving over here.

Grant: OK. How much does the public's want for celebrity stories play a part in the decision? We kind of talked about it, but do you guys have a pulse on what the public wants and that's why you're able to give them, or is it a balance of you guys think they need versus what they want? You can't just give them all of the cake and cookies.

Fred: I can't tell you we know everything they want, but we look at it particularly (inaudible) stories. There's a real risk of that being self-defeating. I think early in the medium (inaudible words).

Eileen: Journalistic judgment is always, is almost always the bottom line. You



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know, I always look at it in retrospect. Oh that did really well and you kind of know. So it's almost like the statistics confirm what we call our gut feeling.

Grant: Yes.

Eileen: We know when we got a hot story.

Grant: Interesting. All right. How does celebrity gossip find it's way into mainstream media like *USA Today*?

Eileen: Um, do you want to clarify that a little bit more.

Grant: So and so is pregnant, says someone who wouldn't give their name. Um, so and so just had liposuction. I mean celebrity gossip.

Eileen: Well, we don't do celebrity gossip column at *USA Today*.

Grant: Like the *New York Times* has quoted the *National Enquirer*.

Eileen: Yeah and we go and do a little bit of that, but that's, generally we don't do use blind sourcing.

Grant: That's what I want to get at, your journalistic policies kind of preclude you from doing much of this celebrity gossip stuff.

Eileen: Although the paper does have, um, a good, um, relationships with for instance *Vanity Fair*, so that *Vanity Fair* will have an article, an exclusive with Jennifer Aniston, and we'll get it first and give highlights of what she says. That's a way of getting at that, but that's just reporting on what Jennifer Aniston says versus being a good reporter or editor and having that story. Sometimes AP will send something about, um, you know, *Us Weekly* and *National Enquirer* have reported X.

Grant: But I'm just wondering if this whole competition, ah, free for all, this celebrity saturation has caused *USA Today* to sort of lower its standards.

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Fred: It really hasn't. (inaudible words). I mean we never want to be the *National Enquirer*. That's my interpretation of it.

Grant: But maybe *Us Weekly* or *People*. I mean they're higher, you can argue, than the *National Enquirer* or *Star*.

Eileen: Yeah, I mean what Debbie will do in her blog is show every once in a while that. I mean the one she had last week was so cute, was Jake Gyllenhaal and Kirsten Dunst emerging from a (inaudible). Debbie wrote a very funny thing with a glum expression she said, "Just like me and my husband. We spent too much money here." And so, but this was a real photo, and you know, you knew it was them, and she, she did it in a funny way. But what she does do more of is a new trailer for "Elizabethtown," and it just came out, and it was really interesting, and check it out. There's no question about whether it's true or not. It's treating the Web and blog as almost you know, quoting sources. But that's the kind of thing we'll do more often. The one I just thought of, Cynthia Nixon being outed, and her publicists were on the phone apparently with the *New York Daily News* or the *Post*, one of those two papers for days. Gawker just printed it, and it flew open. And pretty soon everyone had it. I don't know where we were on that.

Grant: Cynthia Nixon is gay?

Fred: (laughs).

Grant: Yeah, I didn't even, I hadn't even heard that. So apparently I'm not up to speed on Gawker. This is the final question, kind of a philosophical question. Is there a sacrifice *USA Today* makes by publishing celebrity stuff in lieu of more traditional forms of newspaper content, hard news, politics, health care and education?

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Eileen: Well, that's a loaded question.

Grant: Well, some news purists would we'd, like maybe half a page maximum. I mean I'd rather read about the war in Iraq or why I'm paying \$3 a gallon for gas. Um, why do you waste your time with that?

Eileen: And the newspaper does that. We do that. We do both.

Grant: That's what I want to hear. Apparently it's a balancing act.

Eileen: They're not mutually exclusive. I mean just look on the Web. And I would also argue the health coverage here is very complete to a lot of papers. There's a lot of effort.

Grant: So there's room for all of it.

Eileen: Yeah.

Grant: Celebrity stuff has to be kind of a way to be not so inundated with the serious stuff, kind of ah.

Fred: It's the difference, I guess, between coming at the news from the standpoint of here's what you missed all about the world around you versus (inaudible) We know your engaged with these things on a daily basis. And news is a big part of that, but there's more than just that.

Eileen: And I think what the newspaper has is that cocktail, if you will.

Grant: Wow. So there is no sacrifice.

Fred: I don't think so, and I think what a lot of other papers use a lot of what *USA Today* does.

Grant: Formula.

Eileen: Look at these. They wouldn't color on their front page if it weren't for

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*USA Today*. (laughs). Let's just start with that. It's so significant. That's how much, and so you just say sacrifice. I don't think it's a sacrifice; I think it's an advantage. It's what's so special and unique about the brand. And it's proven to be very successful. It's a good thing.

Appendix I. Interview with Chloe, Mid-Level Editor of *usatoday.com*

Grant: What are the paper's basic guidelines to decide what celebrity news you give readers? Is it what editors and reports think is important, or is it more than that?

Chloe: Um, that's a good question. I think, well, I think it's a little bit different online than it is at the paper. Um, we have boundless space online.

Grant: Right.

Chloe: And we can provide anything we want to provide as far as celebrity coverage goes.

Grant: Yes.

Chloe: Whereas the paper is confined to, you know, maybe one page a day or a quarter page or half a page. So um, I mean, ultimately I make the decisions of which, um, celebrities we're going to cover and what news we're going to post. And that sort of thing, but um, I mean, really just about anything celebrity oriented we'll post online. Um, now whether it gets big play . . .

Grant: Mm. Hmm.

Chloe: . . . on the Web site like on the main page or the main Life page, it might not, I mean, um, a good example.

Grant: Yeah, what are some anecdotal examples of this?

Chloe: Yeah, that's a good question. Um, I'm trying to think today. Well, today there's a story about Angelina, um, Jolie, um, is going to star in a new MTV sort of reality series type thing.

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Grant: Yes. I see that.

Chloe: And, I mean we posted a story on that, um, it was linked out of our People Digest, um . . .

Grant: OK.

Chloe: . . . and it was on our TV front page. But it wasn't on the front page of the Life section . . .

Grant: Per se.

Chloe: . . . and it wasn't on the front page of the actual, just the landing page for usatoday.com.

Grant: OK.

Chloe: But something like Madonna . . .

Grant: Oh, the broken leg or the broken collar bone.

Chloe: . . . broken collar bone and broken bones, because she's such a big star, um, readers really want to know about that. So what I did, we posted a story on that as well, but it was everywhere. It was on the home front . . .

Grant: On the sky box or ear as you guys call it.

Chloe: . . . it was on the ear, it was on the Life front page, it was in our People Digest. It was everywhere we could get it because we know that readers are interested in it.

Grant: Love it.

Chloe: They're also interested in Angelina Jolie.

Grant: Oh big-time.

Chloe: But not on the same scale, um, the story wasn't as big of a story.

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Grant: As big right, OK. Are celebrity stories just pretty much profiles and court dealings such as divorce, criminal charges, movie and TV show advances, or does *USA Today* try to do more with the celebrity stuff?

Chloe: Um, I think the paper definitely tries to do more, um, with the celebrity stuff. I mean the basis of their coverage is marriage, divorce, pregnancy, you know, adoptions, those type of things.

Grant: Yes.

Chloe: But I think they do take it to another level with, you know Q & A.

Grant: Trying to get a different angle that other magazines maybe won't have?

Chloe: Yeah, I think that's something that they're working towards. Um, I think we do a very nice job of that online with, um, some of our live coverage from events.

Grant: OK.

Chloe: Like Emmys, Oscars, um, Grammys. What we've done, um, we've done a live blog, I don't know, Whitney may have talked to you a little bit about . . .

Grant: Yes she did about the Oscars.

Chloe: . . . the minute by minute, um, rundown of actually everything that's going on for Oscar night. So in that, we're able to include little things, like, um, you know, Gwyneth Paltrow tripped on the red carpet, or, um, before you know, Jack Nicholson did an interview he popped five breath mints. So we're able . . .

Grant: Yeah.

Chloe: . . . to focus in on the little human bits of celebrities as opposed to just um, they've got a new movie or they, you know, just got married.

Grant: Right.

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Chloe: We're able to zero in on what makes them sort of human like the rest of us. And I think that that's something unique to online that we're able, we have to the space to do that sort of thing, and we have the capability of doing minute-by-minute updates as it rolls out.

Grant: It's incredible, yeah. All right. Have um, there been any readers surveys about celebrity news or whether these types of stories are content that people want to see more of? Now your site, don't you track that?

Chloe: We do, um, we track it as far as page views to different stories.

Grant: Yeah.

Chloe: And um, I can tell that by far, far and away, our celebrity coverage, um, gets the most page views.

Grant: Really?

Chloe: Um, that is compared to TV news, movie news, (inaudible, maybe courts) news and music news. So celebrities here (points up with one hand), and they're down there (points down with other hand).

Grant: Down there. So it justifies then dedicating time and resources to this.

Chloe: It does.

Grant: They want it.

Chloe: Mm. Hmm. Um, so yeah anything, you know, I do a weekly roundup of the top 20 stories online.

Grant: Yeah.

Chloe: And anything celebrity-oriented is always No. 1 through 5.

Grant: Wow.



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Chloe: And it could be something as simple as, um, somebody getting divorced or somebody getting married to somebody getting arrested (laughs) or . . .

Grant: Yeah.

Chloe: . . . it's just the name recognition, pair it with like with a major life altering event, and that's it. The recipe for success.

Grant: That is the formula for success, exactly. What you're saying, then, is that this stuff that's in house for your own records to keep up, or do you actually publish these top 20 things on your Web site?

Chloe: No, it's just, um, in house, well and one of the . . .

Grant: I was gonna say, just to make sure you guys are giving people and tracking things.

Chloe: Yep. I circulate it to my staff, um, and then I circulate it to all the editors of the newspaper and the reporters on the entertainment side . . .

Grant: So that they . . .

Chloe: . . . so that they can kind of be thinking here's what our online readers want to see. Now maybe I ought to start targeting my stories this way or that way.

Grant: Yes. That is fantastic.

Chloe: Or this is the celebrity that's hot. This one is in, that sort of thing.

Grant: This kind of gets to the crux of my thesis. How much does competition from TV, cable the Internet and other publications, Web sites, matter when deciding what and how many celebrity stories you cover?

Chloe: Wow, well, I mean, I guess, obviously you know that the celebrity coverage is like . . .

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Grant: Booming.

Chloe: . . . booming and um these, you know, the tabloids like *US Weekly* and *In Touch* and all . . .

Grant: *OK*, brand-new one.

Chloe: *OK*, brand-new, yeah, they just have so, well they have different standards as far as coverage goes.

Grant: Yeah, let's talk about that.

Chloe: Um, well. I mean, I don't want to bad-mouth them, but their standards are not as high as what ours are.

Grant: Journalistically.

Chloe: Yeah, and, um, you know they'll go to any length necessary to get a story, even, what was it a *People* magazine reporter was just trespassing on Brad Pitt's property.

Grant: Right.

Chloe: So, um, we can't do that sort of thing.

Grant: But isn't it you have to make sure you give people a steady diet of this stuff, or they're going to turn elsewhere?

Chloe: Yeah, I mean.

Grant: They're going somewhere else if they can't get it on [usatoday.com](http://usatoday.com).

Chloe: Yeah, that is true, um, but . . .

Grant: So you risk losing perhaps a large chunk of your, um, audience if you decide to diminish the coverage or not at least try to keep up with the Joneses. Is that a fair statement?

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Chloe: Yeah, that's a fair statement, but, I mean, it is, I will be very honest, it is very difficult to keep up with publications like *US weekly* and *Star* and *In Touch*.

Grant: Really?

Chloe: I mean they just have, um, sources, you know, that so they can get everything first. They really do get everything first. And, you know, one thing that the paper does, which, I, ah, I'm a little iffy on it, but they write about *US Weekly*.

Grant: *US Weekly*, yes.

Chloe: What *US Weekly* is reporting. So say, for instance, *US Weekly* first reported the Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston divorce.

Grant: Yes.

Chloe: Well, we didn't have that confirmed (laughs), so we had a story in *USA Today* that said *US Weekly* is reporting that Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston are . . .

Grant: The old, ah, the old, ah, way to do it.

Chloe: And so I think that we've kind of resorted to that. Um, we kind of let them get at it at first, and then we'll come back on it with maybe with more detail.

Grant: Facts involved, yes.

Chloe: And a more informative story. But I think a lot of the time, ah, we just kind of have to admit that they're going to get it first.

Grant: But you still give people, you don't just ignore that story.

Chloe: Uh, uh, no, no, no, no, I mean, you know a publication like *The Washington Post* or something could maybe ignore it. But I think because our Life section or our Life section of the paper.

Grant: Uh, huh.

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Chloe: . . . is so celebrity-oriented . . .

Grant: Yes.

Chloe: . . . that we kind of have to do it. But even if it's a small little blurb, we're kind of obligated to do it. Um.

Grant: That's a great thing. Is there a thought process, you know, we talked about this a little, to make sure *USA Today* has celebrity coverage so readers don't have to go elsewhere for it? I mean, are you trying to be the one all, be all? Or do you have a realization that, no they're going to go elsewhere as well as *USA Today*?

Chloe: Mm. Let me think about that.

Grant: Is it *USA Today's* goal to, I guess, be celebrity central?

Chloe: Um, I don't, I mean, I think that as we move forward, we're going to put a lot more emphasis on celebrity coverage.

Grant: OK.

Chloe: Because we know that our readers really enjoy it, and um, we've seen that with page views and reader feedback, um, whether there's really a thought process to ensure that people don't go elsewhere, I mean . . .

Grant: It's tough to say.

Chloe: It's tough to say, um, and you know, for me, a lot of it I have to rely on what the newspaper is, what their judgment calls are and, um, because I don't have a stable of reporters that I can send out to do stuff. I'm kind of relying on them to make the call.

Grant: Yes. Absolutely, and you know like you said, those other places have a lot of things that they can maybe do with more photographers and reporters.

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Chloe: Well, I mean they just have tons of reporters, and they're just stationed on every street corner in L.A.

Grant: (laughs).

Chloe: And it's like *USA Today* just doesn't have the capability to do that.

Grant: Right.

Chloe: And um, you know, we do have other things that we have to cover, entertainment-wise.

Grant: Now I've got a little laundry list here. Film and TV stars, musical artists, prominent pro athletes, ah, like high-ranking certain politicians and authors, is this a pretty thorough list of what the paper considers celebrities?

Chloe: Yeah.

Grant: I know like Bill Gates and maybe a CEO or two or a famous preacher or something.

Chloe: Maybe. But . . .

Grant: But celebrity is really . . .

Chloe: . . . they're not going to get, I mean . . .

Grant: Film.

A Yeah, online, you know a story online about Bill Gates compared to a story about Gwyneth Paltrow is just, you know, no comparison.

Grant: Wow.

Chloe: Yeah, I mean it's really the A-list stars that people are really wanting to know about.

Grant: OK, because I want to work a definition when I talk about this in the

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thesis, just the celebrity itself.

Chloe: Yes.

Grant: In general.

Chloe: And some B-list, some at the top of the B-list.

Grant: Indeed. I couldn't even tell you who's at the top of the B-list. But, ah, in general how often is the front page a place where *USA Today* will publish a story about a celebrity or celebrities?

Chloe: Well, for the Life section of dot-com, I mean, it's every day. I mean, I have . . .

Grant: Right, but let's talk about the front page of the paper or the front, um, I guess the dot-com's different because it's, you click all four sections like you do. I've been on it several times, but I don't remember how to do it.

Chloe: Um, the *USA Today* home page, um, you can, you know, navigate to each section.

Grant: OK.

Chloe: So you hit usatoday.com and in the upper left-hand corner there's a tab that says Life. And then you click on Life.

Grant: What are the others? Money Sports and is it News?

Chloe: Yes.

Grant: Is it the front section. All right so that news section.

Chloe: Ah.

Grant: The news section and the actual, this section, this part of the print version (holds up front section of *USA Today*).

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Chloe: Yeah, um.

Grant: How often is celebrity going to make it out here? This is Monday's paper, but . . .

Chloe: On this front page?

Grant: Yeah, somewhere on this front (points to front page), how often are you going to see a celebrity story or some sort of celebrity thing. Now the ear, David Colton told me.

Chloe: That's always.

Grant: . . . is almost 90 percent of the time celebrity.

Chloe: Yep. It is. So strip that out, and then if you want to talk about like an actual story.

Grant: "Desperate Housewives" in May. There was a big trend story about how popular that was.

Chloe: Yeah.

Grant: Steven Spielberg recently.

Chloe: Um, I mean I would guess probably maybe twice a month there's a big celebrity-oriented story.

Grant: So like even if it's movie, that counts as celebrity.

Chloe: Oh, then maybe a little more than that.

Grant: OK.

Chloe: Maybe three to five times a month. Um, then, you know if somebody dies, then if somebody famous dies . . .

Grant: An obituary.

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Chloe: . . . that's always out front.

Grant: Carson, Jennings.

Chloe: Peter Jennings was out front. Um, who else did we have?

Grant: Johnny Carson totally was.

Chloe: Yep. Um, Marlon Brando.

Grant: Yes.

Chloe: Any big, a big name is going to out front for an obit. Yeah.

Grant: OK. Good stuff. Because the only ones that came to mind are, you know, the O.J. verdict, Michael Jackson trial. The verdict was definitely out front.

Chloe: Oh yeah.

Grant: Kind of a news story that maybe blurred the angle of celebrities.

Chloe: Mm. Hmm.

Grant: Um, is there a feeling that these types of celebrity stories are widely read by other newsroom editors and writers?

Chloe: Oh yeah. I think so, I mean, um, you know, people like the EW, E! Online. *People* magazine. I think we're all kind of in this little group of celebrity watchers, and I think in addition to watching celebrities we're watching each other and how we're covering, what we're getting, scoops we're getting, how we're going about the coverage.

Grant: And do you get feedback, like "Oh, hey nice story today, I liked your . . ."

Chloe: No. I don't. I mean.

Grant: Debbie said she sometimes does.

Chloe: She might get some with her blog and her column. Um, I personally, most of my feedback is from readers and what they like and don't like.



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Grant: But is it a guilty pleasure you think, even in house. Like sports guys, I mean do you think they're picking up the Life section?

Chloe: Oh, oh, for sure, oh yeah. Um, I mean, my husband actually works in sports (inaudible) , and you know he'll come home from work some days and be like, "You know I didn't know that, you know, so and so just got married. I'm like 'how would you know that?' And he's like 'Well I was reading it at lunch.'"

Grant: Yeah.

Chloe: So I think there's definitely, um, a guilty pleasure.

Grant: (laughs).

Chloe: Yeah.

Grant: And you don't really have to feel guilty because it's fun. You know, it's less, ah, serious I guess, but it's still, it's like fascinating to people.

Chloe: But yeah, even though, I was just in Toronto covering a concert, and I was flying back. And you know all of these businessmen on the plane, you would think they would be reading like the Money section or something, but they, like I looked down the row and there were like three guys just reading the Life section right there.

Grant: Purple.

Chloe: And had it turned to the People page, and you know, right.

Grant: That's amazing. It works. Ah, the formula. Now, um, have you done any tracking, now I asked you this before, but let's just kind of expand on it a bit, tracking to see what celebrity stories on the Web site get a lot of hits? Now you had already kind of summarized this, but you do track this and you can tell me pretty much with certainty that these celebrity stories get the most hits.

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Chloe: Oh yeah. It's certain.

Grant: Just for my research, um, in the last six months perhaps, was there a story that stands out in your mind that just was kind of off the charts on the hit , ah, tracking?

Chloe: Um, a big one was actually Jennifer Aniston's first, um, interview . . .

Grant: Oh yes.

Chloe: . . . after the divorce, which was in *Vanity Fair*, and, um, that was a big one. Um, I don't know if it was the last six months, I guess it was, was the um Britney Spears pregnancy . . .

Grant: Oh, that's huge, yeah. It's something recent yeah.

Chloe: . . . was huge. Jennifer Garner's pregnancy and marriage to Ben Affleck.

Grant: Ben Affleck was big. What about Kenny Chesney, Renee Zellweger?

Chloe: That was huge, yep. That was . . .

Grant: That was big.

Chloe: . . . not as big as, um, Britney or Jennifer Garner.

Grant: But still sort of big.

Chloe: Pretty big, yeah.

Grant: So you track this and get a good feel of what people want to read.

Chloe: Yeah, and I mean if you would like numbers, if that would help you, then that might be, ah.

Grant: I think just a couple general ones over some time, you know the last couple of weeks, something to just to kind of gauge it.

Chloe: Mm. Hmm.

Grant: That'll be fantastic at some point. Historically I've found that celebrity

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coverage from about the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century has been a big part of newspaper coverage and continues to be today? Why do you as a journalist think this is?

Chloe: Hm.

Grant: Is it this whole fantasy, that people want to read about the royalty type of figures, an escapism, a lot of people have offered . . . ?

Chloe: No, I think it's definitely sort of an escape mechanism, I mean, because there's so much in the news that's negative and depressing and upsetting and just downer type things. You know, you can't even turn on the TV at night, you know your local news is all murders . . .

Grant: I know.

Chloe: . . . and carjackings and blah. This is sort of like a diversion where you can almost kind of dream that maybe you know you could be like that one day or your kids could be like that one day or sort of something that can take the mind off of all the stuff that's just so bad out there.

Grant: Yeah, that's a fair assessment, and it's just, um, the lives of these people, and when they fall, there sometimes a, you know, "Ah see they're human after all."

Chloe: Yes, exactly, exactly. Um, yeah, anything that can bring, lend a human light to celebrities, I think that's very interesting.

Grant: A touch, yeah.

Chloe: Yep.

Grant: OK. Ah, does the fact that the *USA Today* reaches such a large national audience give you guys more leeway to give, ah, readers a daily dose of celebrity news?

Chloe: More leeway, um, well . . .

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Grant: Just kind of, because I guess you are national, you don't have to be you, you know, cover the McLean, Virginia, City Council, um.

Chloe: Oh that's a good point. I haven't thought of it like that. Um, yeah.

Grant: Because it's so mainstream that it reaches everywhere. It's like you won't see this in the Pittsburgh paper. They're not going to be dedicating a Hollywood reporter for this kind of coverage, but they'll run the wire stuff.

Chloe: That's because, that's a good point. Yeah, but no, I think because we are the official nation's newspaper . . .

Grant: Yeah, that's what I want to get at.

Chloe: . . . we're not local that we, um, we do have the leeway and we have the space to do it.

Grant: Yes.

Chloe: You know, we're not like limited by, um, local celebrities or the local artists.

Grant: Yeah that have that angle, yeah.

Chloe: . . . or right, the local, um, star that people on, you know, the local stage or something. We don't have to deal with that kind of stuff.

Grant: The whole nation is your playground.

Chloe: That's right.

Grant: Yes. It's automatically local in a sense.

Chloe: Yep.

Grant: OK, so do you think younger readers are drawn to this type of coverage?

Chloe: Um, I would say, yes that younger readers are drawn to celebrity coverage.

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And, um, I think if I were take an in-depth look at the numbers for the Web site, I would find, I would guess I would find that a percentage of readers 30 and younger, they're probably giving us the majority of page views on the Web site.

Grant: Wow.

Chloe: That's just my guess. I haven't actually looked at it.

Grant: Right. It would probably be a fair guess.

Chloe: Yep. I would definitely, I mean I can look into it actually and see if that's the case. But um, I mean I've found that a lot of our readers, you know, 45 and older are more interested in movie reviews, book reviews, things that are more of a thinking, um.

Grant: Yes.

Chloe: . . . as opposed to just a diversion.

Grant: Stuff right, um. OK. I just got a couple more questions.

Chloe: Uh huh, that's fine.

Grant: How much does the public's want for celebrity stories play a part in the decisions of what you put in?

Chloe: Um.

Grant: Do you look at the public's want, like a balance of giving what they want, or do you give them what they need?

Chloe: Um, I mean I think, you know, for us online, I think we give them everything that they need. I mean, we're like I said, we're not confined by space holes.

Grant: Right.

Chloe: We can put up, you know, 100 celebrity stories a day and they can find them. Um, sometimes, so.

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Grant: Yeah.

Chloe: I mean is that kind of.

Grant: What they want, yeah, but if you give them what they want, I'm just wondering if you take, if you have the pulse on the public, like big trend stories like we talked about maybe Angelina Jolie stuff like that, Britney Spears.

Chloe: Right.

Grant: But does that play a part in your everyday decision-making, or do you guys feel like you know what they want?

Chloe: I mean I think that's part of what's so great about our Life section is that we're comprised with people who actually do have a pulse on the nation and what's going on.

Grant: Yes.

Chloe: I think we have a cross section of younger people that can kind of keep in touch with the hip stuff.

Grant: Yes.

Chloe: And then we have, you know, the next layer of a little bit older but still hip and can kind of um keep a feeler out for what, you know, 35 to 45 people. And then we have the really experienced people who um can kind of keep and eye out for what . . .

Grant: More experienced or the older generation would want.

Chloe: Yep.

Grant: OK.

Chloe: And I think we really do have the nation's best writers and reporters. That helps.

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Grant: I agree. No question. This is good, um, thinker, but it's kind of a philosophical question. How does celebrity gossip find its way into mainstream media such as *USA Today*?

Chloe: Um, gossip, I don't know, I think, I don't know.

Grant: Don't you guys say . . .

Chloe: . . . what Melissa or you know some of the reporters downstairs, but I think that they might kind of cringe at the word gossip.

Grant: OK. They have.

Chloe: OK.

Grant: They didn't accept this and said 'Well no we have such a sourcing policy that it's very difficult to get the juicy gossip, unsubstantiated rumor stuff into the paper.'

Chloe: It's very true.

Grant: It comes in though. I've seen it.

Chloe: Um. Really? (short laugh). I mean you know, like.

Grant: Even reporting stuff like this whole with *US Weekly*. So and so told *US Weekly*. I'm not talking about cellulite or you know weird things like that, but um even *The New York Times* has quoted the *National Enquirer* before. This whole notion of celebrity is like a big battleground now for readership. And at the risk of becoming irrelevant, um, it seems to be the age that *USA Today* has to, I don't want to say resort to that, but I'm just curious to how it can find its way in you know an actual newspaper with journalism ethics?

Chloe: See your talking about something like, um, it looks like so-and-so is three months pregnant or something like that.

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Grant: Perhaps, yeah.

Chloe: Where it's unconfirmed or not confirmed by the rep.

Grant: That kind of stuff.

Chloe: Um, I would say that that getting into the paper has like about a 2 percent chance.

Grant: No that's good. I want you to talk about this.

Chloe: Into the paper, now, that's where the paper and online kind of differ.

Grant: Is that blog.

Chloe: Right. What we can do is we're kind of, it's sort of um, sort of a safe haven, the blog is because it's not, we're not saying we are reporting this. We're saying, "Look we are being your funnel of Internet news, and we have seen that somebody else is reporting this and we're going to say 'hey so-and-so said that, um, Britney Spears had a miscarriage,' you know, or something, and then we link to the story." But we're not confirming or denying anything.

Grant: *USA Today* doesn't have a stake in it.

Chloe: Right. We're just saying we're going to be your eyes and ears on the Internet. We're going to find the stories you want to read, and we're going to link to them.

Grant: OK.

Chloe: We're not taking sides. We're not saying it's necessarily true.

Grant: Right.

Chloe: Now the paper doesn't have that luxury of putting in, first of all they don't have room, but second of all, it's unconfirmed, and you know . . .



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Grant: Yeah they don't use blind sources. Unconfirmed accounts, um, anonymous sources.

Chloe: They can't, no. That's where you know we have kind of um butted heads a little bit with the editors at the paper.

Grant: Yeah. Let's talk about that.

Chloe: You know, they kind of look at it like I don't think we shouldn't be doing it but they kind of feel like we're all part of the same brand. Why our, you know, our sourcing is so strict, why wouldn't that carry over to the Web site. Well the Web site is a little bit different. We're a 24-7 operation.

Grant: Yes.

Chloe: We're always updating. We're always changing, um, and we have room for things like that and we've also noticed that our readers have an appetite for things like that. Debbie's blog started very low in page views and the trend line is just ever-increasing.

Grant: Through the roof.

Chloe: Through the roof, so it's very clear that people want to read this (inaudible), so why not give it to them?

Grant: Yes.

Chloe: We're not saying that we're behind these stories.

Grant: That could, that could become, translate into people wanting to pick up this paper. Translate into people wanting to look at other pages or other parts of the Web site.

Chloe: Exactly.

Grant: If it's a hook and it's one that obviously people are taken to, why not keep

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it up.

Chloe: Yep.

Grant: That's great. All right last question. Um, it's sort of a philosophical one too.

Chloe: OK.

Grant: Is there a sacrifice *USA Today* makes by publishing celebrity stuff in lieu of more traditional forms of newspaper content, i.e. hard news, politics, health care, education?

Chloe: Sacrifice.

Grant: Do you guys sacrifice what quote-unquote matters?

Chloe: I mean I personally I don't think, though I'm sure how everyone else answered that question, but . . .

Grant: Ran the gamut.

Chloe: I mean and it also depends on who you ask. For instance, you know the Better Life Section of the Life . . .

Grant: Yes, the second cover.

Chloe: Yes, the second cover. If you ask them that question, they would say by all means we are sacrificing health content, um, education content for this dumb people stuff, they might say.

Grant: They might.

Chloe: Um, you might ask them that question actually if you get a chance, but um, if you ask the entertainment staff, I think that they would, actually they'd maybe say that we could include even more or it would be nice to include more. So sort of like, you

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know, the Better Life Section butting heads with the front section, you know.

Grant: Right, and news and Money, I mean the purists would say well we don't want, maybe a half a page of that maximum, but we would rather have someone covering Iraq.

Chloe: Right.

Grant: We'd rather have them covering your money. We'd rather have them covering cancer research.

Chloe: Right.

Grant: But your, this company has said no, because we give them all of that, but there has to be room for this other stuff too.

Chloe: There has to be a diversion. I mean there has to be something fun. There has to be something that a paper can include pictures that people want to see. I mean, easy reading. Um.

Grant: Easier to digest.

Chloe: Easier to digest. Yep. Um, but yeah, I think it really does depend on who you talk to.

Grant: But you don't think it sacrifices? You don't think it is a sacrifice by running this kind of stuff?

Chloe: No, I mean I'm of the opinion that we could use a little bit more (entertainment news).

Grant: Right.

Chloe: And we could probably hire, you know, five more people and could compete with *US Weekly* or (inaudible). Um, but we'll never be budgeted to do that, at

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least not that I know of. But I think we also could do more with the entertainment, but right now I think . . .

Grant: You guys could. The reason I'm doing this is because you are a print, standard traditional newspaper with an online version now, but you're going up against Internet sites, and that's what I want to get at. What are some of these sites that you guys look at, these celebrity web sites. Can you name a couple of them for me?

Chloe: Oh yeah, there's Gawker.

Grant: Yeah Gawker,

Chloe: Defamer.

Grant: Defamer, what about Smoking Gun, is that one too sort of?

Chloe: Um, yeah to some extent, not the same as Gawker, um, I mean E! online.

Grant: E! online, what about *People's* Web site?

Chloe: *People's* Web site?

Grant: Do they have a strong Web site?

Chloe: They have a, they have a good Web site, um, not updated as frequently as our, um, but they have some really great pictures.

Grant: What about Web site only stuff. Like you said Gawker, you said Defamer. Is there one or two more?

Chloe: Um, Yahoo. Yahoo's entertainment section is very, very good.

Grant: It's solid.

Chloe: Yes, um, MSNBC.com has . . .

Grant: Strong stuff.

Chloe: Strong stuff.

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Grant: OK.

Chloe: But I mean our, our main competitors are . . .

Grant: Yeah, what are they?

Chloe: . . . like Yahoo, um, AOL's entertainment section . . .

Grant: Yes.

Chloe: Um, E! online, EW, *entertainmentweekly.com* There's um.

Grant: How do you think you stack up? You guys are holding your own, right?

Chloe: I think we are definitely holding our own, yeah. We are actually in the top five, um, Nielsen net ratings for entertainment sites. We just actually after our Oscar coverage, um, increased 500 percent from 2004 to 2005 as far as page views, and . . .

Grant: Can I get those numbers from you maybe?

Chloe: Yeah, yeah. That um, successfully made us jump into the top five.

Grant: Into the top five. So that's what I'm saying. *USA Today* doing their thing and doing it , um, um, their way. I mean a way that's a little bit--I don't want to say more respectable--but certainly you maybe have more credibility . . .

Chloe: Yeah, I think . . .

Grant: . . . than perhaps than *US Weekly*?

Chloe: I was thinking about that, and, um, I think it's sort of like you would say you know *US Weekly* is here as far as celebrity coverage (hands high). They, it may not be all well-sourced , but it's always first.

Grant: Right.

Chloe: Um, and then we're somewhere, *USA Today* is somewhere you know right here in the middle, and then you have you know local newspapers or papers like *The New*

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*York Times* down here (hands lower), *Washington Post*.

Grant: *LA Times*.

Chloe: Or *LA Times*.

Grant: The *LA Times* may be a little bit more because they're in LA.

Chloe: They're, yeah, they're probably I mean, *US Weekly*, *USA Today*, *LA Times* is very close to what we're doing and then you get *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, which is mostly . . . crap.

Grant: Where would you throw *People*?

Chloe: Oh *People's* right up there with *US Weekly*.

Grant: OK.

Chloe: Yeah, I mean they go back and forth as far as who gets the scoops.

Grant: *People* seems to have more journalistic, um . . .

Chloe: A small bit more integrity than *US Weekly*.

Grant: A little bit more, yes.

Chloe: Just a small bit, though, not . . .

Grant: A little, not huge.

Chloe: No. Not huge, I don't think. But you know then, um, that's another interesting question, you know, stars, um, have relationships with these magazines where they will only give say *People* an exclusive. Like Britney Spears only worked with *People* for her exclusive, so her first, um, pictures of her wedding were in *People*, um, pictures of her pregnant were in *People*. Um, other people like Jessica Simpson only work with *US Weekly*, so anything exclusive she wants to say . . .

Grant: What about paparazzi photos? You guys, I talked to John. He said you

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guys will from time to time purchase a photo from a paparazzi, but you have to make sure it was gotten legally.

Chloe: Only if it's absolutely necessary.

Grant: Exactly. And it can't provoke a reaction from a celebrity.

Chloe: Right.

Grant: Basically just a shot.

Chloe: Right, um I think a good example of that was when, oh gosh, Britney Spears in the um, she was going barefoot in the bathroom or something.

Grant: Yes. She was barefoot. I remember that.

Chloe: Yeah and I think we wrote something about it, and we had to get a paparazzi shot.

Grant: Yeah, they were worried about disease and things she could get.

Chloe: Mm. Hmm. Yeah, I think that was an example of when we did it.

Grant: (laughs).

Chloe: But you know we would never, online either, we would never you know I don't know if you've ever been to wenn. W-e-n-n.com, which is . . .

Grant: What is that.

Chloe: Well it's an online data base of paparazzi photos. And it's kind of fun to look at. I look at it all the time, but we would never use anything like that.

Grant: Yeah, there's certain paparazzi companies that are more reputable I'm told by John. He gets them sometimes when he can't get them from Getty or AP.

Chloe: That's true. That's right.

Grant: Because they're not running, Getty is doing the most I guess from

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what I'm told, but AP, they don't run a steady diet of this stuff, like Britney Spears.

Maybe a little but.

Chloe: That's true. AP, you can't rely on them. Getty Images is good. Um, we use them a lot online. But you know, like I was just looking at the Wenn site yesterday, and there's shots of you know, um Jennifer Garner's 30<sup>th</sup> birthday party in the park. You know they're all fuzzy and weird-looking, but you can see that she's pregnant. You can see her holding hands with Ben Affleck.

Grant: Wow.

Chloe: Um, people love to see that kind of thing, but we're just, it's not . . .

Grant: It's not part of your repertoire.

Chloe: Mm, mm. No.

Grant: Last thing, um, tell me what your title is and your responsibilities at *usatoday.com*.

Chloe: So I'm the Life editor, pretty much like the entertainment editor.

Grant: Right.

Chloe: And, um, I have, um, a staff of four.



Appendix J. Interview with *USA Today* High-Level Editor Melissa, Mid-Level Editors  
Tim, Veronica and Ruby

Grant: OK, what are the paper's basic guidelines to decide what celebrity news you give readers? I mean is it simply what editors and writers consider newsworthy or interesting, or is it more than that? Anyone?

Veronica: I don't think there are written-out guidelines. I think a lot of it is editorial judgment as far as you know, who in the news and . . .

Grant: OK.

Veronica: You know if Jude Law was making himself available to us, of course, we'd want to talk to him. Um, we're also looking at other publications . . .

Grant: Sure.

Veronica: . . . and we're very interested in younger readers and the Web and things that, who's happened there, what we think younger readers are interested in. Might be trend-setting. It might be . . .

Grant: Just a whole facet of things. There's not really hard, fast rules.

Veronica: Right.

Grant: It's based on what's news I guess.

Tim: Newsworthiness, space and availability, um, combined with, you know, our assessment and our opportunity to do it.

Grant: Yeah. Exactly. Now are celebrity stories just pretty much profiles and court dealings such as divorce, criminal charges, new movies, TV shows, or does

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*USA Today* try to do more with the celebrity stuff?

Melissa: I think clearly, if you look at the paper you'll see that we do do more with most stories. Well our big, um, we try to be original as much as we can. If it's a, um, different such as breaking news celebrity story, we try to add some additional elements to it, like um, a timeline or a fun chart or something that might be a little added information. Um, you know, space and staffing also play a role.

Grant: Exactly.

Melissa: We can't do that with every single story, but we pick a spot or two usually every day, every week, you know, we try to have something.

Grant: Does that mean maybe, too, you could have more than, like say a magazine that can only devote so much and try to get a little more in-depth with it sometimes or . . .

Melissa: It's not necessarily in-depth.

Grant: OK.

Melissa: Um, sometimes it's just fun like, ah, I'm trying to think.

Tim: Well the charts.

Melissa: You know, like today's People's page, we did sort of the summer of dreams where we sort of looked at the news that happened this summer and tried to assess it and sort of came up with an interesting way to present it. That's the kind of thing that we like to do.

Grant: Yeah. That's great.

Tim: Sometimes when the topic suggests it, the opportunity avails itself, we'll get deeper and examine the why of celebrity.

Grant: Why Paris Hilton and Nicole Richie are . . .

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Tim: Why Jessica Simpson or . . .

Grant: Why Jessica Simpson and Nick. Sure.

Melissa: Or why Jessica Simpson made it to the level she is. Because we did a story like that on Friday.

Grant: Yes. I did see that. Um, has there been any reader surveys about celebrity news and whether these are the types of stories are the content people want to see more of? You guys, I mean, just generally.

Melissa: We survey on occasion, but we're not, we don't really, um, discuss that information. Um, as long as it looks like we're on target with what we're doing, we just keep on doing what we're doing. We haven't. You know, for years, we haven't been told anything about (inaudible).

Grant: But are people saying that they like this stuff and want some more of it?

Melissa: They don't share that information. Marketing doesn't share information unless it's something that we ought to know about.

Grant: OK. Now this kind of this next question, I'm hoping you guys will really, um, kind of explain this, because it's kind of the crux of my thesis. How much does competition from TV, cable, the Internet, and other publications, I know *OK* magazine just came out, matter when deciding what and how many stories you guys cover?

Melissa: Um.

Grant: I mean do people read, like I saw the desk of June, you know, *Star* is there, *Us Weekly*. I mean how does competition play into it. How do you guys?

Melissa: We try to have an awareness of everything that's out there to make sure what we do is different in some fashion. You know, whether we add additional elements

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to it. We try to cover a side part of it that no one else is covering. We try to get the interviews in as quickly as we can, so we're in the front edge of the coverage. Um, you know, try to get exclusive photo shoots, you know, any number of different things we can do to try to make get it out first.

Grant: And Tim as a reporter speaking from experience, I mean, do you want to chime in on this?

Tim: Um, are you saying I'm a reporter?

Grant: Well no I'm.

Tim: As a reporter, I need a modifier.

Grant: Well no, just a different point of view. I mean.

Tim: Yeah. Because I'm, you know, an assignment editor like her, you know, so.

Grant: Right, I mean as an assignment editor then, do you develop this material every day as a part of your whole repertoire. Reading your competition? Getting on the Web sites to make sure they're not scooping *USA Today*?

Tim: As time permits. Yeah, we do try to check the stuff that's out there. You know, and if there's a way to arrive at a different angle on it.

Grant: And kind of a follow-up to this, whoever wants to, to go. Is there a thought process to make sure *USA Today* has celebrity coverage so readers don't have to go elsewhere for it? Like to be the source.

Melissa: No, we expect people to have other sources they go for information.

Tim: We're not going to stop people from watching TV or . . .

Grant: It's not reality. Or stop people from watching *Extra*.

Melissa: No. As long as they keep reading us.

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Grant: Exactly (laughs).

Veronica: We have restrictions on us that other publications don't have. We don't use gossipy sources, we don't say "sources say" or "a friend of Julia Roberts said." We don't do that. So that's a restriction we have to deal with. They don't.

Grant: That's very interesting. In fact I'm coming up to a question, and I'm glad you mentioned that and brought that up. Um, is there, I'm sorry, film and TV, I'm just going to do a laundry list now, film and TV stars, musical artists, prominent pro athletes, politicians and authors. Is that a pretty thorough list of what the paper considers celebrities or are there a few others?

Melissa: You went too fast.

Grant: I'm sorry. Film and TV stars, musical artists, like rock stars, prominent pro athletes. Some politicians and authors. Is this a pretty thorough list of what the paper considers celebrities? Or are there other people to add. I just kind of want to get a good working definition of celebrity.

Melissa: Well, we don't, I mean obviously politicians and sports people are outside of our definition of a celebrity.

Tim: Whereas something, a publication like the *Washington Post* might blur that line a lot more when it comes to politicians. It's part of their style section, generally, but they're a company, you know, company town, basically.

Grant: OK.

Grant: Now this is an interesting question, too, kind of where this stuff gets played. In general, how often does the front page become a place where *USA Today* will publish a story about a celebrity or celebrities? I mean does it have to be a real significant

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issue like a couple that have come to mind, the Michael Jackson case. I mean, do you guys, can you get a story out front, *Desperate Housewives*. in the spring, I know.

Tim: On the news section?

Grant: Yeah, exactly, on the front section, the news section.

Melissa: We probably get a cover once a month or more. Um, generally, it's cover stories that make it out front. What we do is not hard breaking news by and large.

Grant: Right but can you kind of explain the whole cover of the story aspect, like if it's *Desperate Housewives*.

Melissa: If it's something (inaudible). If it's a trend that we've discovered, um, that no one else has yet. Um, we've done trend stories on like epic style films, um, war films and that kind of thing. It has to be sort of a big idea or something that's super hot.

Veronica: We had a different angle on, when Steven Spielberg came out with *War of the Worlds*.

Grant: Yes.

Veronica: Our reporter got him to talk about how aliens and snakes and all these different themes of the movie. Um, what themes did he like when he was playing out and how we would have done some of his movies differently had he done them as a family man now. That was a unique angle that no one else had.

Grant: Exactly. Like what you talked about earlier.

Veronica: And that's why 1A thought that was worthy.

Grant: All right, so it doesn't have to be necessarily a big scandal for it to get out there.

Melissa: Not at all.

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Grant: It can be something like you said, you know, different angle on something that's hot. All right I just was trying to get a sense of that. Um, is there a feeling that these types of celebrity fun stories are read by other newsroom editors and writers, I mean, you guys get feedback, people from other departments say 'hey, I like that today. Or hey I read Life every day. I can't get enough of it.'

Melissa: Other departments in house.

Grant: In *USA Today*, in house. Do you guys get any generally feedback like that?

Veronica: Yeah, we have. Occasionally.

Grant: I'm just wondering if it's a guilty pleasure that everyone reads your section, and you, tells you guys you're doing a good job.

Tim: I don't know if it's a guilty pleasure.

Veronica: We're guilt. It's a guilt. It is a pleasure. (laughs in background).

Grant: I'm sorry. I don't mean to say guilty pleasure.

Melissa: Yeah. I think we, I mean at least I feel like I am a totally functioning contributing editor to the paper as a whole. I don't feel like we're like in, you know, the fun ghetto or something. (laughs in background).

Grant: OK. That's good to know.

Melissa: Where, you know, people are really ashamed that we exist.

Grant: The culture, exactly.

Melissa: I think we all have a realistic notion that all four sections balance each other very well and complement each other very well.

Tim: Yeah there's no real back of the bus feeling as far as our like our stories are trivial than their stories or something.

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Melissa: We don't think that. Maybe there's this an illusion out there about it.

Grant: No it's good.

Ruby: Well see I come here just a little over a month. And I know that going to the 11:30 meeting, and we'll here from (inaudible) and Melissa about what was said in the 11 o'clock meeting.

Grant: At the other meeting, yeah.

Ruby: Very often they will mention our stories.

Veronica: But they're looking for us on the 1A desk to, to generate excitement beyond the front page of the new. I mean, everyone is interested in the news of the plane crash or whatever, but they're looking for us to give a little jolt to the rest of the paper, like we've got an interview with Britney Spears or (inaudible). So they're looking to us because everyone is interested in celebrities.

Grant: I noticed. I guess you guys call them billboards. We call them skyboxes, but the thing up in the corner almost always has some sort of celebrity angle, not always but usually you get someone noteworthy up there.

Melissa: Right.

Grant: Is that pretty much a hard and fast rule that you guys like to adopt.

Melissa: Um, you should talk to Jack (*USA Today* 1A editor) about that because he decides who's going in the ears (same as billboard or skyboxes) and what's going to be a billboard, ah, but yeah, typically it seems to be a window into the Life section. The right ear. The left ear is typically sports.

Grant: OK. Excellent. Historically I've found that celebrity coverage from about the turn of the century has been a big part of newspaper coverage and continues to be



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today. Why do you all think that is?

Veronica: Give me the first part of that question again. I'm sorry.

Grant: Sure. I've just done my historical research on the subject. I've found that celebrity coverage from about the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century has been a big part of newspaper coverage like devoting a lot of time or resources to Hollywood and covering all of this and continues to be today. Why do you as journalists think that that is? Why do you think that this, you know, 100 years of, they can't get enough of celebrities?

Melissa: I'm curious as to why it wasn't before that, prominent before that.

Grant: Well because newspapers were kind of in their infancy in this country and there wasn't Hollywood and there wasn't radio.

Tim: I'm curious as to who the celebrities of 1905 were before there were movies and radio. Is there any way of disseminating?

Grant: Baseball. More like the 19 and early 19, ah, 15 to 18 and then the 20s when you got.

Tim: I mean, let's get to the 20s when you had movies and radio and why they disseminated sports broadcasting. Yeah.

Grant: Yes. Sports and stage and theater and things like that. But there were some marginalized sports stars back then as well.

Tim: Yeah.

Grant: Ty Cobb.

Melissa: But they still covered celebrities. It's just the nature of celebrity was different.

Grant: Right. But do you think just the public just can't get enough of these

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people's lives because they can't live them themselves? (laugh in background). I mean, why has this been such a fascination I guess is what I'm trying to get at?

Veronica: I think, um, in some ways celebrities are our, America's version of the royal family. They're people who usually popular because they seem to have everything, looks and style, money, position and success.

Grant: Yes.

Veronica: And yet, you know, Prince Charles sits there and says something to his lover and he's overheard on a phone conversation. So I think it's kind of a great leveler and people always want to know about people who are very very different from their life.

Grant: That's exactly what I've been told.

Melissa: And although they're different, um, they've become our interest in a lot of ways. We spend a lot of time with these people. We watch them in movies. You know, I mean, you know, Courtney Cox we're interested in what's going on in her life because she's been part of our life for so long.

Grant: For so long. That's a good point.

Melissa: Um, and you know, in some ways they're part of the family.

Tim: Yeah, especially in a society where perhaps traditional family values break down somewhat.

Grant: Yes.

Tim: You get a surrogate family situation going.

Melissa: In your television.

Grant: (laughs, other laugh).

Tim: Right. And once, once, you know by the 20s once movies and radio kick in,

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then you get a certain larger than life factor. You know, when you're seeing somebody up on the screen or hearing about them. And it just embodied what you heard on radio.

Grant: And you want to know what they're doing, you know, when they're not on the screen.

Tim: But you have some curiosity about, yeah, the world of Hollywood or . . .

Melissa: And in a broader sense, celebrities represent the culmination of the American dream. A lot of these people do not start out wealthy.

Grant: That's so true.

Melissa: They work their way up and you know in that way it's a very American. Tale of the American dream.

Grant: Ala Britney Spears.

Tim: Yeah, it goes on all the way through "American Idol." You know, it's a representation, anybody with a voice, supposedly can break through and become successful.

Grant: Excellent. Now does the fact that *USA Today* reaches such a large national audience give you guys more leeway to give readers a daily dose of the celebrity stuff? I mean because some of the smaller papers I see. They can't devote the time but I guess.

Melissa: What do you mean more leeway?

Grant: More space, more, um, I guess because you guys can write the stuff. That. I don't mean it to sound controversial, but . . .

Melissa: Um, we've, we've been dedicated to doing this since the beginning of the paper.

Grant: From the time this paper was launched, this has been a big part.

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Melissa: Um, and that's the only difference. We do it. And others chose not to.

Tim: I would say another difference we have compared to local papers is we're not shackled by what's going in any given town.

Melissa: Right.

Grant: Good point.

Tim: But in music, most daily papers' usual coverage is another act is coming in.

Grant: Concerts. Exactly.

Tim: Yeah, but obviously we can't do that, so we're able, but it gives us a chance to take sort of a more measured overall perspective of what's happening and what needs to be covered.

Grant: I mean, I think you guys cover it as much as any paper in the country and maybe more as far as space and types of stories. That's why this caught me because you reach this large audience and they must want this stuff. And they do want it. Um, I guess you guys are more mainstream. Do you think younger readers are drawn to this type of coverage? I mean do you guys try to tailor it? I mean, because everybody says newspapers can't get younger readers to pick up the paper habit. The celebrity stuff seems like the best battle to do this. What do you guys think of that?

Melissa: Yeah, we certainly don't ignore the younger reader. We certainly hope to appeal to the younger reader. But we don't do that to the point where we isolate the older readers. You really have to strike a balance. Um, we can't write about only what's on MTV. It's just not, I mean we write on occasion about MTV, but we'll also write about CBS. It's not like we're going to be slaves to them.

Grant: OK. So you, right, all right.

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Melissa: Um.

Grant: Like TV, sometimes the demo and stuff.

Melissa: Right. We're a little more realistic about what are readers want.

Tim: The music coverage for instance would range from 50 Cent to the Rolling Stones.

Grant: 50 Cent. (laughs).

Veronica: I mean it's clear with all the plethora of all the *In Touches* and the *Us's* and all the other millions that have sprung up within the past year that they're clearly an interest out there, and they're clearly going for young readers. They are, anyway.

Grant: Right.

Veronica: I would assume some (inaudible) of young people are interested just like older people are interested in celebrities.

Grant: These Internet Web sites. I mean "Smoking Gun." I mean people want this stuff, obviously. *OK* just sprung up. I don't know if you guys did a story on that, but ah. I'm wrapping this up. I just have a couple more questions. I appreciate you guys', um, answers. They're very good, um. Just real quick did any surveys, we talked about that, you really don't release that kind of information. I was going to say are younger readers drawn to this stuff. Um, getting back to your thing about the gossip, Veronica. I wanted to ask that question. Um, how does celebrity gossip find it's way into mainstream media such as *USA Today*? But it sounds to me like you guys are very careful and have more ethics when it comes to what you're going to publish on celebrity gossip. Like *Star* magazine, um, would maybe have more (inaudible) to do it. What do you guys make of it? Because this is kind of, ah, I mean it's really, um, a debate that's been going on *The*

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*New York Times* has quoted the *National Enquirer* before. Taking stories and following the *National Enquirer*. I just want to know how you guys. How does it find it's way in here? Are you guys careful about it? Do you have restrictions that you can't quote anonymous sources?

Melissa: We are extremely conservative.

Grant: OK.

Melissa: Especially in the last few years. Um, we're extremely careful about what information we use from other sources. What, how well things are sourced in those publications. We have a couple publications we trust. Most publications we don't. Um, and you know, we get what we can and we print what we can.

Grant: Right.

Melissa: But we won't print something that we do not know to be true. As far as (inaudible words) I think. (laughs).

Grant: Yeah, I was going to say.

Melissa: Like you'll say we have never said the Brad and Angelina are a couple. We never have. Because we don't know that to be true. I mean there's a lot of evidence that suggests that's the case.

Grant: Right.

Melissa: But whenever we write about them we're very careful not to say that they are a couple.

Grant: A couple.

Melissa: They have a relationship clearly. We do not know, the, you know.

Grant: The nuances of that.

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Melissa: Exactly.

Grant: OK. And so, when you mentioned those other publications. Ah, *Star*. I mean you guys get these publications here. I mean you must read them.

Melissa: Mm. Hmm.

Grant: I see them, but I don't know if that's just for to make sure they're not, um, getting a story that you didn't already have or they're . . .

Melissa: We're not, we don't ah, you know, we're not slaves to the tabloids. If they have a story we can't nail. We can't nail it. You know, we try to approach the idea in another direction. Or we, um, I'm trying to think of an example.

Grant: Sure.

Melissa: Um, or we, you know, we keep very aware of what's that's going on and when the next time we interview that person or talk to that person, you know, we make sure we address it. You know stories have been in other publications, we put it that way.

Grant: OK. Any of you guys want to respond to competition and gossip? I know you mentioned it earlier. It sounds like you're very careful about, um.

Melissa: We really run into that primarily in the People (page) coverage. Not too much in film.

Veronica: I mean we ask, I mean if we're doing, somebody who had some some . . .

Melissa: (inaudible).

Veronica: Yeah I think Donna (inaudible) interviewed, um, Jean-Claude Van Damme's lady.

Grant: Oh. OK.

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Veronica: And in the course of the article of course what a year ago, Diane Lane called police on her husband (inaudible name) about a domestic or something. So we ask about it in the context of, but that wasn't the lead. I think that was like the next to the last graph of the story. I mean we ask the questions that are out there.

Grant: OK.

Veronica: But we are objective and we are trying to get a source, a knowledgeable source to it to say 'yes, this is true' or 'this is not true.' They could be lying, but Diane Lane (inaudible) said it was a misunderstanding or whatever. We do not print an anonymous source said such and such. We don't do that.

Grant: Right. OK. Um, just a couple more questions, I think we've kind of gone over this, but I just want to nail it down a little more. How much does the public's want for celebrity stories play a part in your decisions? Do you kind of, I guess, have a pulse of what people want with this stuff?

Melissa: Well we're really guided by the levels of supervision above us. Um, you know, they are, they sort of devote the amount of resources they want to each coverage area. And if they want it, they start, keep giving us more resources, we keep doing more stuff. So . . .

Grant: How would, how then would you say your staffing levels? I mean do you think you have what you, I mean every newspaper, they wish they could have more, more reporters, more editors. Um, but.

Melissa: Yeah.

Grant: Even in this unbelievable, um, publication. But you feel like you're able to, um, give the people what they want with what you got right now?



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Melissa: We get by. I'd definitely like to have some more people.

Grant: All right. And this is the last question. Um, I apologize up front if it's, going to catch you off guard. But is there a sacrifice . . .

Tim: Save the tough one for last.

Grant: Yeah. (Background laughs). You guys make not think it's that tough, but it's sort of a little bit about what I'm trying to get at too. Do you think there's a sacrifice *USA Today* makes by publishing the celebrity stuff in lieu of more traditional forms of newspaper content: hard news, politics, health care, education? Because some purists would say, well I don't want, I want very little of this celebrity stuff. I would rather have more of the stuff that quote unquote matters. What do you guys think of that? Is there a sacrifice?

Veronica: I think, I would say we do a lot of politics, sports, health. I think we're carrying a good thing.

Tim: Certainly we share the Life section with education and health coverage, you know, with each other every day, so.

Veronica: They get space every day. We get space every day. And they may choices about what they cover, but I would not say we're sacrificing, you know, if somebody has the cure for cancer for Britney Spears has, you know, stretch marks.

Grant: That's (laughs, background laughs). That's what I'm getting at.

Veronica: We don't.

Grant: So a lot of people I've talked to so far have said, you know, there's a place in the paper for everything. It's not like by doing this, you're neglecting a cure for cancer or some of these serious.

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Tim: I think the people here at all levels are concerned with striking a balance.

Grant: Yeah. I'm hearing that a lot. So the four sections like you said, feed off each other and balance each other out and no section it sounds like is better than any other section or more important.

Melissa: Well, I would say our section is the best section, but . . . (background laughs).

Grant: Well, I think, I totally agree. I mean, I think.

Tim: Certainly the best editors. (background laughs).

Grant: Outstanding. But ah, you know I mean, that, that pretty much wraps it up guys. I can't thank you enough for taking the time to do this. Um, this is going to be pretty much the crux of my thesis, these interviews. I'll be analyzing them and writing the body of my work based on what you guys have said.

Veronica: Who else are you talking to?

Grant: I've got the list here, but um.

Veronica: Other papers?

Grant: This is, um, no, this is, *USA Today* is the case study, so I'm pretty much using you guys and kind of the whole gatekeeping. The whole how you guys do what you do type of thing. Um, with all the competition that's out there and how you guys keep doing it and the fact that newspapers, you can argue, are becoming a little more irrelevant or other media keeps swarming on the poor newspaper, but you guys seem to be holding your own. That's why I wanted to talk to Chloe (online Life editor) and, ah . . .

Melissa: Debbie.

Grant: Debbie, exactly, to get kind of the online stuff because I know that's a big

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part of what you guys do as well.

Appendix K. Interview with *USA Today* Photo Editor John

Grant: What are the paper's basic guidelines to decide what celebrity news you give readers? Is it simply what writer and editors, um, consider newsworthy and interesting, or is it more than that?

John: Well, of course, that's a big part of it, what the writers and editors consider interesting, um, that fills in the slow period, but there's also the news of the day.

Grant: OK.

John: So if you have an award show, if you have premiere, if you have a breaking news story surrounding celebrities . . .

Grant: Right.

John: . . . like divorce, an arrest, um, something that has made news, um, that rises to the top (inaudible) as something in play that we will fill in when there's not a premiere, when there's not an awards show, when there's not an event.

Grant: Absolutely. And ah, are celebrity stories, though, like what you talked about, pretty much just profiles and courts dealings such as divorce, criminal charges along with new movies and TV show advances, or does *USA Today* try to do more with the celebrity stuff? Kind of explain that.

John: Well, from my perspective, one of the things the paper does is they look for trends, whether it's fashion trends, that readers might want to pick up on, like in fashion trends, of course, are primarily driven by the women celebrities.

Grant: Sure.

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John: So it's a hand bag or a type of top or a brand of sunglasses.

Grant: Yes.

John: Or something like that . . .

Grant: Yeah.

John: . . . you know, we might do a little package of photographs with some quotes from either the publicist or from the manufacturers or designers or whatever. Um, and then, periodically we go through this very, from my point of view, speculative, um, process of announcing the summer's hookups and breakups and new couples and the ins and outs of that sort of thing.

Grant: And the celebrity photos play a big part in that, I mean, obviously, there, that's what draws people in.

John: You want to have photos of the people wearing the clothes or in the case of the couples together. We're limited in terms of what we can run because we have some pretty strict standards, guidelines, of agencies that we will and will not work with and circumstances under which photos are taken that we consider, um, out of bounds, um, that can get, that can, ah, limit our ability to show people the same photos as say *US* magazine or *OK* the new tabloid magazine we cited earlier . . .

Grant: Right.

John: . . . um, would run. But it's a question of whether or not we're willing to deal with the paparazzi that resort to certain, you know . . .

Grant: Can you talk more about that because I think Jack mentioned the long lens paparazzi, that you don't those kinds of photos, or . . . ?

John: Well, you know, I don't want to, I don't want to, you know, dispute

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anything Jack said without actually getting, you know . . .

Grant: Well no, just explain it a little more.

John: . . . sharing his whole makeup of the thing, but actually, our standard is that we won't run anything that was obtained in an illegal way, of course, or in a way in which the celebrity was confronted, intimidated, um, where a reaction was provoked, where a photographer just got right into somebody's face, um. But actually I think that Jack's understanding might be a little incorrect about what a long lens photo is versus what a short lens photo is.

Grant: Right.

John: Um, long lens photo as long as you're not, ah, intruding in somebody's personal, personal property . . .

Grant: OK.

John: . . . we're, we're pretty much OK with it. If you can see it from the street, if you can see it on the street, ah, we're not going to, we're not going to, shy away from those photos. We've purchased helicopter photos before for one of Jennifer Lopez's, ah, many weddings.

Grant: Wow.

John: That was really unusual for us to do that. I know this precedes me, my being at the paper, but I remember it running. It was, ah, photos from Brad and Jennifer's wedding and Madonna and Sean Penn's wedding. I seem to remember seeing those in the archives at some point.

Grant: Wow.

John: Um, that were helicopter pictures. Um, those pictures are the ones that are

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really, really expensive. Um, we, we tend to always have to, um, we get the second tier, we're not in there bidding against the *National Enquirers*, the *People* magazines or anything like that. We, we don't get the absolute best photo, but we might get a photo from the same photographer. But it's not going to be their real money shot.

Grant: I see.

John: Um, part of the reason we get that can second tier is the exposure that the photographers get. Because we're a daily, if something occurs on Saturday, and it's in *USA Today* on Monday, and the tabs and the celebrity magazines haven't had a chance to get to it, um, it helps sort of advance the cause of the photographer, so we get a cut rate.

Grant: So you guys get can sometimes scoop or get it first because they know it will run first here.

John: Yeah.

Grant: I see. Fascinating.

John: Um, but, you know, to get back to your original question about working with paparazzi, like I said, you know, if there's intimidation, if there's, ah, the photographers trying to provoke a reaction, we won't purchase those. But we have in the past, and it's sparked a lot of discussion, is why it is now there are now guidelines in place. Um, the one thing that we have to keep in mind is, you know, one person's, ah, one person's Britney Spears with Kevin Federline is another person's, ah, indicted CEO or Judge William Rehnquist, who was you know, very very ill. And we wouldn't say we won't run a photo of an indicted CEO because we will have to stake his house out.

Grant: Right.

John: Um, and we wouldn't say we would not run a photograph of William

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Rehnquist because we'd have to stake his house out in order to get a telephoto lens photo of that person. That's, that's the right of the press to go after those photographs.

Somebody who's reading the news section might be far more interested in Rehnquist.

Somebody reading, ah, the Money section might be far more interested in, ah, some CEO.

Grant: Yeah right.

John: Now there is crossover, of course, with Martha Stewart where you've got a CEO who also lives in the Life section.

Grant: Yes. Celebrity. Yes.

John: But, you know, you don't say, you can't, you can't handcuff the Life section and say you can't run those sorts of photos without saying guess that means we'll never run another perp walk.

Grant: Um.

John: And, you know, to the editors in the Life section, they are one in the same. I don't think our colleagues in News or Money appreciate that standpoint or approve of that standpoint. But they would appreciate the (inaudible); they would appreciate the spirit of journalism. But ah . . .

Grant: Absolutely.

John: . . . um, there's ah, there is a difficulty in this argument, though, and that is that the news. If I'm looking for a photo of William Rehnquist, I can send a staff photographer out there, or I know that the Associated Press is going to be out there. If I'm looking for a new photo of Britney Spears, the AP is not stocking Britney Spears on a daily basis. They're not out looking for, you know, a candid photo of her, so then you



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have to start dealing with these agencies, um, the paparazzi agencies. Um, that's where it becomes very, very difficult to know who you're dealing with because the paparazzi agencies have gone away from using their own staff to now buying photos from every Tom, Dick and Harry that comes in off the street. They just care about the photograph, so you don't, you're dealing with representatives as opposed to directly . . .

Grant: Directly with the photographers.

John: Yeah, you're not dealing with photojournalists. I mean, they are, they are snap shooters; they are amateur photographers.

Grant: They don't have the skills that, say, your staff does.

John: They don't have the skills or the training that, that most photojournalists have. That's, that's not across the board, but that's the new breed. There is a level of paparazzi that is very highly trained. You know, they sort of, they made this new model of, of paparazzi, but they were the guys who did know what the heck they were doing.

Grant: Yeah. Have there been any reader surveys about celebrity news or whether these types of stories are content people want to see more of?

John: Well.

Grant: In general.

John: Yeah, I'm sure that there have been, um, I know that Dora (managing editor of Life section) feels very strongly that *USA Today* readers enjoy our celebrity coverage, um, I think, you know, not because it's important. You never have to forget that what you're talking about is a lot of really silly people who get paid way too much money for what they do. I mean, a lot of these folks aren't terribly talented. They've just managed to work themselves into the right position so that, you know, they're exploiting what limited

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talent they got . . .

Grant: Right.

John: . . . or whatever sort of deals that got them into their position. These are not really terribly talented actors and actresses.

Grant: But people can't seem to get enough.

John: Because it's water cooler stuff. I mean, it's, it's stuff people talk about over a coffee break or with total strangers. It's cocktail chatter. There are far more important issues than this, but it's the lowest common denominator of, of, of news that's out there. It's something that doesn't require a lot of thought. I've sat in this room and listened to us talk about the celebrity news of the day, and people will talk about celebrities as if they are their next-door neighbors who they have, you know, evening discussion of their entire lives. They know this is how she is, this is how they are. Oh, so and so's a crackhead, so and so's, you know, of this sexual persuasion, and, and it's bogus. It's just, you know, these people don't, and I'm referring to my colleagues. They don't really know this stuff.

Grant: Know this stuff.

John: They don't know this stuff for a fact. There's a lot of assumption that goes on, and that sort of spins itself into celebrity coverage. Some of it is because they read the tabs, and they believe what they read from the tabs. The tabs do have a track record of publishing a kernel of truth that does eventually . . . the kernel of truth does become eventually the fact that everybody knows. That's in there, you know, but tabs really do blow it up and make it look far more grotesque or grandiose or, or lurid than it really is, you know, most of the time. Again, sometimes they've been right, and they've been right

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because they bought the information from the people who know. You know, that's another piece of this. "OK" magazine, again is another one that says, "yeah, we're going to buy coverage, we're going to buy actual . . ."

Grant: Buy information and photos.

John: Yes.

Grant: A package deal. Man, that's, that's amazing. Now this is what, this is kind of the crux of my thesis, and we just started to hit on it. How much does competition from TV, cable, the Internet and other publications like *OK* and *US Weekly* matter when deciding what and how many stories to cover.

John: Well.

Grant: Do you look at the competition every day?

John: I certainly don't, um, but then, you know, ah, the new People editor is in charge of doing that. Dora looks closely. Melissa, who is one of the senior assignment editors.

Grant: Yes. I talked to her.

John: And, ah, Dan, the DME, so on and so on. They all look at a huge amount of this material. And then, of course, there's the reporting staff. There's the New York reporters, the couple of reporters who are based here, the LA reporters. But it's a relatively small staff. There's only about six people that are, that are pulling, you know, all this information together. And they're using the same sources that you just cited as possible competition. They're looking at the Internet, they're watching the shows . . .

Grant: Yes.

John: . . . at night and in the morning. They're getting press releases. I frankly

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don't know if they're getting tips. I would hope that, you know, the LA guys and the New York guys would be betting some sort of tip.

Grant: But are your photo staff looking at how photos are getting played elsewhere and, it's like, "hey, can we," you know, concern yourself with that?

John: No, because we tend to go at it from, if there's, again, if there's an event, sure. You know we come in in the morning, and we know there was a premiere the night before. We'll look and see what was there, and we'll make some recommendations. We might say, "Hey, there's a really great photo of Johnny Depp this morning." Or there's a really terrific photo of Will Smith and his kids. Or, you know, gee, this is the first time I've seen this couple together in public before. Um, so we don't look at the paparazzi sites every day. Um, we do look at the wires as I said before. The wires, for lack of a better word, the legitimate wires, the Associated Press, Getty, Reuters, don't do the sort of celebrity photo photography every day.

Grant: Don't every day.

John: Yeah, yeah. Getty does. Getty covers it more than anybody else. Um, because that's a big part of their business model is entertainment news. But there's just, there's too much of it. I mean there are, we have three photo editors on the photo desk in life, we have an assistant editor, and then we have a photo assistant. There are five of us.

Grant: Too much to consume every day.

John: We're doing the cover stories and the better life stuff and travel and music, and I mean we're doing everything. So we're relying on, what we do is we get a request from the People editor saying, you know, we're doing this story, can you find a photo to go with it? And a couple of the reporters go so far as to look at the Getty sites, and they'll

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say, 'I saw this one, and it's perfect for my story,' and that's fine as long as it meets, you know, as long it's up to our standard. That's just . . .

Grant: You'll work with it. Is there a thought process, though, to make sure *USA Today* has celebrity coverage so readers don't have to go elsewhere for it?

John: I think that that's probably, that's not a question I feel real comfortable answering.

Grant: And in these meetings, and as you're, is it an ultimate goal of this paper . .

John: Well . . .

Grant: . . . to be the, the voice on celebrity news?

John: I think that that, again, that's a really good question to ask like Max. I think that, you know as the top editor of the paper, I think that Max would say, "No, we want to supply our readers with a smorgasbord. We want to, we want to inform our readers as much as possible." To be the top celebrity covering, you know, publication in the country?

Grant: But a place where that maybe it's, if you know you read it in *USA Today*, you know it's true. The standards are there, the journalism ethics are in place that, you know, this is the place where you're going to get the real deal.

John: Yeah. Yeah. Well in combination with (usatoday).com, which obviously has a different set of resources, and they skew more towards younger readers, and obviously, that we have to keep in mind here is, you know, there's retaining our existing readers, attracting younger readers. But are we ever going to launch a full-out, ah, ah, you know, attack on the other publications? You know this is the only place you need to go, day in and day out. I can't imagine it. We would have to have, we'd have to have far

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more news hole for it.

Grant: Mm. Hmm.

John: We would have to have a far greater staff. We would have to have a larger budget for photography because these are photos that have to be purchased as opposed to photos that we get from the agencies that we already have a contract with.

Grant: Yes.

John: Sort of, we have cart blanche with some and we have, and then there are others where we have to order off the menu.

Grant: (laughs).

John: Some places there's a buffet, and some places you're stuck with what the special of the day is.

Grant: Yes. John, that's a great point. Um, film and TV stars, musical artists, prominent professional athletes, some politicians and even some high authors, ah, is this a pretty thorough list of what the paper considers celebrities?. Is there anyone else, kind of this whole buffet, if you will, or am I missing some people?

John: Um, no, that's a pretty good list. For CEO, there's only like the Jack Welchs, the Martha Stewarts.

Grant: True.

John: The really big names. Um, I think that there's always a lot of interest in this room, in the Life conference room, when some CEO gets caught with a younger woman, you know, this like some 60-year-old guy, you know, runs away with a 25-year-old sex kitten. There's always a lot of interest in that. And we like to put a face on it. Oh, you know, gee, how does that fit in with the rest of the world. How does that fit in with the

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rest of society.

Grant: (laughs)

John: If my 60-year-old neighbor took off with a 25-year-old sex (inaudible), you know, there's an attempt to make people understand how they can relate to that type of world.

Grant: Yeah.

John: But yeah, you're absolutely right, it's, it's motion picture and TV actors and actresses. You didn't say stage, you didn't say, say theater.

Grant: That's true. Ah . . .

John: Um, and I think that we do a pretty job of, we actually do a very good job of covering theater. We're probably the only national publication, um, except the *New York Times* if you want to call the *New York Times* a national publication, and you might as well. Um, we're the only national publication that, that provides regular coverage from Broadway. Um, but there aren't, it's just a different level of celebrity on Broadway.

Grant: Yeah, it's kind of a lower tier unless it's a big name in maybe motion pictures or TV that went on to do a Broadway show.

John: But we deal with the great, the almost great, the never great, the nearly great. Ah . . .

Grant: Reality stars.

John: The reality stars are just, yeah, I know that you're very enthusiastic about (inaudible). Your enthusiasm when we were talking about . . .

Grant: "The Amazing Race."

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John: Yeah, I just do not get that at all. I just don't even. . . .

Grant: I like *Survivor* and *Big Brother*, the CBS staples. But you're right, these other ones I'm starting to grow a little tired of.

John: Yeah, I watched half a dozen, over the five years that it's been on, maybe a half dozen installments of *American Idol*. Um, have never watched a minute of *Survivor* .

Grant: Wow.

John: Have never watched a minute of *The Amazing Race*. Just couldn't care less. It's all fake. It's like wrestling.

Grant: (laughs)

John: You know, sorry Mark Burnett is, you know, it's all canned.

Grant: Yeah.

John: And I have no real interest in that. Not enough hours in the day.

Grant: Um, cool. Ah, in general how often does the front page become a place where *USA Today* will publish a story about celebrity or celebrities? Like the Jackson verdict for instance comes to mind, but does it have to be, ah, even a cover story maybe, it's a trend, like the *Desperate Housewives* things comes to mind.

John: Yeah. I think we probably did do at least one *Desperate Housewives* story out front.

Grant: Yes.

John: Um. We, actual cover stories . . .

Grant: I guess it has to have a national hook for it to be on A1, or what do you think? I mean you've seen the paper.

John: Yeah, um, we're always looking for a blockbuster movie that's worth



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putting on the front. They're always very interested in that. But the problem there seems to be that, and this is more of a Hollywood problem than it is ours . . .

Grant: Right.

John: . . . is that if we, if we feature any single movie on the front page and say this is this summer's blockbuster and it fizzles for whatever reason. And if you ask people about the movie "Pearl Harbor" out on the morning desk, um, the Ben Affleck, ah, Michael Bates thing a couple years ago. Um, you'll understand the hesitation in putting any one movie sort of out front. Ah, they express a lot of interest over the course of, ah, the year. Fridays, obviously is a great day for us to have something on 1A, um, because the paper's out there for three days. It helps to have something that doesn't have a time peg to it.

Grant: Sure.

John: So if you've got a big celebrity face on the front page on a Friday, your sales might hold up a little bit better over the course of three days.

Grant: The weekend, yeah.

John: Yeah. Um.

Grant: Interesting.

John: We look for things off of box office trends for 1A. Um, they, I'm surprised they weren't more interested in this summer's box office. You know, where the box office was down sixteen weeks in a row, seventeen weeks in a row and . . .

Grant: Right.

John: I don't know if they took anything off of that, maybe a strip story, but they didn't take a cover story that I remember. Um, they'll do stuff off the Oscars.

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Grant: Ok, Emmys.

John: They'll, not Emmys so much. The Oscars, the Oscars are the Super Bowl, you know. The Oscars are, are the Life section's Super Bowl. There's just no other way to put it. And they might not run the results as the cover story. In fact, they wouldn't run the results as the cover story. They'll always run either a billboard or at least, and there's usually a billboard off of, um, the winners. Ah, but . . .

Grant: Yeah.

John: But what they are looking for, and again the Oscars are on Sunday, they'll look for a Friday story that says this is what this year's Oscars means. Um, and even that's a story that hasn't always sold over the last . . .

Grant: Sold big?

John: No, I'm saying sold to 1A.

Grant: Oh, to 1A right.

John: It always, it, it, it's always a very clever story for us. We always manage to find something different to look at. Like last year's, ah, was this was not a really, ah, most of the, the majority of the nominated films were not about healthy topics or healthy people. Um, for example, you know, *Ray* was nominated, and he was a heroin addict. Um, ah, *Sideways* was a big, ah . . .

Grant: Drinking.

John: Yeah, it's entirely about being an alcoholic, about being, yeah, drinking to excess and the problems that can cause. Um, *Neverland*, there's a guy who (inaudible) thought his relationships with children were . . .

Grant: Bizarre.

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John: Yeah, dangerous. Anyway.

Grant: Is there a feeling that these types of stories are widely read by other newsroom editors and writers, here and elsewhere, I mean, kind of a guilty pleasure?

John: Yeah.

Grant: I mean do they just read it and give you feedback?

John: No, ah, wait a minute I'm sorry. Within the building?

Grant: Yeah, let's talk about within the building or even . . .

John: I'm coming at it from a photo perspective.

Grant: OK.

John: And I've always had a real tough time with my supervisors. Um, to understand the hierarchy, I'm a supervising photo editor, which means I run the photo desk in the Life section. Above me is the assistant director of photography, director of photography, ah, deputy managing editor of graphics and photography and managing editor of graphics and photography.

Grant: OK.

John: That's just in the photo department alone. Um, with very few exceptions, most of those people do not give a rat's ass about celebrity, about entertainment. They are bordering on ignorant on pop culture. I mean they just . . .

Grant: Wow.

John: They don't know who these people are. What they rely on is, is . . .

Grant: The young?

John: No what they rely on is my coming to them and saying "This is an important story." That's why I need to spend money to buy this photograph, or this is a

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really great get. This is a really great interview for us, and I need to put a staff photographer on a plane to do the photo shoot because I don't want to entrust it to a freelancer. And you see, that's a, that's a, that's a bigger part of what I do than for that matter what Greg and Anthony do, than the daily hubbub.

Grant: Right.

John: We're far more involved in the celebrity profiles and generating original photographs out of shoots either that we . . .

Grant: Are invited to.

John: . . . that we generate or that we are invited to, yeah, one of the two, yeah.

Grant: Cool. Um, this isn't really your specialty, but have you done any tracking to see what celebrity stories on the Web site get a lot of hits?

John: I don't. It's news of the day.

Grant: Yeah we're going to be talking. Yeah, that's fine. Historically, I've found that celebrity coverage from about the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century has been a big part of newspaper coverage and continues to be today. Why do you as a journalist think that is? This whole longevity. Is it just people want to learn about the stars?

John: No, because it's . . .

Grant: Fantasy?

John: It's fantasy. Because life is hard, the world is an ugly place, there's a lot of terrible shit going on,

Grant: Yes.

John: . . . and it's escapism. It's just like the same reason you go to the movies or turn on the TV to watch, you know, *Survivor* or to watch, um, ah, *CSI* to watch anything

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that's on TV.

Grant: Yeah, *CSI*.

John: It's just to get away from the economy sucks, gas is \$3 a gallon. Nearly 2,000 guys have been killed, ah, you know, less than three years and never mind, you know, that's just Americans in Iraq. Um, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. You know, there's, it's just escape, and it's easy to understand and pretend that you understand, pretend that you have a knowledge about this stuff . . .

Grant: Right.

John: than it is to try to understand Social Security or why crime is, you know, where it is or getting your kids to college. And that stuff frankly, I even have a hard time getting my head around.

Grant: Yes.

John: It's far easier to just dive into . . .

Grant: Celebrity.

John: Celebrity or a review of a movie or a book.

Grant: Sure.

John: I mean, there's a lot of levels. I mean, you're dealing very much with the celebrity aspect of this, um, but there are pieces that kneads all of this that are really important to consider. Um, (inaudible) has been working on a project for the last year. Um, that I've been driving and based on young woman's attempt to obtain fame. And she's a, she's a country singer.

Grant: Mm. Hmm.

John: And I got really interested about, over the course of the last several years in

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the aspect of fame from the perspective of the person trying to achieve it. Why would go after celebrity? Why would they go after fame? Because when you look at the down side, which is having guys chase you around with cameras, not being able to go for a walk, not being able to take your kids out in public without having somebody, you know, some bozo stick his camera in your face. That's a really tremendous downside, so.

Grant: It is.

John: So what we've been doing is tracking this young woman through the course of her first record being released as she gets up and tries to, to acquire a level of fame. So, the other piece of celebrity, the other piece of, of fame is the creative role. Before I was pretty disparaging about the lack of talent and . . .

Grant: Right.

John: and that really is true. I mean, time and time again when people have been surveyed about why they're not going to the movies this year, it's because the product sucks. The product is not good. There are not enough good movies out there. But at the same time, there are, there are good movies that are made, and they're made by people who have an artistic soul, who have an artistic talent, who have a message, who has something to say. And then the same thing with this young woman who has been writing music since she was like 11, 12, 13 years old.

Grant: Wow.

John: Ah, and finally got a record deal and has a support network of family and friends. Her dad is out there on her tour with her. The record company believes in her, etcetera, etcetera. And she's really focused, yes, on becoming famous, but if after this first record is done and she goes in the city of, the first record did very, very well. She

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was fine. It was the top-selling debut record by a new artist in country . . .

Grant: Nice.

John: in I think the last 10 years. We got really lucky when we chose this person who actually sort of took off, you know we weren't covering somebody that nobody had heard of before the entire year. But if she releases another album, and it immediately just goes to you know, into the (cut-out bin or could have been), um, and she ends up having to tuck her tail back between her legs and go back to Texas and she's playing little honky tonk dives, she'd be just as happy because she'd be doing what she loves to do.

Grant: Right.

John: Now, if Jessica Simpson found herself acting in community theater in Fort Myers, Florida. She's not going to be a very happy girl.

Grant: No.

John: You know, she, because she doesn't have that, I don't think, I don't see that creative soul.

Grant: Yes.

John: She's got something else, and she lives in the moment. We just did a project on her. We did a little spread on her, and I ended up having to look through about 200 photographs of her that had been shot in the previous two weeks, which is a really interesting thing to think of, that like in less than two weeks 200 photos have been made available to me, readily, those were the easy ones. I could have easily found more, but this was 200 photographs of her at events, you know, surrounding the promotion of, of . .

Grant: *Dukes of Hazzard*

John: Yeah, the new movie, right. But there's a thing that I noticed through all of

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these photographs and that is that she really is very aware of everything that's going on. She makes eye contact a lot. She reacts to the situations around her. She's really working hard to make herself aware, and I'm talking to Ruby (the People editor at *USA Today*) about it, and she said "Yeah, she's a little, you know, beauty pageant contestant, you know the little kids beauty pageant?"

Grant: Yes.

John: Of course like, she's always shaking people's hands and looking right in their eye, which is what a little beauty pageant contestants do. It's sort of crazy, but anyway, I . . .

Grant: Yeah! No that's great. I just have a couple more questions John. Um, does the fact that *USA Today* reaches such a large national audience give you guys more leeway to give readers the daily dose of celebrity news?

John: It gives us less. It gives us less leeway.

Grant: Oh.

John: Um, first off, it's very, very, very important that we be right, um, and we get into debates about taste, um, both from a photo standpoint and from a word standpoint.

Grant: Uh, huh.

John: That other publications don't have to. And it's awkward. We had a, we had a, we had a tough situation last week that I don't think was handled terribly well, um, involving a photograph of, ah, a movie actor, where editors here at the paper tried to put themselves into the minds of the readers. I think that's always a really scary thing. Rather than just saying "This photograph offends me personally, and I don't think we should run



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it.” People will walk around saying “I think readers won’t get it. I think readers will be offended. I think that readers will, you know, will be turned off by this.” I don’t think that you can say that you know what readers think. I mean, this is, just say what you think and why you think it. Say that you don’t like this photo because you don’t think that women should be showing that much cleavage or that, that, guys shouldn’t be, you know, doing what this guy was doing in this photograph.

Grant: Right.

John: You know or say that the double entendre that was this photograph’s message is offensive. Say it offends you. Don’t be chicken shit, you know, and don’t hide behind “I think the readers would be offended.” We don’t do enough readers surveys.

Grant: To know that.

John: Yeah, exactly, exactly. So anyway it has to be right, you have to be, you have to, we think about the reader in a different sort of way than I think when at times shouldn’t. Um, but no we definitely don’t have more leeway because, um, because of who we are, um, because we had a horrible, horrible lapse of journalistic integrity at the paper, um, with Jeremy. Um, you know when you have a pathological liar on your staff for many, many years, ah, since the birth of the paper, actually. Um, who was fabricating entire events, entire news stories, ah, and you have to admit to your 6 million readers that yeah, we published this guy, we’re terribly sorry because you trust us. They look at you from a different point of view. So yeah, you know, I mean from a, they’re looking for you to prove yourself right every single day. That’s why we have a corrections and clarifications policy.

Grant: Yes.

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John: Ah, I mean and the thing is, yes, this is silly stuff, celebrity journalism,

Grant: Right.

John: I think this, ah, you're covering silly people, but you gotta get it right because otherwise why should people come and, and see you?

Grant: Right, and when I say leeway, I'm also talking about, you know, other papers may be able to donate their, I'm sorry, dedicate a half a page inside or something, whereas you guys seem to have a little more ability to, um, because, not the dummy down of it, I guess, but you have the ability to know that people are going to be interested in this stuff, generally so you can give them that.

John: Yeah, we're very creative about our use of space. Um, (inaudible), who is the design desk chief is very good at moving ads around to create some nice space.

Grant: Yes.

John: Um, he and his other designers, um, use that space well. Um, when you add in to the fact that not only is there about the news of the day, the premieres and the awards shows and or whatever trend, as you pointed out, today's paper had a lot of celebrity news in it in the form of the TV story.

Grant: Yes.

John: Um.

Grant: *American Idol*.

John: Yeah, there, there are other ways that our, our, ah, let's see our movie reviews, excuse me our music reviews ran today. Um, so there's more celebrity news in editorial content.

Grant: Yes.

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John: And it's, and it's criticism by nature, um, but it is celebrity driven. Brad Paisley's review is gonna get read, um, in part because it's Brad Paisley.

Grant: Right.

John: Not just because it's *USA Today* writing about a record. You know, he's one of the top names in country music right now.

Grant: Do you think younger readers are drawn to this type of coverage? I don't know if a survey bears this out, but we talked about it earlier. I mean this celebrity news, but trying to get the younger readers. I mean, it's so hard to pull them in . . .

John: Yeah.

Grant: the habit, but this stuff has to be a good shot.

John: You would hope. I would hope. I would hope they would come to us for whatever reason including our celebrity coverage and then look at the buffet.

Grant: Yes.

John: You know read the news section, read the Money page, I mean it's, in many ways you could be asking all of these same questions about sports coverage.

Grant: You could.

John: Sports is silly guys playing games as opposed to silly guys, you know, acting on TV. Um.

Grant: ( laughs).

John: There's a lot of money at stake. There's a huge amount of money at stake, um, for all concerned, um, for the athletes, for the actors, for who owns the teams, for who makes the movies, for this newspaper in attracting readers. And, and the paper has been long known for its Sports and Money coverage, now for its celebrity coverage, and,

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you know, for the news coverage. Of course, I mean, it's a balancing act.

Grant: OK.

John: You're trying to bring people in. Max (*USA Today* editor) has the expression he likes to throw out there. He loves to hear people say "I saw it in *USA Today*." So if they see it in, if they see some piece of celebrity gossip or an item about a celebrity, and it makes them want to buy the paper the next day, and then they start reading other parts of the paper, that's all good. You know, what it really . . .

Grant: That's great.

John: yeah.

Grant: And when you just said that, that's my almost second to last question here. How much does celebrity gossip find its way into mainstream media like *USA Today*? I know you said your careful with the practices.

John: Yeah. I don't think we . . .

Grant: Do you see the gossip coming in?

John: There have been discussions in this room about the paper's sourcing policy, about, ah, how some other publications would be able to print something and not have to have a named source, and how we can deal with that, you know, and get around it is a really scary phrase to hear in a newsroom. "How can we get around that policy?"

Grant: Yeah.

John: Um, there have been previous people working on the celebrity desk, the people desk who felt that if it's in all the tabs, that that should be good enough. If we just quote the tabs, and we say, the *Star* said.

Grant: Mm.

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John: But that's not good enough, because how do we know where they got their information? Um, so then it becomes a whole, you know, OK, if the *Star*, if, if, if one of the tabs says it or prints it, and we call up the publicist for Jennifer Lopez. The tabs say Jennifer Lopez has had her, you know, breasts reduced. And we call the publicist and say "The *Star* says that Jennifer's had her breasts reduced. Do you care to comment?" "Well we never comment on anything that concerns the physical appearance of our client." Then, all of a sudden you've got a way, you know, the *Star* reports and other media, you know. I've, we've looked at these things a whole lot of different ways.

Grant: Right.

John: Um, I don't know.

Grant: You don't, yeah, no, that's fine. But it sounds to me like *USA Today* from what other people have told me, there's a different level of what you will run, versus what you can run.

John: Yeah, you know, gossip, gossip is what it is. Um, it's not necessarily based in truth. But if you're talking about your next door neighbor . . .

Grant: Yeah.

John: because you heard your next door neighbors yelling in the middle of the night.

Grant: (laughs).

John: Unless you saw what he was yelling at, you can assume he was having a fight with his, you know, wife. And you could say to the neighbor on the other side, 'Gee, I heard Tom and Mary going at it last night.' Tom could have been yelling at the TV, you know.

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Grant: Yeah. Two, two last questions, and we'll be done here. This last one I think we've talked about. How much does the public's want for celebrity stories play a part in the decisions that you make here? It's hard to tell, but it seems like you always have the reader in mind.

John: Yeah, if there's a really hot celebrity story out there, and it's, ah, let's say that we know at around noon that there might be something really interesting out there. And it can be fun.

Grant: Right.

John: You know or it could be, it could be lascivious, or it could be legal.

Grant: Right.

John: I mean, but if we know there's a celebrity sort of talker, I mean bottom line is these are all 'hey Marthas.'

Grant: Yes.

John: You know what a hey Martha is?

Grant: Hey Mable. We use it hey Mable.

John: OK.

Grant: Same thing.

John: Um, if there's a really strong hey Martha celebrity story in play at noon, and we've already decided how the front page is gonna be chopped up, how it's going to be designed, we know that OK, top story is some, I don't know, news conference about new television shows. And the cover story is something about, um, antique car collectors and the bottom story's a book story. At 5 o'clock we're standing around looking at the paper for the next day, those two strip stories, the top and bottom strip story, are, they're in

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jeopardy until the paper goes to bed for the night. So (inaudible) if somebody nails that hey Martha celebrity story, and if Dora (managing editor of Life section) really likes that hey Martha, that other story is gone. It's either going to be . . .

Grant: Inside.

John: It's either going to be inside.

Grant: Or held.

John: Or it's going to live to be printed another day or it just dies on the vine. In most cases, either it finds a home or it lives to run another day. Um.

Grant: Right (laughs).

John: But you know if it's a talker, if it's something that Dora thinks people will pick up the paper and look at it and go 'hey' and then they'll chat about that around their water cooler all day, she's all for it, particularly if she thinks we're first. If she thinks that

Grant: This is a scoop.

John: . . . if she thinks the *Today* show or *Good Morning America* or whatever CBS's thing is called, um, would,

Grant: *The Early Show*.

John: Yeah, if she thinks that Katie Couric or Matt Lauer is going to hold up *USA Today*, which they've done and say, this morning, you know, 'Matt did you read this in *USA Today* this morning? I can't believe that Jennifer Lopez had her breasts reduced? You know.

Grant: That is golden.

John: Yeah, yeah, For Susan, that's just like, yeah. That's, you can't beat that because she knows the guys that are, our readers, everyone that reads *USA Today*

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regularly or in their hotel rooms or in their dorm rooms or whatever with the *Today* show on, you know.

Grant: Wow! Man!

John: Exactly.

Grant: John, this has been fantastic. Last question, and this is a thinker. Is there a sacrifice you think *USA Today* makes by publishing celebrity stuff in lieu of more traditional forms of newspapers content, hard news, politics, health care, education? Stuff that quote unquote matters?

John: Well, we'll talk about space. Space is, space is everything in a newspaper. We run a really, really tight newspaper. Um, most days we only have eight pages in the Life section.

Grant: Mm. Hmm.

John: There are ads, thank God, that pay for, ah, everything . . .

Grant: (laughs) Yes.

John: and take up some of that space. So, yeah, I mean it definitely is eating into that space. Um, at the same time, we are always looking very, very hard for stories that people can relate to on a more realistic level. Ah, now before about why is this stuff so popular? Well in some ways it just brings the celebrity down to everybody's else's level.

Grant: Right.

John: If you read this, that Eddie Murphy and his wife (inaudible) are getting divorced, and they've got five kids, you can think about your own divorce or your neighbor's divorce or whatever. Um, but there are other stories that we look for that, that, what we call stories that inspire, stories that make you want to be a better person.



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Grant: Right.

John: And those will always find a place too, and, and, um.

Grant: But purists would say that, “Well, I would rather have just a half page of this stuff maximum, or I would rather read about a cure for cancer or some of these other things.” But it seems like the *USA Today* gives you all four of these things kind of in balance, and it doesn’t do it at the expense of something else.

John: Yeah.

Grant: That’s what someone told me.

John: I would never, they had told you that we do it at the expense of others.

Grant: No, no, no they haven’t done it at the expense of others.

John: Right, I think if you look at it in the newsroom, that side of the room (points) is where the health and behavior people sit, and Greg (inaudible), the other photo editor you meant earlier . . .

Grant: Right.

John: works very closely with most of them. There are I think 17 or 18 people that are health and behavior reporters. Um, that’s as many reporters as there are in lots of medium-sized newspapers’ newsrooms total.

Grant: Yeah.

John: You know, that cover everything. Um, and there are five editors. Um, there are more people covering entertainment in the field, I think, but there are more categories that we cover, that we cover over there.

Grant: I see.

John: So, with, the resources are divided. Dora refers to the Better Life section as,

## Appendix K (Continued)

you know, the back of the book or the second section or the second front because it carries its own title. It's a very deliberate piece of the way the paper is. The section is . . .

Grant: Laid out.

John: designed, you know that in the front you can get entertainment, but when you hit that midpoint, here's the stuff that's probably more relevant in your life. Um, you know, again, there's stuff in the front that's relevant in your life. If you know that a movie is not any good, you shouldn't bother going to see it. If you know a book is great and you absolutely should read it.

Grant: Right.

John: Or tomorrow's cover story about a guy who just loves antique cars and has restored a 1905 National to compete in the Pebble Beach Grand Prix.

Grant: Wow.

John: I mean, that's our cover story, so there is good mix in there.

Grant: Sure.

John: Um.

Grant: But it seems like other sections too, I mean if you want to read about this stuff, you go to the front section if you want to read about Iraq. You go to the sports, obviously, sports, so the argument really doesn't really hold water maybe if you're saying that, well celebrity news, you guys could be dedicating these reporters to covering what's real.

John: Um, yeah, but the fact of the matter is we're trying to attract readers to read our paper.

Grant: Yes.

## Appendix K (Continued)

John: And that's what I was saying before, you know, bring them in one way and get them to read something else. It's sort of, it's like teaching a kid to read. I mean if you, if you, if you've got some kids that are not terribly interested in reading, but they love to hunt and they love to fish, and you give them a subscription to a hunting and fishing magazine, and they start reading, now all of a sudden some guy makes some reference to Jack London, and.

Appendix L. Celebrity Content of *USA Today* Front Page and Life Front Page

**Aug. 31, 2005**

Front: small teaser of movie *The Constant Gardener* down rail.

Life front: Lifeline rail features mug of Alicia Keys for MTV Unplugged brief; brief about GMA concert series, Charlize Theron guest star on *Arrested Development*

**Aug. 30, 2005**

Front: Left skybox, photo of Kanye West teasing story about CD review. Life teaser about Blues Brothers new CD.

Life front: Bottom of Page review of Kanye West CD. Skybox photo of Blues Brothers.

Lifeline head photo of Glen Campbell, briefs about George Clooney, Toby Keith, Campbell and what Gwyneth Paltrow told Time magazine about Brad Pitt and Jennifer Anniston and their relationship, how they shouldn't have talked to the press.

**Aug. 29, 2005**

Front: Left skybox, photo of Green Day at MTV Music Awards. Life teaser about lackluster summer movie season.

Life front: Main story: Coverage of MTV Music Awards with photos of Green Day lead singer Billie Joe Armstrong, Diddy and Kelly Clarkson. Cover story above fold about Hollywood looking for solutions after a ticket sales for summer movies fall to lowest point since 2001.

Lifeline briefs about *Desperate Housewives* star James Denton, Big Brother show, Blackbeard miniseries on Hallmark channel. Chris Cooper and Ryan Phillippe to star in new thriller *Breach*.

## Appendix L (Continued)

### **Aug. 26-28, 2005**

Front: Cover story of Martha Stewart.

Life: Skybox photo of Jack Osborne in a teaser about thinner celebs.

Rail briefs about new *24* season, trumpet player Chris Botti's CD and appearances with several celebrity stars such as Sting and dating Katie Couric in the past. Cover story about making of videos and evolution of how they're made.

People page: Feature story about celebrities who lost weight and how they did it, photos featuring Osborne, Nicole Richie, Peter Jackson, Sara Rue, Anna Nicole Smith.

### **Aug. 25, 2005**

Front: Left skybox photo of HBO epic *Rome* stars Indir Varma and Kevin McKidd.

Life front: Feature of HBO epic *Rome*. Lifeline briefs about Justin Timberlake (winning an apology and damages from a British tabloid), Pearl Jam rock band, mug of Hillary Duff and story about top-selling Cds. Mug of Ricky Gervais.

People page: Story of new magazine launch of *Men's Vogue* with sidebar of man on cover, George Clooney, and his spinal injury.

### **Aug. 24, 2005**

Front: Left skybox photo of Dakota Fanning in teaser of *Charlotte's Web* with mentions of stars Julia Roberts and Robert Redford.

Life front: Feature on *Charlotte's Web* with Dakota Fanning photo above fold. Lifeline briefs about R. Kelly, *American Idol* star Bo Bice, John O'Hare (*Dancing with the Stars*), Omarosa. Elton John.

### **Aug. 23, 2005**

Front: Left skybox photo of *Beauty and the Geek* TV stars. Cover story featuring

## Appendix L (Continued)

interview with Major League pitching star Roger Clemens.

Life front: Feature about Pamela Anderson's book with headline "Anderson's second novel turns up the sex" TV news & views piece about summer shows featuring large photo of *Dancing with the Stars*' John O'Hurley and Charlotte Jorgenson and inset photo of Brook Burke and David Navarro of *Rock Star INXS*.

Lifeline briefs about Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston's divorce papers signed, Martha Stewart's daughter.

### **Aug. 22, 2005**

Front: Left skybox photo of rapper Kanye West with teaser about his new album.

Life front: Skybox photo of rock star Tommy Lee teasing story package about reality shows.

Lifeline column photo of Angelina Jolie and son Maddox. Briefs about Jolie (starring in new movie), Eminem (treated for sleep pill addiction), rock star Mark McGrath and actress Poppy Montgomery (hosting awards show). Brief about World Music awards show dropping performance names Mariah Carey, Diana Ross and Destiny's Child  
Story across bottom page about Kanye West's new album.

### **Aug. 17, 2005**

Front: Left skybox photo of Madonna, teasing story about her being injured in a horseback riding accident.

Newsline teaser about Sean P. Diddy Combs dropping the P. from his moniker.

Life front: Skybox photo of Diddy teasing the same story .

Story about 9/11 dramas hitting the big and small screen with photo of actor Nicolas Cage.

## Appendix L (Continued)

Lifeline mug of Angelina Jolie with brief of MTV following her to Africa. Timely brief with headline “Gossip Up, News Down on magazine racks” “American’s obsession with celebrities shows no signs of letting up. *People*, *In Touch* and *Us Weekly* and *Star* all saw their circulation numbers climb, while *Time* and *Newsweek* saw their rack sales fall.

### **Aug. 18, 2005**

Front: Left skybox photo of Rolling Stones teasing an inside interview with the band.

Life front: Rolling Stones cover story with cutout photos of band. Lifeline briefs about Eminem (canceling European tour) with mug shot, Eva Longoria hurt on set of *Desperate Housewives*. Story on bottom of page about celebrity poker with photo of Travis Tritt.

### **Aug. 16, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Kelly Clarkson, teasing story about *American Idol* tryouts.

Life front: Skybox photo of Rob Schneider kissing Hilary Duff at Teen Choice Awards.

Cover story about *American Idol* with chart of most successful contestants with head shots.

Lifeline mugs of Dick Clark and Charlize Theron. Briefs about Clark and New Year’s Eve, Theron and other celebrities who will get Hollywood Icon awards. Harry Connick Jr. making Broadway debut.

### **Aug. 15, 2005**

Front: Left skybox photo of Martha Stewart and Donald Trump, a teaser about Stewart’s new *Apprentice* spin-off.

Life front: Story above fold about Martha Stewart’s new show and what would her punch line be. Lifeline briefs about actress Kristen Johnston; Salma Hayek, George Lopez, Jennifer Lopez featured in *Time* magazine’s most influential Hispanics in America. Mug

## Appendix L (Continued)

shot of Hayek. Column photo of Four Brothers stars Mark Wahlberg, Garrett Hedlund and Tyrese Gibson.

### **June 30, 2005**

Front: Newline teaser about U2 rock band and concert tours.

Life front: Story above fold about summer concert tours with picture of U2's Bono.

Briefs about musician John Mayer, actors Ian Holm, Kaley Cuoco, People Page: celebrity magazines feature Jolie, Aniston. Story about Tom Cruise and scientology.

### **July 1-4, 2005**

Front: Teaser skybox above fold about global concert with pictures of Mick Jagger and Beyonce. Newline, Life section teaser about Ben Affleck and Jennifer Garner tying knot.

Life front: Cover story about Live 8 with head shots down the rail of celebrity participants Jay Z, Bono, Joss Stone, Ms. Dynamite, Bob Geldof, Dave Mathews.

### **July 5, 2005**

Front: Newline, Life section teaser about Tom Cruise and *War of the Worlds* being No. 1 at box office.

Life front: Story about Cruise, *War of the Worlds*. Cover story about celebrities who publicize their religion, with photos of Mel Gibson and Jim Caviezel, Richard Gere and Madonna. Lifeline mug of Angie Harmon with brief, briefs about Shelby Lynne, Obit of Four Tops Renaldo Benson.

### **July 6, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of country star Kenny Chesney, teasing feature story.

Life front: Skybox photo of Chesney, teasing feature about his concert. Lifeline photo of Ben Affleck and Jennifer Garner with brief about their wedding day.



## Appendix L (Continued)

### **July 7, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Mariah Carey, teasing feature about her comeback.

Life front: Story down right column about Carey's comeback with photo.

Lifeline photo of *Dancing with the Stars*' Kelly Monaco. Brief of Laura Flynn Boyle joining cast of *Las Vegas*. Obits of screenwriter Ernest Lehman, musical actress June Haver.

### **July 8-10, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Kate Hudson, teasing story about her and others taking chances on gory movies.

Life front: Cover story about gory movies with photos of Oscar winner Jennifer Connelly and Hudson. Lifeline photo of plus-size actress Mo'Nique Imes with brief about her new reality show. Brief of Bob Dylan with photo of his album cover.

### **July 11, 2005**

Front: No celebrity presence

Life front: Skybox photo of Scarlett Johansson teasing inside story. Lifeline photo of Paul McCartney, brief about his new album. Briefs about Nicolas Cage (with mug shot), Oliver Stone teaming up for 9/11 movie, Brook Shields returning to Broadway.

### **July 12, 2005**

Front: No celebrity presence except skybox of cyclist Lance Armstrong teasing Tour de France story in sports.

Life front: Skybox photo of Gene Hackman teasing story about his film roles. Story above fold about music celebrities Gwen Stefani and Mariah Carey singers of some of the most downloaded songs. Lifeline photo of Hilary Duff with brief about Duff and Rob

## Appendix L (Continued)

Schneider hosting Teen Choice Awards.

### **July 13, 2005**

Front: No celebrity presence.

Life front: Lifeline mug shot of actress Jeri Ryan beginning a guest role on *The O.C.*

Brief of Micheal Jackson sued over the Beatles' music library.

People page: available.

### **July 14, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of St. Louis Cardinals slugger Albert Pujols teasing baseball's second-half preview.

Life front: Skybox photo of Tom Arnold teasing inside story. Movie review at bottom of page of *Wedding Crashers* with photo of stars Owen Wilson and Vince Vaughn. Lifeline photo of *American Idol* judge Simon Cowell about new reality show, brief about David Chapelle.

### **July 15-17, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Johnny Depp teasing new movie review of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Skybox photo of Tiger Woods at British Open.

Newsline Life section teaser about *Desperate Housewives* stars Teri Hatcher, Marcia Cross and Felicity Huffman getting Emmy Award nominations.

Life front: Story at bottom of page about Emmy bids with photo of women of *Desperate Housewives*. Cover story of *Chocolate Factory* with photos of Depp and cast.

### **July 18, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Tiger Woods at British Open. Skybox photo of actor Josh Henderson teasing inside story about new war drama.

## Appendix L (Continued)

Life front: Lifeline mug shot of Liam Neeson with brief, other briefs about country artist Faith Hill, Hilary Swank and Kevin Costner (narrating 9/11 documentary). Photo of Johnny Depp in *Chocolate Factory* about top movies.

### **July 19, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of *American Idol* finalists Bo Bice and Carrie Underwood. Cover story about Hilary Clinton with headline “Can Hilary be elected commander in chief?” with photo of senator addressing troops in Afghanistan.

Life front: Story above fold about *American Idol* stars getting little radio play with photo of Bice and Underwood. Lifeline briefs of Paula Abdul, Bruce Springsteen (with mug), Dick Van Dyke.

### **July 20, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of *CSI* stars Marg Helgenberger and William Petersen teasing story about CBS crime dramas. Newline photo of Lance Armstrong.

Life front: Skybox photo of David Schwimmer and Catherine Tate teasing inside story.

Lifeline mug of Bonnie Raitt with brief, others briefs about Willie Nelson (new book), Cameron Diaz (forged autographs).

### **July 21, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Lindsey Lohan teasing story about aggressive paparazzi.

Newline: Photo of Actor James Doohan of Star Trek fame, teasing inside obit.

Life front: Skybox photo of Courtney Cox teasing profile of the celebrity. Cover story of celebrities' relationship with paparazzi with photo of George Clooney. Lifeline mug shot of actor Roselyn Sanchez with brief about her joining *Without a Trace*. Brief about Steve Martin receiving an award with Tom Hanks, Diane Keaton, Martin Short, Paul Simon

## Appendix L (Continued)

and Lily Tomlin mentioned as celebrities who will salute him.

### **July 22-24, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Uma Thurman and Nathan Lane teasing story about Hollywood looking again to Broadway. Skybox photo of Lance Armstrong at Tour de France.

Life front: Skybox photo of Billy Bob Thornton teasing inside profile story. Cover story of Hollywood trying for medley of Broadway hits with large photos of *Rent* cast and *The Producers'* Lane, Thurman and Matthew Broderick.

Rail photo of *American Idol* Judges Simon Cowell, Paula Abdul and Randy Jackson with brief about show coming to DVD. Brief about new tribute album to Sly and the Family Stone featuring today's artists such as Joss Stone and the Black Eyed Peas.

### **July 25, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Martha Stewart teasing story about her new shows. Cover story of Lance Armstrong winning Tour de France, looking to future with three-column photo of Armstrong in a pack of cyclists and four one column photos.

Life front: Story above fold about action movies fizzling with photo of *The Island* stars Scarlett Johansson and Ewan McGregor.

Lifeline brief of Richard Chamberlain, one column photo of *Will & Grace* stars Debra Messing and Eric McCormack with brief about a live first show. Brief about Hong Kong erecting statue of former kung-fu movie legend Bruce Lee.

### **July 26, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of NFL running back Ricky Williams teasing story of his return to football.

Life front: Small skybox photo of Jennifer Garner of *Alias* teasing new TV season.

## Appendix L (Continued)

Lifeline briefs of MTV awards featuring nominees Gwen Stefani, Green Day and Missy Elliott. Brief about Jane Fonda going on the road to call for end of war in Iraq.

### **July 27, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of TV Guide with cover shot of Teri Hatcher and James Denton of *Desperate Housewives*, teasing story about evolution of magazine.

Life front: Skybox photo of Geena Davis of *Commander in Chief*.

Lifeline briefs about Oprah Winfrey, Martha Stewart, Jerry Lewis and Mel Gibson (new movie) and the rock group "Queen."

### **July 28, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Hall of Fame Larry Brown, new coach of New York Knicks.

Life front: Story at bottom of page about a space-themed reality show with photos of creators Ron Howard and Brian Grazer. Lifeline mug shot of *American Idol* winner Carrie Underwood with brief about her being a vegetarian; brief about Kate Moss winning a libel suit against the United Kingdom's Sunday mirrors.

### **July 29-31, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Chelsea Hobbs of TV show *Beach Girls*.

Life front: Skybox photo of Diane Lane, teasing interview with star and movie review.

Story at bottom of page about Fox's upcoming TV season with headline "Will Abdul be forever Fox Network's girl" with photo of Paula Abdul.

Rail photos of Ricky Gervais, Dolly Parton and Meryl Streep with short stories about each one.

### **Aug. 1, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of actress Sela Ward, who will appear in seven episodes of *House*.

## Appendix L (Continued)

Four column short photo of quarterback Tom Brady teasing NFL training camps.

Life front: Skybox photo of Jessica Simpson teasing *Dukes of Hazard* story.

Story above fold about fun movies being summer hits with photo of Kurt Russell and teenage co-star Michael Angarano.

Lifeline photo of Julia Roberts in story about her making Broadway debut. Briefs of celebrity guest voices Alec Baldwin, William H. Macy, Kelsey Grammar and Randy Johnson this season on *The Simpsons*. Brief about legendary actress Lauren Bacall blasting Tom Cruise for his weird behavior.

### **Aug. 2, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Bill Cosby and Phylicia Rashad, teasing story of *Cosby* debut on DVD. Cover story about slugger Rafael Palmeiro getting suspended for steroids with two photos of Baltimore Orioles star.

Life front: Skybox photo of Burt Reynolds teasing inside story about *Dukes*. Cover story of major home video execs using John Wayne to lure young audience to classic films with collage of photos of Wayne in 10 classic movies. Lifeline briefs about Oprah Winfrey, Martha Stewart and Haley Joel Osment.

### **Aug. 3, 2005**

Front: No celebrity presence.

Life front: Skybox photo of Lindsay Lohan teasing People Page story about hot girls and cars they drive. Lifeline photo of Nicole Kidman with brief about her upcoming movie *Invasion*. Other briefs about musical artists Mariah Carey, Brad Paisley, actors Teri Hatcher and Matthew Perry.

## Appendix L (Continued)

### **Aug. 4, 2005**

Front: Skybox photos of Hilary Duff and NFL star Terrell Owens. Newline teasers about inside stories of Rafael Palmeiro and rapper 50 Cent.

Life front: Story above fold about 50 Cent's new album with photo. Story at bottom of page about *Teen People* selecting a power list with info box of top 10 celebrities and head shots of Ashton Kutcher and Nick Cannon.

Lifeline briefs about Howard Stern, Dr. Phil McGraw, Martha Stewart with mug shot.

Brief about VH1 show featuring Kanye West, Missy Elliott and Nelly.

### **Aug. 5-7, 2005**

Front: Skybox photos of Jude Law with Kate Winslet and NASCAR driver Jeff Gordon.

Life front: Skybox photo of Jessica Simpson of *Dukes*. Story at bottom of page about *All the Kings Men* movie with photo of stars Sean Penn and James Gandolfini. Lifeline brief about Ray Charles, Christopher Knight's reality show with model Adrienne Curry.

### **Aug. 8, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Jessica Simpson of *Dukes*. Story above fold about death of ABC news anchor Peter Jennings.

Life front: Skybox photo of actress Tara Reid. Cover story grading the summer's films with photos of several celebrities, including Tom Cruise, Angelina Jolie with Brad Pitt, Johnny Depp, Christian Bale and Katie Holmes and Scarlet Johansson. Story in center of page about *Dukes* movie with photo of stars Johnny Knoxville and Seann William Scott.

Lifeline photos with briefs of Usher and Rosie O'Donnell (starring in Broadway's *Fiddler on the Roof*). Other briefs of 50 Cent and Bobby Brown.

## Appendix L (Continued)

### **May 20-22, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Paul McCartney teasing story about nostalgia music acts.

Life front: Cover story of summer concert tours with large photo of U2's Bono and Rolling Stones' Mick Jagger and Keith Richards. Story at bottom of page about *Revenge of the Sith* with photo of star Jimmy Smits.

Lifeline mug shot of Babyface with brief.

### **May 23, 2005**

Front: Large photo above fold of David Letterman in story about Indy 500.

Newsline: One column photo of *Revenge of the Sith* star Ewan McGregor. Large standalone photo of First Lady Barbara Bush, teasing inside story. Skybox teaser about Chris Rock's new show on UPN.

Life front: Skybox photo of reality stars Rob & Amber of *The Amazing Race* Cover story with large photo of Brian Wilson of Beach Boys. Article at bottom of page about network sweeps with photo of Chris Rock, fellow actor and director of *Everybody Hates Chris*.

Lifeline: Mug photo of Gwyneth Paltrow with story of her being named model of Estee Lauder and upcoming projects. Brief about Ellen DeGeneres with mug shot (Daytime Emmys results).

### **May 24, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of *American Idol* stars Bo Bice and Carrie Underwood teasing story of show. Newsline photo of Indy racing driver and phenom Danica Patrick, teasing sports story.

Life front: Cover story of *American Idol* finale preview with bios and large side-by-side photos of Underwood and Bice. Skybox mug photo of David Chapelle teasing inside



## Appendix L (Continued)

story.

Lifeline briefs about Bobby Brown (entourage hurt in fight, Patricia Heaton, Anita Baker).

### **May 25, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Russell Crow and Ron Howard teasing story about *Cinderella Man*. Newline mug photo of Jay Leno teasing inside story about him testifying in Michael Jackson trial.

Life front: Skybox photo of Natalie Portman teasing story about female celebrities who have pulled off “no-hair” look. Cover story about Crowe and Howard making *Cinderella Man*, with huge photo of two together.

Lifeline briefs about Bo Bice (TV critic saying he was better than Carrie Underwood), Tom Cruise and actress Annabelle Sciorra, Singer/guitarist Dave Navarro.

### **May 26, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Carrie Underwood teasing story of her winning *American Idol*. Newline mug photo of Michael Jackson teasing story of his trial. Teaser of obit of film legend Ismail Merchant.

Life front: Skybox teaser of Paul Newman teasing *Empire Falls* series. Story above fold of Underwood. Cover story of actors providing voices for animated movies with large photo of David Schwimmer, smaller photos of Ellen DeGeneres and Antonio Banderas.

Lifeline briefs with mug photo of Shannen Doherty, Motley Crue’s feud with NBC network.

### **May 27-30, 2005**

Front: Huge skybox photo of racer Danica Patrick.

## Appendix L (Continued)

Life front: Skybox photo of Chris Rock, photos of Kiefer Sutherland (24), Jennifer Garner (*Alias*), Teri Hatcher (*Desperate Housewives*) teasing season finales.

Cover story of *The Longest Yard* with giant cutout photo of Adam Sandler.

Lifeline photo of Jeff Bridges with brief, photo of Ice-T and Chris Rock with brief about new show.

### **Aug. 12-14, 2005**

Front: Skybox photos of Tiger Woods and Aretha Franklin. Front cover story of future Hall of Fame quarterback Brett Favre with large photo.

Newsline: Life section teaser referring to singer Gwen Stefani.

Life front: Three skybox photos teasing inside stories of Jessica Simpson, Steve Carell, Kate Hudson. Photo of Willie Nelson in an info box about top country road songs with cover story package.

### **Aug. 9, 2005**

Front: Skybox photos of Wayne Gretzky and Kyra Sedgwick and Raymond Cruz teasing inside story about the show "The Closer. Large photo of Peter Jennings above fold teasing Life section story about future of network news.

Life front: Skybox photo of rapper 50 cent.

Lifeline photo of Duran Duran lead singer Simon LeBron. Brief about singer Marc Cohn being shot during a carjacking.

### **Aug. 11, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Bob Saget teasing story about his new projects.

Newsline teaser about death of *Dallas* star Barbara Bel Geddes.

Life front: story at bottom of page about Saget with photo.

## Appendix L (Continued)

Lifeline photos of Faith Hill (story about new album), brief about David Bowie, Destiny's Child, Alicia Keys, Gwen Stefani, Joss Stone, and Tim McGraw set to perform at New York concert with photo of Stone  
Brief about Simon Cowell, obit of Matthew McGrory.

### **Aug. 10, 2005**

Front: Skybox photos of Tiger Woods teasing PGA Championship, Dana Reeve, widow of actor Christopher Reeve.

Life front: Skybox photo of Dana Reeve teasing story that she has lung cancer. Story above fold about celebs doing Broadway with photos of Julia Roberts and Denzel Washington.

Lifeline photo of Kirsten and Orlando with story about Toronto International Film Festival. Briefs of Maria Carey, Rolling Stones, Martha Stewart and Ciara.

### **Feb. 4-6, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Elvis, Curt Schilling. Cover story of Super Bowl with large cutout photos of quarterbacks Donovan McNabb and Tom Brady.

Life front: Cover story of celebrity collector's items with small inset photos of Elvis and Jackie Onassis.

Lifeline photo of Robert Plant with brief about his new CD.

### **Feb. 7, 2005**

Front: Newline photo of Pope John Paul II. Teaser about breakthrough year for black actors, teaser of obit for actor Ossie Davis.

Life front: Story above fold about black actors' breakthrough with photo of Will Smith and Eva Mendes. Photo of Davis teasing inside obit with the package.

## Appendix L (Continued)

Cover story about Fashion Week with headline “Celebs turn up runway lights” with photos of Ashley Olsen and Lil’ Kim.

Lifeline brief about David James Elliott leaving CBS’ *Jag*.

### **Feb. 8, 2005**

Front: Newline photo of NFL quarterback Tom Brady

Life front: Story above fold about Brad Pitt doing Super Bowl commercial; Pitt photo.

Lifeline mug photo of Kanye West; briefs about Britney Spears suing over surgery, canceled tour, Aiadan Quinn, singer Michael W. Smith, Oscar nominee Don Cheadle, Lindsay Lohan.

### **Feb. 9, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of actress Emilie de Ravin of hit TV show *Lost*.

Life front: Story above fold about Oscars with photos of show producer Gil Cates and host Chris Rock.

Lifeline briefs about stars of *Desperate Housewives*, actor Chris Noth, Grammy performers, including singer Gwen Stefani and Usher.

### **Feb. 10, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of superstar Will Smith with teaser about him in comedy *Hitch*.

Newline teaser to Life section about *O.C.* actress Olivia Wild.

Life front: Skybox photo of three cast members of *Desperate Housewives*

Cover story of Will Smith with large photo of him holding a rose. Story above fold about Kanye West about a controversial song he sings with a photo of him. Story at bottom of page about *O.C.* and a lesbian relationship. Lifeline mug photo of Tina Turner with story about album sales. Obit of jazz great Jimmy Smith; Briefs about singer Beyonce

## Appendix L (Continued)

Knowles, Grammy performers, including Alicia Keys, actor David Caruso (wife files for divorce).

### **Feb. 11-13, 2005**

Front: Skybox photos of pitcher Pedro Martinez and NASCAR driver Jimmie Johnson;

Story above fold about Prince Charles to marry Camilla Parker Bowles.

Newsline teaser to Life section about new Will Smith film *Hitch*.

Life front: Cover story about Grammy awards' lesser known stars with large photo of singer Tift Merritt.

Lifeline photo of *People* magazine front of actress Julia Roberts and her twin babies with story. Brief about actor John Stamos starring in new comedy. TV review at bottom of page about HBO show *Lackawanna Blues* with photo of actress Rosie Perez.

### **Feb. 14, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of singer Alicia Keys teasing story about Grammys.

Life front: Story above fold about Grammys with photos of Kanye West, Jamie Foxx, Alicia Keys, James Brown, Usher; smaller photos of Gwen Stefani and Loretta Lynn.

Lifeline photo of Will Smith and Kevin James with story about movie *Hitch*.

Briefs about Lindsay Lohan, singer Christina Aguilera (gets engaged), Mel Gibson (movie released on video), Matthew Perry (hospitalized with prescription drug reaction).

### **Feb. 15, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of American swimsuit model Carolyn Murphy teasing story about Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue.

Newsline teaser about Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston and celebrity magazines' obsession with couple

## Appendix L (Continued)

Life front: Skybox photo of *House* star Hugh Laurie. Story above fold with headline: Magazines can't break up with Brad and Jen with photos of three magazine covers with the couple on the front.

Lifeline head photo of actress Teri Hatcher with brief about Barbara Walters special, Briefs about band The Eagles, singer John Mellencamp.

### **Feb. 16, 2005**

Front: Newline teaser to Life section about Michael Jackson being hospitalized with flu-like symptoms.

Life front: Cover story about comic book movies with large photo of Keanu Reeves.

Lifeline briefs about Kirstie Alley, singer Bruce Springsteen.

### **Feb. 17, 2005**

Front: No celebrity presence.

Life front: Story above fold with headline: Media, fans increasingly spill TV secrets with photo of *Desperate Housewives* women.

Lifeline head photo of rapper 50 Cent with story about album sales; Briefs about actress Ashley Olsen suing *National Enquirer* for libel and false light invasion of privacy, and comedian John Stewart.

### **Feb. 18-20, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of actress Halle Barry; Large photo above fold about NASCAR driver Dale Earnhardt Jr. teasing NASCAR preview section. Story at bottom of page about Michael Jackson trial with mug photo of Jackson.

Life front: Cover story with headline: Five actresses face down the big 4-Oh, photos of Nicole Kidman (largest cutout photo), Julia Roberts, Naomi Watts, Katherine Zeta-Jones

## Appendix L (Continued)

and Halle Barry.

Lifeline: Photo of Tammy Faye Messner with brief about documentary on her.

### **Feb. 21, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Sandra Dee with teaser of her feature obit. Photo of NASCAR racer Jeff Gordon teasing story about Daytona 500.

Life front: Dee's feature obit above fold with photo.

Lifeline photo of "Hitch" stars Will Smith and Eva Mendes with brief about movie earnings; obit briefs of singer/actor John Raitt, singer Sammi Smith, brief about rock star Prince receiving an award.

### **Feb. 22, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of *One Day at a Time* cast teasing reunion special.

Cover story about the Oscar best director race with photos of Clint Eastwood and Martin Scorsese.

Life front: Story about television reunions with *One Day at a Time* cast photo.

Lifeline briefs about author Hunter S. Thompson's apparent suicide, Brian McKnight among singers at Soul Train awards, American Idol star Bo Bice with mug photo, Mel Gibson wins Moviefone award for *Passion of the Christ*.

### **Feb. 23, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of *Lost* star Evangeline Lilly. Large photo of Giants slugger Barry Bonds teasing inside story about steroid allegations.

Life front: Skybox mug photo of Oscar nominee Imelda Staunton. Story above fold about singer/actress Jennifer Lopez with photo.

Lifeline briefs about Jessica Simpson hospitalized, new book about Johnny Carson, and

## Appendix L (Continued)

Queen Elizabeth skipping son's wedding. Mug photo of *American Idol* singer Nadia Turner with brief about show.

### **Feb. 24, 2005**

Front: Skybox teaser about *Ray* star Regina King. Teaser about Ray Charles' No. 1 album.

Life front: Story above fold about Ray Charles' newest album with photo of late musician.

Lifeline briefs about Song Writers Hall of Fame adds seven inductees, including John Fogerty. Hunter Thompson, Aquinton Tarantino, Natalie Portman (angers Jewish worshippers).

### **Feb. 25-27, 2005**

Front: Skybox photos of Oscar nominee Hilary Swank, Leonardo DiCaprio, Johnny Depp, Virginia Madsen and Jamie Foxx.

Story about Pope John Paul II and his illness with photo.

Life front: Skybox photo of Michael Jackson. Head shot photo of Oscars host Chris Rock with cover story about show.

Lifeline mug photo of actress Kyra Sedgwick with brief about her new show, photo of Johnny Cash with brief about new box set.

### **Feb. 28, 2005**

Front: Skybox photos of Kate Winslet, Jamie Foxx, Hilary Swank and Clint Eastwood teasing Oscars coverage.

Newsline photo of Michael Jackson teasing start of his trial.

Story at bottom of page about ailing pope with head photo.



## Appendix L (Continued)

Life front: Skybox photo of Swank teasing story about Oscar fashion.

Two stories about Oscars with photos of Eastwood, host Chris Rock, Jamie Foxx and Morgan Freeman, Swank and Kate Blanchett.

Lifeline brief about Halle Berry, Britney Spears and George W. Bush winning “Razzies.”

Other briefs about Eastwood, Bob Newhart and Steven King. Head photo of Tyler Perry of *Diary of an Angry Black Woman* with brief about movie.

### **March 1, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of actor Dennis Franz teasing story about end of *NYPD Blue*.

Newsline photo of Michael Jackson teasing story about his trial. Teaser about Oscar follow-up with mentions of Chris Rock, Hilary Swank and Elizabeth Taylor.

Life front: Skybox photo of Oprah Winfrey and Julia Roberts teasing story about Oscars after-parties. Story above fold about how Chris Rock didn't help Oscar ratings with head photo. Cover story about Franz's character on *Blue* with large photo of *NYPD* cast.

Lifeline brief about singer Dave Matthews' summer tour.

### **March 2, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of actor Tyler Perry teasing story about film *Diary of a Mad Black Woman*. Newsline teaser about Martha Stewart's controversial photo in a magazine.

Life front: Skybox photo of actor Morgan Freeman teasing story about his latest movie.

Lifeline photo of Martha Stewart on cover of *Newsweek* with story about photo that was altered. Brief about singers Usher and Alicia Keys winning Soul Train awards. Brief about rapper 50 Cent song's success.

### **March 3, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Dan Rather teasing story about his last evening news broadcast

## Appendix L (Continued)

Newsline teaser about actors Charlie Sheen and Denise Richards divorcing.

Life front: Skybox photo of Chris Rock teasing story about Oscars. Cover story about

Rather with large photo.

Lifeline photo of Sheen and Richards with story about pending divorce.

### **March 4-6, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of child actor Annasophie Robb teasing story about big movies for 2005.

Cover story about Martha Stewart's release from prison and her future.

Life front: Skybox photo of actor Ian McShane teasing story about *Deadwood*.

Cover story about five big movies with photo of Johnny Depp and cast of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.

Lifeline brief about former Beach Boys singer Brian Wilson's new disc set.

### **March 7, 2005**

Front: Skybox photos of Kirstie Alley (teasing new show) and Tiger Woods (winning tournament to reclaim top ranking in world).

Newsline photo of actor Robin Williams teasing story about new movie.

Life front: Skybox head photo of singer Christina Milian. Story above fold about Robin Williams being voice in animated film *Robots*.

Story at bottom of page about Alley's new show *Fat Actress* with photo.

Lifeline photo of Vin Diesel with story about weekly movie ratings. Briefs about actor/comedian Brad Garrett with head photo, Mel Gibson (man convicted of stalking him), singer Bryan Adams.

## Appendix L (Continued)

### **March 8, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of rapper 50 Cent. Newline photo of Martha Stewart teasing story about her back to work. Story at bottom of page about the Department of Homeland Security working with Hollywood stars to make movies and TV shows more realistic with photo of Tom Hanks.

Life front: Skybox photo of two stars of new show *Blind Justice*. Story down rail about 50 Cent's new album.

Lifeline briefs about Sarah Jessica Parker, Stevie Wonder, Oprah Winfrey and Bruce Springsteen.

### **March 9, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Jessica Alba teasing story about new film *Fantastic Four* Story about President Clinton having heart surgery.

Life front: Story above fold about new show *Jake in Progress* with photo of stars John Stamos and Wendie Malick. Cover story about film *Fantastic Four* with photos of stars Alba, Michael Chiklis, Chris Evans and Ioan Gruffudd.

Lifeline brief about Newsweek's controversial photo of Martha Stewart, 50 Cent

### **March 10, 2005**

Front: Newline photo of Dan Rather teasing story about his last newscast. Teaser about accuser testifying in Michael Jackson trial.

Life front: Story down rail about 50 Cent album topping 1 million in sales

Lifeline briefs about Prince Charles' upcoming wedding, Bill Cosby named in sexual assault civil suit, author John Grisham's new book.

## Appendix L (Continued)

### **March 11-13, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of actress Naomi Watts. Large photo of Michael Jackson and entourage with story about his trial.

Life front: Cover story about horror movies with photos of Watts, Kate Hudson, Melissa George and Paris Hilton. Story at bottom of page about movie *Passion of the Christ* with photo of star Jim Caviezel.

Lifeline photos of band Coldplay and cast of 1980s movie *9 to 5*, including Dolly Parton with briefs about new album and new Broadway play, respectively.

### **March 14, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of singer Mario Vasquez with teaser about him dropping out of show. Newline photo of Pope John Paul II.

Life front: Skybox photo of U2's Bono. Story above fold about *American Idol* with pictures of Vasquez and replacement, Nikko Smith. Story at bottom of page about TV show *24* and its real-life interrogation scenes that compare to the Iraq war, photo of star Kiefer Sutherland and cast member Nestor Serrano.

Lifeline head photo of Jay Leno with brief about him being allowed to tell Michael Jackson jokes before he testifies, briefs about Jane Pauley (canceled talk show), Martha Stewart (unique poncho), Paris Hilton (her show available on cell phones)

### **March 15, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of U2's Bono with teaser about Rock & Roll Hall of Fame inductees. Skybox photo of *American Idol* star Nikko Smith.

Life front: Story above fold about rock hall of fame with photo of Bono. Cover story about *Idol* with photo of final 12 and inset photo of Smith.

## Appendix L (Continued)

Lifeline head photo of Billy Joel with brief of him entering rehab. Other briefs about Cary Grant and Marilyn Monroe topping a list of greatest film stars, Quentin Tarantino, Donald Trump and singer Rob Thomas.

### **March 16, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of actor Ashton Kutcher teasing feature story.

Life front: Cover story about Kutcher with larger photo. Lifeline briefs about Michael Jackson's visitors at his ranch during his trial. Head photo of *American Idol* singer Nadia Turner.

### **March 17, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of baseball slugger Mark McGwire teasing steroids story

Newsline photo of actor Robert Blake teasing story of his acquittal at trial.

Life front: Lifeline head photo of Tony Award winner Hugh Jackman with story about awards show, brief about celebrity hosts filling in at *The View*, including Anna Kournikova, Hilary Duff. Head photo of rapper 50 Cent with story about ratings.

### **March 18-20, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of singer Miranda Lambert teasing feature story. Cover story about baseball's steroid hearings with large photos of Jose Canseco, Mark McGwire, Sammy Sosa and Curt Schilling

Life front: Skybox photo of Naomi Watts teasing movie review

Cover story of Lambert with large photo.

Lifeline photo of film *The Island* stars Scarlett Johansson and Ewan McGregor

### **March 21, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of *Star Wars Episode III* stars Natalie Portman, Samuel Jackson and

## Appendix L (Continued)

Hayden Christensen teasing story about director George Lucas.

Newline photos of Pope teasing story and Michael Jackson teasing story about trial.

Life front: Cover story about end of Star Wars with photo of stars Iam McDiarmid and Christensen. Lifeline photo of Naomi Watts in *The Ring Two*. Head photo of Oscar winner Jamie Foxx with brief about NAACP Image awards. Brief about judge ordering man to stay away from singer Janet Jackson. Story below page about singer Cowboy Troy with photo.

### **March 22, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of actor Rainn Wilson teasing story about new TV comedies.

Life front: Story at bottom of page about networks finding comedies with photo of cast of *Dante*.

### **March 23, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of slugger Barry Bonds teasing story about his injury.

Life front: Skybox photo of Michael Jackson teasing story about his family's support during trial. Lifeline head photo of *American Idol* star Carrie Underwood with brief about show. Briefs about actor Thomas Haden Church (new role in *Spider-Man 3*).

### **March 24, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of *American Idol* host Ryan Seacrest and singer Carrie Underwood teasing story about mixed-up phone numbers.

Life front: Story above fold about *American Idol* mixup with photo of singer Mikalah Gordon. Story at bottom of page of NBC comedy *The Office* preview.

Lifeline photo of Whitney Houston with brief about her entering drug rehab treatment center. Brief of Regina King.

## Appendix L (Continued)

### **March 25-27, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of *Desperate Housewives* star Marcia Cross teasing story about show.

Life front: Cover story profile of actress Cameron Diaz with large photo. Story down rail about *Housewives* with photo of star Eva Longoria.

Brief of *Bewitched* with photo of stars Will Farrell and Nicole Kidman. Briefs and photos of singer Dwight Yoakam and actor Danny Glover.

### **March 28, 2005**

Front: Skybox photos of Martha Stewart and golfer Annika Sorenstam. Newline teaser about Ashton Kutcher's new movie. Story at bottom of page about Pope.

Life front: Skybox photo of Martha Stewart teasing inside story. Story at bottom of page about Kutcher's new movie *Guess Who*.

Lifeline photo of James Taylor with brief, photo of tennis sisters Serena and Venus Williams with brief about new reality show. Other briefs about *American Idol* winner Fantasia, Tom Sizemore sentenced to jail, treatment center, Nelly halting tour after sister dies.

### **March 29, 2005**

Front: Newline teaser about Michael Jackson trial.

Life front: Skybox photo of *American Idol* singer Carrie Underwood teasing story. Story above fold about reality shows with photo of actor/wrestler Hulk Hogan.

Lifeline head photo of Courtney Love with brief about new movie. Other briefs about actor Robert Goulet, singer Tom Petty, Marcia Gay Harden and John Goodman. Obit about Crowded House drummer Paul Hester.

## Appendix L (Continued)

### **March 30, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of actress/singer Queen Latifah. Cover story about *American Idol* and massive business it generates with photos of past winners Kelly Clarkson, Fantasia and Ruben Studdard. Newline photo of O.J. Simpson's attorney, Johnnie Cochran, teasing feature obit.

Life front: Skybox photo of U2 singer Bono. Cover story about Queen Latifah with large photo. Lifeline head photo of *American Idol* singer Constantine Maroulis.

### **March 31, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of *ER* star Noah Wyle teasing story about him leaving show.

Life front: Skybox photo of singer Avril Lavigne. Photo of rapper 50 Cent with story about album sales. Story at bottom of page about Wyle leaving *ER*. Lifeline head photos of *American Idol* cast with brief. Others briefs of actress Gong Li, Ed McMahon.

### **April 1-3, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of actress Jessica Alba teasing film *Sin City*.

Newsline teaser about Ted Koppel leaving Nightline.

Life front: Cover story about *Sin City* with large photo of star Bruce Willis

Head shot of Barbra Streisand and Maurice Gibb with rail story that they're teaming up on a song.

### **April 4, 2005**

Front: Giant illustration of Pope John Paul II with story about his death.

Life front: Skybox photo of Queen Latifah teasing children's awards show story. Cover story about Pope touching lives of Americans. Lifeline photo of Brittany Murphy with story about movie earnings. Head photo of *American Idol* singer Scott Savol's past arrest,



## Appendix L (Continued)

rock star Neil Young recovering from aneurysm, John Mellencamp and John Fogerty joining up for tour.

### **April 5, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of celebrity Jane Fonda with teaser about profile story of her. Photo of Prince Charles and Camilla Parker Bowles teasing part of Pope coverage.

Life front: Skybox photo of *American Idol* singer Bo Bice teasing story.

Cover story of Fonda about her new autobiography with large photo. Story about Pope's death creating book interest at bottom of page. Story down rail about Royal Wedding of Prince Charles postponed because of Pope funeral with photo of Prince and his bride.

Lifeline photo of *Vanity Fair* magazine cover with stars of *Desperate Housewives* with story about issue. Briefs about rocker Neil Young and Paris Hilton.

### **April 6, 2005**

Front: Skybox teaser about anchor Peter Jennings. Newline teaser about Masters preview with photo of Tiger Woods.

Life front: Skybox photo of *Lost* star Emilie de Ravin teasing story. Story about Peter Jennings battling lung cancer with large photo. Lifeline head photo of *American Idol* singer Anthony Federov with story about show.

Brief about *American Idol* winner Fantasia.

### **April 7, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Oscar winner Denzel Washington teasing black stars on Broadway. Photo of Tiger Woods teasing The Masters preview. Newline teaser about actress Drew Barrymore feature inside.

Life front: Teaser about Prince Charles' weddings. Story above fold about *Lost* with

## Appendix L (Continued)

photo of star Ian Somerhalder. Cover story about blacks on Broadway with photos of James Earl Jones, Leslie Uggams, Washington and Phylicia Rashad.

Profile story at bottom of page of actress Drew Barrymore with photo.

Lifeline head photos of *American Idol* singers with story about show. Briefs about Bruce Springsteen (summer tour).

### **April 8-10, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Prince Charles and bride Camilla Parker Bowles teasing story.

Newsline photo of Michael Jackson teasing story about trial. Cover story about Pope

Life front: Skybox photo of *Sideways* stars Virginia Madsen and Paul Giamatti.

Cover story about Prince Charles' wedding with small photos of stamps of royal couple.

Story at bottom of page about *Desperate Housewives* with photo of Marcia Cross, Teri Hatcher and Leslie Ann Warren.

Rail photo of Brad Pitt dancing with Angelina Jolie in film *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* with story. Photo of singer Shakira with story. Story about reality star Gordon Ramsay of *Hell's Kitchen*.

### **April 11, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of singer Mariah Carey. Photo of Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson at The Masters. Newsline photo of Prince Charles and Camilla Parker Bowles teasing story.

Life front: Skybox photo of Princess Anne's daughter, Zara Phillips teasing story about royal wedding. Story above fold about movie *Zahara* with photo of stars Matthew McConaughey and Steve Zahn. Story at bottom of page about singer Mariah Carey's new album with photo.

## Appendix L (Continued)

Lifeline head photo of *Grey's Anatomy* star Ellen Pompeo with brief about show. Other briefs about band Eagles, Eminem, 50 Cent.

### **April 12, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of *American Idol* singer Carrie Underwood teasing story.

Life front: Skybox photo of Underwood teasing story.

Lifeline head photo of *The Apprentice* contestant Chris Shelton with brief about his arrest. Other briefs about band U2, singer Gretchen Wilson winning an award.

### **April 13, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of singer Britney Spears teasing story about her pregnancy.

Life front: Skybox photo of actor Mickey Rourke. Story above fold about Spears' pregnancy with photo. Cover story about TV shows in danger of being canceled with photos with seven inset photos of stars of various programs.

Lifeline head photo of "American Idol" singer Vonzell Solomon with brief about show.

Other briefs about Oscar winner Hilary Swank and country duo Brooks & Dunn.

### **April 14, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of *Survivor* contestant Stephanie LaGrossa.

Life front: Skybox photo of actress Kristen Bell teasing story about Showtime film. Story at bottom of page about LaGrossa's plight on *Survivor* as lone member of tribe. Lifeline head photo of singer Faith Evans with brief. Head photos of *American Idol* singers with brief about show. Other brief about Britney Spears' reality show.

### **April 15-17, 2005**

Front: Skybox illustration photo of TV personality Jon Stewart teasing story about late-night shows.

## Appendix L (Continued)

Life front: Skybox photo of Oscar nominee Don Cheadle teasing story about DVD release of *Hotel Rwanda*. Cover story about late-night shows with caricatures of Stewart, Jay Leno, David Letterman, Ted Koppel, Craig Ferguson, Conan O'Brien and Jimmy Kimmel. Story at bottom of page about show *Arrested Development* with photo of star Jeffrey Tambor.

Rail head photo of actress Jessica Alba with story about her shark movie *Into the Blue*.

### **April 18**

Front: No celebrity presence.

Life front: Skybox photo of singer Rob Thomas teasing story.

Lifeline photo of actress Melissa George of "The Amityville Horror" with brief about movie earnings. Head photo of Paul McCartney with brief about U.S. Tour

### **April 19, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of cyclist Lance Armstrong teasing story. Newline teaser about Martha Stewart's new deal with satellite radio.

Life front: Skybox photo of *The Shield* star Anthony Anderson. Short story above fold about wedding of reality stars Amber Brkich and Rob Mariano.

Lifeline brief about TV personality Tom Snyder being diagnosed with leukemia.

### **April 20, 2005**

Front: No celebrity presence.

Life front: Skybox photo of actress Amanda Peet teasing story about new movie.

Cover story about Epic films with photos of Colin Farrell and Orlando Bloom.

Lifeline head photo of Paul Simon with brief. Other briefs about actor Nick Nolte.

## Appendix L (Continued)

### **April 21, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of *Desperate Housewives* star Eva Longoria on cover of celebrity magazine *Inside TV* with teaser about celebrity magazines.

Life front: Story above fold about *American Idol* star Paula Abdul's odd behavior. Cover story about celebrity magazines (which compete with USA Today). Story at bottom of page about TV doctor dramas with photo of *Grey's Anatomy* star Isaiah Washington.

Lifeline head photo of singer Mariah Carey with story about album sales. Head photos of *American Idol* singers with brief about show. Other briefs about Donald Trump and Bruce Springsteen.

### **April 22-24, 2005**

Front: Cover story about Star Wars with photo of Hayden Christensen, who plays Anakin Skywalker and becomes Darth Vader.

Life front: Skybox photo of actress Elizabeth Hurley teasing story about her new clothing line. Story above fold about new *Superman Returns* film with photo of actor Brandon Routh.

Lifeline photo of musical artists Kenny Loggins and Jim Messina with brief about reunited tour. Photo of actor Nicolas Cage with brief about his new movie role.

### **April 25, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of *24* star Dennis Haysbert teasing story about show.

Life front: Skybox photo of singer/actress Beyonce Knowles teasing story.

Story above fold about new movies with photo of Sean Penn and Nicole Kidman of *The Interpreter*.

Lifeline head photos of Stevie Nicks and Don Henley with brief about new tour.

## Appendix L (Continued)

### **April 26, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of singer Bruce Springsteen with teaser about story of new album.

Life front: Review story in center of page of Springsteen's new album with large photo.

Lifeline Head photo of Celine Dion with brief. Other briefs of actor/comedian Will

Ferrell, George Lopez (kidney transplant), *Will & Grace* cast gets raises, Dixie Chicks member Emily Robison having twins.

### **April 27, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of *American Idol* singer Vonzell Solomon with teaser story about sweeps. Cover story about network anchors Brian Williams, Bob Schieffer and Peter Jennings.

Life front: Cover story about TV season with photo of "Lost stars Terry O'Quinn and Dominic Monaghan. Lifeline photo of *American Idol* singer Bo Bice with story about show. Briefs about Martha Stewart and Garth Brooks.

### **April 28, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of TV personality Katie Couric with story about morning shows.

Life front: Skybox head photos of Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes with story about them being a new couple. Story above fold about new album releases with photo of singer

Toby Keith. Cover story of morning wars with photos of *Good Morning America* and

Today show hosts. Lifeline photos of *American Idol* singers with story about show. Head

photo of Rob Thomas with story about album sales. Briefs about Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie being on beautiful people list and Ray Romano.

## Appendix L (Continued)

### **April 29-May 1, 2005**

Front: Teaser photo above fold of *Stars Wars, Episode III* stars Hayden Christensen and Ewan McGregor teasing story about blockbuster movies.

Life front: Skybox photo of TV personality Rosie O'Donnell teasing profile story.

Cover story about summer movies with photos of stars Lindsay Lohan, Jamie Foxx and Orlando Bloom. Rail head photo of singer Carly Simon with story about new record. Rail story about unauthorized movie about Donald Trump with photo of stars Jennifer Baxter and Justin Louis.

### **May 2, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Coldplay band member Chris Martin teasing story about alternative rock.

Newsline teaser about Laura Bush feature with photo.

Life front: Story above fold about future of show *Arrested Development* with photos of star Jason Bateman and Andy Richter.

Cover story of Dana Reeve, wife of Christopher Reeve with giant photo. Smaller inset photo of the Reeves. Story down rail about summer movies with *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* stars Mos Def, Martin Freeman and Sam Rockwell. Lifeline photo of Mike Myers and Justin Timberlake with story about *Shrek 3*. Lifeline photo of Will Smith and wife Jada Pinkett Smith with brief about them hosting awards show. Brief about Peter Jennings.

### **May 3, 2005**

Front: Newsline teaser about Martha Stewart story.

Life front: Skybox photo of *American Idol* singer Anthony Federov teasing inside story

## Appendix L (Continued)

about show. Story above fold about Stewart's new show with head photo.

Lifeline photo of *Vanity Fair* cover with Angelina Jolie with story about her interview in magazine. Other briefs about actor/documentary writer Morgan Spurlock, Meryl Streep

### **May 4, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of *American Idol* star Paula Abdul with teaser about story.

Life front: Skybox photo of Harry Potter star Daniel Radcliffe.

Story above fold about Abdul's alleged relationship with contestant with head photo.

Story next to it about *Idol* with head photo of singer Carrie Underwood.

Lifeline briefs about Ray Charles and Ashton Kutcher.

### **May 5, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of actress Garcelle Beauvais-Nilon with son, Oliver, with teaser about celebrity moms juggling family and show business. Newline photo of Paula Abdul with teaser about show controversy.

Life front: Skybox teaser about celebrity mothers. Story above fold above about *Idol* expose on ABC with head photo of Abdul and former singer Corey Clark. Story at bottom of page about *Star Wars: Episode III* and Darth Vader with photo of star Hayden Christensen.

Lifeline head photos of *Idol* singers with story about show. Briefs about actors/comedians Dave Chapelle and Jimmy Fallon. Lifeline photo of singer Bruce Springsteen with story about album sales.

### **May 6-8, 2005**

Front: Cover story about TV show *Desperate Housewives* with large photo above fold of stars Eva Longoria, Jesse Metcalfe and creator Mark Cherry.



## Appendix L (Continued)

Life front: Skybox photo of actress Eva Green. Story at bottom of page about *American Idol* star Paula Abdul's alleged affair with singer Corey Clark with head photos of Abdul and Clark. Rail photo of singer Neil Diamond with story about new album.

### **May 9, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of singer Bruce Springsteen teasing interview story.

Life front: Skybox photo of *American Idol* host Paula Abdul teasing story about her appearing on *Saturday Night Live*. Story at bottom of page about Springsteen's tour with photo.

Lifeline photo of *Kingdom of Heaven* star Orlando Bloom with story about film sales.

Head photo of actor Wesley Snipes with brief about his new TV movie.

### **May 10, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of *American Idol* singer Carrie Underwood. Cover story about Shaquille going from Hollywood to South Beach with large photo.

Life front: Story at bottom of page about *Idol* and its curiosity factor with head photos of singers Underwood, Bo Bice, Vonzell Solomon and Anthony Federov.

Lifeline head photo of actress Hilary Swank with story about her and actresses Katie Holmes and singer/actress Jessica Simpson. Brief about singer Jimmy Buffett.

### **May 11, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of *Amazing Race* winners Uchenna and Joyce Agu teasing story about show finale.

Life front: Skybox photo of singer Renee Zellweger and Kenny Chesney teasing story of their surprise wedding. Story down rail about *Race* winning couple with same photo as front page. Lifeline head photo of *American Idol* singer Bo Bice with story about show.

## Appendix L (Continued)

Briefs about band The Rolling Stones and actor Steve Martin (winning Mark Twain Prize for American Humor).

### **May 12, 2005**

Front: Skybox of Britney Spears and husband Kevin Federline teasing story about new reality show of couple.

Newsline head photo of actor Macaulay Culkin teasing story about Michael Jackson trial, where he testified.

Life front: Story at bottom of page of Spears and Federline's new show on UPN with photo of couple. Lifeline briefs about actress Lorraine Bracco. Head photo of Nine Inch Nails member Trent Reznor with story about album rankings.

### **May 13-15, 2005**

Front: Skybox teaser of *Star Wars* with cutout photos of Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher, Hayden Christensen and Natalie Portman in story about old and new trilogies. Newsline head photo of Dave Chappelle with teaser about him entering treatment center.

Life front: Skybox photo of actor named "Vartan." Cover story about *Star Wars* with stars of first and second trilogies. Story at bottom of page about *Survivor* castoff Stephanie with head photos of her and four fellow castoffs. Rail photo of Greta Garbo and John Barrymore with brief about a collection of Garbo movies available. Head photo of Outkast band member "Andre Benjamin with brief about new movie role. Brief about Paul Anka.

### **May 16, 2005**

Front: Cover story of Billy Graham's differences from religious right with large photo. Newsline teaser about Dave Chappelle story.

## Appendix L (Continued)

Life front: Skybox photo of Oprah Winfrey teasing story. Cover story of *Everybody Loves Raymond* about farewell of show with photos of stars of Ray Romano and Romano with co-star Patricia Heaton. Lifeline head photo of *Survivor* castoff Tom Westman with story about him winning show.

### **May 17, 2005**

Front: Newslite teaser about Bill Gates 250 million gift to poor countries.

Life front: Skybox photo of Jane Fonda teasing profile feature. Cover story with headline “Secret celebrity weddings (and how they got that way)” with photos of couples Renee Zellweger and Kenny Chesney and Julie Robert and Danny Moder.

Lifeline head photo of Coldplay singer Chris Martin with brief about tour. Brief about Jamie Foxx being featured in musical show.

### **May 18, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Stars Wars creator/director George Lucas with story teasing political angles of movie.

Life front: Skybox photo of star Jennifer Love Hewitt teasing story about CBS fall lineup. Lifeline briefs about Kenny Chesney. MTV awards brief featuring Mariah Carey and Tom Cruise. Head photo of *American Idol* singer Bo Bice with brief about show.

### **May 19, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of *American Idol* finalists Bo Bice and Carrie Underwood.

Life front: Skybox photo of *The Apprentice* contestants Tana and Kendra.

Story down rail about Bice and Underwood with photo of singer Vonzell Solomon.

Lifeline head photo of Jane Fonda with brief about Kentucky theater boycott of her latest movie. Photo of musician Dave Matthews with his band with brief. Brief about Rolling

## Appendix L (Continued)

Stones tour.

### **May 31, 2005**

Front: Skybox front photo of actresses America Ferrera and Amber Tamblyn teasing movie *The Sisterhood of Traveling Pants*. Newline photo of race car driver Danica Patrick teasing story about how she boosted Indianapolis 500 ratings 40 percent.

Life front: Story at bottom of page about *Traveling Pants* film with photo of cast. Brief about Denzel Washington and Susan Sarandon appearing AARP magazine. Briefs about Johnny Depp. Brief about director Oliver Stone being arrested for drunk driving. Head photo of supermodel Twiggy with brief about TV show *Top Model*. Photo of Nine Inch Nails singer Trent Reznor.

### **June 1, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of *Beauty and the Geek* stars Lauren and Richard with story teasing summer hits. Cover story with headline "Can the rich, famous save Social Security with cutout photos of Julia Roberts, Alex Rodriguez and Tiger Woods.

Life front: Cover story about summer TV with cutout photo of Showtime star Omar Gooding. Lifeline brief about Christian Slater arrested on sexual groping charges. Briefs of Kelly Clarkson, Kevin Spacey and Hugh Jackman.

### **June 2, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Gwen Stefani teasing story about ring tones.

Life front: Cover story about celebrity pop culture mysteries with large photo of Carly Simon, with smaller photos of Jodie Foster, Alanis Morissette, Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman. Story at bottom of page about cellphone ringtones with photo of Stefani.

Lifeline briefs about Rod Stewart, Paul McCartney, Lindsay Lohan. Head photo of Dave

## Appendix L (Continued)

Chappelle with brief.

### **June 3-5, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of “Cinderella Man” stars Russell Crowe and Renee Zellweger.

Cover story of boxing great Mike Tyson with story about his life with photo.

Life front: Cover story of band Coldplay with large photo of band. Movie review story at bottom of page about *Cinderella* with photo of Crowe and co-star Paul Giamatti.

### **June 6, 2005**

Front: Newline photo of *The Breakfast Club* cast teasing 20-year reunion appearance on MTV awards.

Life front: Skybox photo of Lindsay Lohan teasing MTV awards show story. Lifeline briefs about Dave Chapelle, Brad Pitt, Marilyn Monroe, *Lost* star Michelle Rodriguez with head photo. Photo of *Six Feet Under* cast with teaser about inside story.

### **June 7, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes teasing story about their romance.

Newline head photo of Russell Crowe with teaser about his assault charge.

Life front: Skybox photo of Coldplay band members teasing story about album.

Story above fold about of Holmes and Cruise with photo of couple.

Lifeline head photo of Emmy Rossum with brief of her new movie.

### **June 8, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Anne Bancroft teasing feature obit.

Life front: Cover story about actress Angelina Jolie’s personal life and charity work with large photo illustration of her. Feature obit of Bancroft down rail with photo of her and husband Mel Brooks.

## Appendix L (Continued)

### **June 9, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Mick Jagger ex-wife, Jerry Hall, teasing feature.

Life front: Story about star antics before movies come out with photo of Russell Crowe.

Story at bottom of page about The Black Eyed Peas and their social commentary in their lyrics with photo of band.

Lifeline head photos of Mariah Carey (with story about ratings). Head photo of Jennifer Lopez with brief about her and Madonna beating featured in magazine *Billboard*. Briefs about Backstreet Boys tour.

### **June 10-12, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of “Batman Begins” star Christian Bale. Cover story about Arnold Schwarzenegger and recent controversy with large photo.

Newsline photo of Elvis teasing story about National Archive releasing military records of him, others.

Life front: Cover story about *Batman* with large cutout photo of Bale. Story at bottom of page about couple Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt’s new movie, *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* with photo of couple. Rail photo of *Prison Break* stars with Dominic Purcell and Wentworth Miller with story about upcoming series. Rail photo of Patti LaBelle with story about her new collection CD.

### **June 13, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of country great Alison Krauss teasing music festival. Large photo above fold of race car driver Dale Earnhardt teasing profile story.

Newsline head photo of Mike Tyson teasing story about his future.

Teaser about Backstreet Boys.

## Appendix L (Continued)

Life front: Skybox photo of “Batman” star Christian Bale teasing story. Story above fold about box office slump with photo of Brad Pitt. Story at bottom of page about Backstreet Boys’ comeback with photo of band.

Lifeline photo of Pink Floyd with story about upcoming Live 8 show. Briefs about actor Macaulay Culkin and singing duo Brooks & Dunn.

### **June 14, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of actress Elizabeth Kostova with teaser about coverage of *Da Vinci Code* film.

Story above fold with large headline “Jackson Free” with story about Michael Jackson’s acquittal with large photo of Jackson with sidebar.

Life front: Cover story about Jackson’s future with large photo of his Neverland Ranch and head photo of young Jackson. Movie review of *Batman Begins* with photo of star Christian Bale. Lifeline photo of singing group Destiny’s Child with story about their pending breakup. Brief of Rush Limbaugh and Bob Woodward. Story about *Us Weekly* tightening its policies about paparazzi photos, specifically those taken with reckless means.

### **June 15, 2005**

Front: Newslite teaser about Michael Jackson story.

Life front: Story above fold about Michael Jackson’s future with photo. Lifeline head photo of actress Alicia Silverstone with brief about her marrying rocker boyfriend. Briefs about Eddie Murphy to star in new movie, *American Idol* winner Carrie Underwood to sing national anthem at NBA Finals.

## Appendix L (Continued)

### **June 16, 2005**

Front: Photo above fold about Tiger Woods teasing U.S. Open bonus section. Newline teaser about Hugh Hefner and Playboy Mansion story.

Life front: Skybox photo of Heath Locklear and Hilary Duff teasing inside story. Story above fold about rock group Coldplay's new album with photo of group. Story at bottom of page about Playboy Mansion allowing public viewings. Lifeline photo of singer Macy Gray with story about her posing for charity. Brief about networks passing on Michael Jackson reality show.

### **June 17-19, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of *24* star Shohreh Aghdashloo teasing story about Emmy nominees. Story above fold about summer concert tickets with photo of Coldplay's Chris Martin, Mick Jagger, Paul McCartney and Bruce Springsteen.

Graphic about top-ranked dads on TV with head photo of Bill Cosby.

Life front: Skybox photo of *Batman Begins* star Christian Bale teasing story about movies. Cover story about Emmys with large photo of *24* star Kiefer Sutherland and smaller photo of *Desperate Housewives* star Marcia Cross.

### **June 20, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of couple Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes teasing story about celebrity engagements.

Life front: Skybox photo of Holmes showing off her ring with teaser "Tom gives Katie a ring. Story above fold about movies trying to end slump with photo of *Batman Begins* stars Christian Bale and Cillian Murphy. Rail story about *American Idol* online contest. Brief about Dr. Phil show featuring musical artists.



## Appendix L (Continued)

### **June 21, 2005**

Front: Skybox teaser of George Romero's film *Land of the Dead* with photo of actor Eugene A. Clark.

Life front: Skybox photo of music great Emmylou Harris teasing story of music festival.

Cover story about *Dead* with large photo of Clark and smaller photo of Romero. Story at bottom of page about casinos using celebrity images on their gaming chips. With pictures of chips with band coldplay and Pamela Anderson.

Lifeline brief about singer Martina McBride having baby. Other briefs about Mariah Carey, Sean P. Diddy Combs, Dave Spade with head photo and upcoming NBC series about celebrity pop star reality show.

### **June 22, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of John O'Hurley and Charlotte Jorgensen teasing story about *Dancing With the Stars*.

Life front: Story above fold about O'Hurley with photo. Lifeline head photo of Clark Gable with briefs of memorable movie quotes. Brief about upcoming book about Michael Jackson.

### **June 23, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of hip hop star R. Kelly teasing story.

Life front: Skybox photo of Marlon Brando's driver's license, teasing story about film auction. Story above fold about R. Kelly with photo. Lifeline photo of Foo Fighters member Dave Grohl with brief about song ratings. Head photo of Madonna with brief about Live 8 concert. Briefs about Howard Stern and former couple Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston's movie company.

## Appendix L (Continued)

### **June 24-26, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of actress Keira Knightley teasing story about women action heroes.

Cover story about filmmaker Steven Spielberg and his movies.

Life front: Skybox of group Destiny's Child. Cover story about women movie heroines

with large photo of Knightley, smaller photo of Jessica Alba. Rail. Photo of Michael

Jackson's new album cover with brief about collection album.

### **June 27, 2005**

Front: Cover story about Billy Graham's revival with photo.

Life front: Teaser photo of Miranda Lambert above Lifeline rail. Head photo of Gwen

Stefani with brief about tour. Other briefs about John Lennon (museum display). Photo of

Oscar nominee Don Cheadle with brief about "Crash" and other DVD releases.

### **June 28, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Derek Jeter teasing story about high school baseball stars.

Life front: Skybox photo of Tom Cruise teasing story about recent criticism. Cover story

about King Kong with photo of Naomi Watts. Lifeline head photo of singer Alicia Keys

with brief about Live 8 concert. Brief about Bob Dylan (music featured at Starbucks)

### **June 29, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Tom Cruise with co-star Dakota Fanning teasing "War of the Worlds" review.

Life front: "Worlds" review with photo of Cruise, Fanning in center of page. Lifeline brief about singer Kanye West winning BET award.

### **Nov. 19-21, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of Jesse Metcalfe teasing story about men of *Desperate Housewives*.

## Appendix L (Continued)

Newsline teaser about feature with members of band U2.

Life front: Large photo of U2 members with cover story about band. Story at bottom of page about male frontal nudity in movies with photo of Peter Sarsgaard and Colin Farrell.

Rail photo of singer Ludacris with brief about new CD. Cutout rail photo of actress Jennifer Garner with story about *Alias*.

### **Nov. 22, 2004**

Front: No celebrity presence.

Life front: Story above fold about movie *National Treasure* with photo of star Nicolas Cage. Lifeline briefs about Rapper Young Buck (arrested for stabbing), actor Vincent D'Onofrio (hospitalized), singer Clay Aiken (postponing tour with sore throat). Head photo of actress Annie Parisse with brief (new member of *Law & Order*).

### **Nov. 23, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of Gwen Stefani teasing story of her going solo.

Life front: Cover story of Gwen Stefani talking about life, love and celebrity with large photo. Music review down rail about U2's new CD with album cover photo.

Lifeline head photo of Paul McCartney with brief about Super Bowl show. Head photo of Liam Neeson with brief. Other briefs about Ryan Seacrest, Rosie O'Donnell, Nicollette Sheridan

### **Nov. 24-25, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of Colin Farrell and director Oliver Stone. Cover story of Dan Rather's future with large photo.

Life front: Skybox photo of actress Eva Longoria teasing story about *Desperate Housewives*. Cover story about big-time film directors with small inset photo of Stone.

## Appendix L (Continued)

Lifeline head photo of actress Lisa Kudrow with brief about new show. Brief about celebrity commentator Steven Cojocarú needing kidney transplant.

### **Nov. 26-28, 2004**

Front: Teaser about *Saturday Night Live* anchor girls.

Life front: Skybox photo of Beatles record cover teasing release of box set.

Cover story about TV's best shows with photos of several scenes in different shows.

Story at bottom of page about *SNL* female co-anchors making show history with photo of Tina Fey and Amy Poehler. Lifeline photo of Richard Pryor with release of documentary CD.

### **Nov. 29, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of actress Julia Roberts teasing story about her having twins, her personal life. Newline photo of Jay Leno teasing story about vintage cars.

Life front: Cover story of Roberts with large photo. Rail story about box office rankings with photo of *Alexander* star Colin Farrell.

Lifeline photo of David Hasselhoff with story about U.K. list of worst U.S. TV imports.

Brief about actress Shelly Long being OK after drug reaction to pain medicine.

### **Nov. 30, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of *Desperate Housewives* star Teri Hatcher.

Life front: Story above fold about *Housewives* with photo of Nicollette Sheridan and Christine Estabrook. Story at bottom of page with headline "Celebrities want to be alone -- or do they?" with photo of Ben Affleck and Jennifer Garner.

Lifeline briefs about singer Martina McBride, feature obit of actor John D. Barrymore (father of Drew Barrymore). Briefs about Keanu Reeves and Naomi Watts (in new films).

## Appendix L (Continued)

Head photo of Sting with brief about him touring college campuses.

### **Dec. 1, 2004**

Front: No celebrity presence.

Life front: Lifeline head photos of singer Nat King Cole with brief about top Christmas songs, head photo of actress Candice Bergen with brief about her joining *Boston Legal*.

Briefs about singer George Strait and George Clooney.

### **Dec. 2, 2004**

Front: Newline photo of Tom Brokaw teasing story about his last newscast.

Life front: Story above fold about U2's new CD with photo of band.

Lifeline photo of Johnny Depp with brief about movie honor. Other briefs about Tom Hanks, Carson Daly with head photo, filmmaker Morgan Spurlock and Luciano Pavarotti (pending retirement).

### **Dec. 3-5, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of actress Ziyi Zhang teasing movie review. Cover story about Arnold Schwarzenegger's potential run for president with cutout photo.

Life front: Movie review at bottom of page about *Flying Daggers* with photo of Zhang and co-star Takeshi Kaneshiro. Rail photo of actors Sam Page, Elisabeth and Grant Show with brief about new show *Point Pleasant*. Brief about Hugh Jackman with head photo. Photo of Clair Danes with story about new movie.

### **Dec. 6, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of singer/actor Lindsay Lohan teasing inside story.

Newline photo of Elton John teasing story about Kennedy Center awards.

Life front: Cover story of Lindsay Lohan's life with large photo, four smaller inset photos.

## Appendix L (Continued)

Story at bottom of page about Kennedy awards with photo of John Williams, Joan Sutherland, Warren Beatty and John. Story down rail about movie *Closer* with photo of stars Natalie Portman and Jude Law.

Lifeline briefs about Sharon Stone and Anne Heche (appearing in children's show), Mariah Carey (new Christmas show).

### **Dec. 7, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of Annie Parisse teasing story about *Law & Order*.

Life front: Skybox photo of Rod Stewart teasing story about DVDs. Lifeline head photo of Julie Roberts with brief about top-paid stars. Head photo of Jon Stewart with brief about his book. Brief about Stevie Wonder criticizing Eminem for ripping Michael Jackson. Brief about Gloria Estefan's new children's book.

### **Dec. 8, 2004**

Front: Newline teaser about singer Kanye West.

Life front: Story about Kanye West topping 10 Grammy nominations with photo.

Lifeline head photo of Craig Ferguson with story about him hosting late night TV show.

### **Dec. 9, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of *Survivor* star Amber Brkich teasing feature about show. Newline photo of Martha Stewart teasing story about TV program. Teaser about Dick Clark's stroke.

Life front: Skybox photo of *Survivor* cast teasing inside story. Lifeline head photo of Clark with story about his stroke. Head photo of singer Kelly Clarkson with brief about album sales. Other briefs about singers Josh Groban and Jay-Z, TV personality Al Franken.

## Appendix L (Continued)

### **Dec. 10-12, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of actor Leonardo DiCaprio teasing interview story. Promo photo of Peyton Manning teasing NFL story.

Life front: Skybox photo of *Ocean's Twelve* cast, including George Clooney teasing inside story. Cover story of DiCaprio's upcoming role, personal life with large photo.

Story at bottom of page with headline "Magazines await first photos of Julia's twins" about Julia Roberts' new twins. Rail photo of Jennifer Lopez with story about her new album.

### **Dec. 13, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of Julie Andrews playing Cinderella movie of classic tale. Newline teaser about *Survivor* winner.

Life front: Story above fold about film *Ocean's Twelve* leading box office sales. Story at bottom of page about new *Cinderella* movie with head photo of Andrews, larger photo of Andrews dancing with star Jon Cypher.

Lifeline brief about James Brown having prostate surgery. Head photo of Chris Daughterty with brief about him winning *Survivor*.

### **Dec. 14, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of actor/singer Jamie Foxx with story about Golden Globes.

Newline teaser about Regis Philbin hosting New Year's celebration show.

Life front: Story down rail about Golden Globes with photo of Foxx. Lifeline head photo of Philbin with brief. Other briefs about rock band U2, The Pretenders being nominated to Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Brief about Madonna's record-setting tour.

## Appendix L (Continued)

### **Dec. 15, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of Hilary Swank teasing story about Clint Eastwood film *Million Dollar Baby*.

Life front: Movie review of *Baby* above fold with photo of stars Eastwood and Swank.

Cover story of film *Phantom* with large photo of stars Gerald Butler and Emmy Rossum.

Lifeline head photo of Katie Holmes with brief about her and Swank's upcoming film roles.

### **Dec. 16, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of actor Adam Sandler teasing story about movie *Spanglish*.

Newsline teaser about Howard Stern feature article.

Life front: Cover story about Stern with large photo. Rail story about TV show *O.C.* with photo of stars Adam Brody and Rachel Bilson. Story at bottom of page about *Spanglish* with photo of Sandler. Lifeline head photo of Snoop Dogg with brief. Other briefs of Barry Manilow, Minnie Driver and rapper O.D.B. (autopsy into his death by overdose).

Head photo of Ludacris with story about his CD leading Billboard Chart in sales.

### **Dec. 19, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of actor Leonardo DiCaprio teasing review of *Aviator*.

Teaser at bottom of page about Elvis investor paying \$100 million for rights to market late singer with photo of Presley souvenir.

Life front: Movie review at bottom of page of *Aviator* with photo of DiCaprio. Rail photo of Carol Burnett with brief about Broadway show. Photo of Fred Astaire and Judy Garland with brief about new DVD.



## Appendix L (Continued)

### **Dec. 20, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of Jim Carre teasing story of latest movie.

Life front: Cover story about *Desperate Housewives* and real Wisteria Lane with small photo of cast. Story at bottom of page about *American Idol* winners struggling to sell records with head photo of past winner *Fantasia*.

Lifeline briefs about Ashlee Simpson, Jeff Probst (dating past *Survivor* contestant). Briefs about Motley Crue singer Vince Neil (facing assault charges), actress Denise Richards (expecting second child).

### **Dec. 21, 2004**

Front: No celebrity presence.

Life front: Lifeline brief about Leonardo DiCaprio and Tobey Maguire being sued by a producer. Other briefs about rapper Young Buck (charged in stabbing), Dave Chappell (TV show), Josh Brolin (cited in lawsuit).

### **Dec. 22, 2004**

Front: Skybox photos of Bill Murray teasing interview story. Skybox photo of NBA stars Shaquille O'Neal and Kobe Bryant teasing upcoming showdown.

Life front: Skybox head photo of Matt LeBlanc teasing inside story about TV ratings.

Story above fold about film *Phantom* with photo of stars Emmy Rossum and Gerard Butler. Cover story of Bill Murray with photo of he and co-stars of *The Life Aquatic With Steve Zissou*. Lifeline brief of Wesley Snipes (files lawsuit), head photo of 24 star Arnold Vosloo with story previewing season premiere.

### **Dec. 23-26, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of Dustin Hoffman and Barbra Streisand teasing story about holiday

## Appendix L (Continued)

movies. Cutout skybox photos of Shaquille O'Neal and Kobe Bryant teasing holiday NBA showdowns. Teaser photo of NFL quarterback Tom Brady above fold teasing football game previews.

Life front: Cover story about holiday movies with inset photos of Leo DiCaprio, Jim Carrey, Kenan Thompson, Dania Ramirez. Story at bottom of page about Ray Charles with photo of late star. Lifeline head photo of late rapper Tupac Shakur with story about album sales. Head photo of Tom Hanks with brief about Santa wish lists, which also mentions several other celebrities. Other brief about actress Kirstie Alley's new reality series.

### **Dec. 27, 2004**

Front: Skybox illustration of Ronald Reagan teasing story about actors who made indelible impressions.

Life front: Story above fold about box office rankings with photo of *Meet the Fockers* stars Barbra Streisand and Ben Stiller. Story at bottom of page about *Desperate Housewives* keeping young adults tuned in with photo of stars Teri Hatcher and Felicity Huffman. Lifeline head photo of Diana Ross with brief. Other briefs about filmmaker Michael Moore. Photo of stars Ethan Hawke and Julie Delpy of *Before Sunset* with brief about magazine poll. Briefs about Jennifer Lopez (ex-husband files lawsuit) and Marlon Brando (business manager files lawsuit).

### **Dec. 28, 2004**

Front: No celebrity presence.

Life front: Skybox photo of singer Kanye West with teaser "Celebrity going silly."

Story at bottom of page about *Meet the Fockers* with photo of stars Dustin Hoffman and

## Appendix L (Continued)

Barbra Streisand. Lifeline head photo of George Carlin with brief about him going to alcohol treatment center.

### **Dec. 29, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of actress Scarlett Johansson teasing story about her two upcoming films.

Life front: Skybox photo of Jim Carrey and Kate Winslet teasing story about movies.

Movie review above fold of *In Good Company* with photo of stars Dennis Quaid and

Topher Grace. Cover story of Johansson with large photo. Lifeline photo of couple --

CBS TV personality Julie Chen and Viacom co-president Les Moonves with brief about their wedding.

### **Dec. 30, 2004-Jan. 2, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of singer/actress Beyonce Knowles teasing story about top photos of year.

Life front: Skybox photo of Pope John Paul II teasing inside story. Feature obit above fold of Broadway and *Law & Order* actor Jerry Orbach. Year in review story with several photos of celebrities in collage, including Donald Trump, cast of *Desperate Housewives*, Janet Jackson and Martha Stewart. Lifeline head photo of rapper Eminem with brief. Oter brief about rapper Ja Rule (hosts party where there was shooting). Head photo of Johnny Depp with brief about most search celebrity on Internet database.

### **Jan. 4, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of actors Josh Cook and Jennifer Finnigan.

Life front: Skybox photo of actor Don Cheadle teasing inside feature. TV preview story about *Committed* with photo of stars Cook and Finnigan.

## Appendix L (Continued)

Lifeline briefs about Lindsay Lohan and Bill Murray. Head photo of director Martin Scorsese.

### **Jan. 5, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of *Alias* star Jennifer Garner teasing story.

Life front: Cover story about writer/producer J.J. Abrams with photo of Garner. Lifeline photo of Seal and super model Heidi Klum with brief about them to wed. Other briefs about Dick Clark, Leonardo DiCaprio.

### **Jan. 6, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of TV stars Kelly Ripa and husband Mark Consuelos teasing story about their personal life. Newline photo of Bill Gates teasing interview story.

Life front: Skybox photo of Cruz Smith. Story above fold about 2004 year in review for music industry with head photo of singer Usher. Cover story about Ripa and Consuelos with subhead mentioning “celebrity couple.” Story at bottom of page about hot books with head photos of Bill Clinton and Jon Stewart. Lifeline head photo of Jennifer Garner with brief her being injured by possible stunt. Other brief about Steven Spielberg and Sting (charity relief work) and Christina Applegate’s Broadway debut.

### **Jan. 7-9, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of *24* star Shohreh Aghdashloo teasing story about season premiere.

Newline photo of Mickey Rooney teasing Super Bowl commercial story.

Life front: Skybox photo of Julie Roberts’ niece Emma becoming a young star. Cover story about “24” show and its upcoming season with large photo of star Kiefer Sutherland. Story at bottom of page about top directors with photo of *Aviator* star Leonardo DiCaprio. Rail photo of Tom Selleck with story about his latest TV movie.

## Appendix L (Continued)

Photo of singer Kenny Chesney with story about upcoming tour.

### **Jan. 10, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston teasing story about celebrity watchers, magazines going crazy for more information.

Life front: Story above fold with headline: "Start the presses! Aniston and Pitt split."

Story is about celebrity magazines rushing to get information about blockbuster breakup with photo of People front featuring photo of couple. Story at bottom of page about "The Aviator" being an Oscar hopeful with photo of Leonardo DiCaprio. Lifeline head photo of actress Cynthia Nixon with brief about a guest TV role. Head photo of singer/actor Harrick Connick Jr. with brief about Broadway role. Brief about Clint Eastwood (movie honored).

### **Jan. 11, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of actress Sasha Alexander with teaser about show *NCIS*. Life front: Skybox of *Queer Eye for the Straight Girl* cast. Teaser above fold photo of Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston with teaser "What now for Brad and Jen?"

Story about CBS News controversy with head photo of Rather. Cover story about "NCIS" with photos of star Mark Harmon and David McCallum. Lifeline head photo of Stevie Wonder with brief about benefit concert. Other briefs about Alicia Keys, Sarah McLachlan and Jon Stewart.

### **Jan. 12, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Jennifer Garner teasing feature story about her.

Life front: Story above fold about TV dramas with photo of *Medium* star Patricia Arquette. Cover story of Garner's life, celebrity with large photo.

## Appendix L (Continued)

Lifeline photo of *Fantastic Four* cast, including Jennifer Alba with brief about film.

Other briefs about Jon Stewart, Michael Jackson, Denis Leary.

### **Jan. 13, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward teasing story about long-time celebrity couples. Cover story about NFL playoffs with large photo of Tom Brady.

Newsline teaser about Golden Globe fashion tips, mentioning Johnny Depp, Renee Zellweger.

Life front: Skybox photo of Newman and Woodward with teaser "Celebs' love stories."

Lifeline head photo of Green Day singer Billie Joe Armstrong with brief about album sales. Head photo of Kid Rock with brief about him not appearing in inauguration performance. Brief about Prince Harry apologizing for wearing Nazi outfit.

### **Jan. 14-16, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of actress Kate Winslet teasing story about Oscar performances.

Teaser above fold about NFL playoffs with head photos of Peyton Manning, Tom Brady.

Life front: Skybox photo of Samuel L. Jackson of *Coach Carter*. teasing story. Cover story about Oscar favorites chosen by industry insiders with photos of Gael Garcia, Sophie Okonedo, Catalina Sandino Moreno and Freddie Highmore. Story at bottom of page about *The Life Aquatic With Steve Zissou* film with photo of Bill Murray and Cate Blanchett. Rail photo of Elvis Costello with story about upcoming tour. Brief about upcoming miniseries about Elvis Presley with photo.

### **Jan. 17, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Jamie Foxx teasing story about Golden Globes. Teaser above fold about NFL playoffs with photos of Donovan McNabb and Tom Brady. Life front: Cover

## Appendix L (Continued)

story about Golden Globes with photo of *Desperate Housewives* star Nicollette Sheridan with fiance Nicklas Soderblom on way to *Golden Globes* in back of limousine. Other photos of Jennifer Garner and Robin Williams. Story at bottom of page about Tsunami benefit concert with photo of Eric Clapton. Lifeline head photo of Samuel L. Jackson with brief about movie box office rankings. Brief about TV personality Jerry Springer.

### **Jan. 18, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of *American Idol* judges Randy Jackson, Simon Cowell and Paula Abdul with teaser about show.

Life front: Skybox photo of actor Billy Bob Thornton teasing story about sports movies.

Story above fold about Golden Globes after parties with photo of Ellen DeGeneres, Portia de Rossi. Cover story about *American Idol* with photo of judges. Lifeline obit of film star Virginia Mayo and daytime star Ruth Warrick. Other briefs about Dick Clark, celebrity TV personality Steven Cojocar.

### **Jan. 19, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Bush twins Jenna Bush and Barbara Bush teasing what outfits they'll wear to inaugural ball.

Life front: Teaser above fold about first family's wardrobe selections for inaugural ball.

Lifeline head photo of Julia Roberts with brief. Briefs about Donald Trump, Stone Cold Steve Austin, Gillian Anderson (wedding).

### **Jan. 20, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of actor/rapper Ice Cube teasing story about upcoming film role.

Life front: Story above fold about singer Mario's latest CD. Story at bottom of page about Sundance Film Festival with photo of actor Pierce Brosnan. Lifeline photo of band

## Appendix L (Continued)

Green Day with story about record sales. Head photo of singer Alison Krauss teasing story. Brief about Sandra Bullock and Keanu Reaves teaming up for second movie project.

### **Jan. 21-23, 2004**

Front: No celebrity presence.

Life front: Cover story about Oscar performances with illustrations of Johnny Depp, Leonardo DiCaprio, Don Cheadle, Jamie Foxx. Story at bottom of page about Show *Monk* with photo of star Traylor Howard. Rail photo of Vica A. Fox with story about upcoming reality show *The Starlet*.

### **Jan. 24, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of actors Clint Eastwood and Hilary Swank teasing story about Oscars. Cover story of death of TV great Johnny Carson with large illustration of him.

Life front: Skybox photo of Donald Trump's bride, Melanie Knauss teasing story about their wedding. Teaser photo above fold of Carson teasing inside story. Cover story about "Million Dollar Baby" and other past Oscar dramas with large photo of Eastwood and Swank, smaller inset photos of Haley Joel Osment, Bruce Willis, Jaye Davidson and Stephen Rhea. Story at bottom of page about U2 tour with photo of band. Lifeline photo of Ice Cube teasing story about latest role. Briefs about Bob Dylan. Head photo of singer Julie Roberts. Clay Aiken.

### **Jan. 25, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Jay Leno and Ed McMahon teasing story about Johnny Carson.

Life front: Skybox photo of singer Kenny Chesney teasing story about new album. Story above fold about tributes to Carson with photo of Don Rickles, Bob Newhart with Leno.



## Appendix L (Continued)

Story at bottom of page about future of former couple Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston with head photos of both.

Lifeline head photo of TV host Paige Davis with brief. Other brief about rapper Jermaine Dupri changing record labels.

### **Jan. 26, 2005**

Front: Skybox photos of Leonardo DiCaprio, Kate Beckinsale, Jamie Foxx and Hilary Swank teasing Oscar preview package.

Life front: Cover story about Oscar nominations with photos of Swank, Clint Eastwood, Foxx, Annette Bening. Lifeline head photo of Halle Barry with story about Golden Raspberry Awards. Briefs about Johnny Carson, Nicole Kidman (someone listening outside her estate with audio equipment), Ringo Starr and *Survivor* winner Richard Hatch arrested on tax evasion charges.

### **Jan. 27, 2005**

Front: No celebrity presence.

Life front: Story above fold about upcoming Oscars. Lifeline head photo of rapper The Game with story about album sales. Briefs about Oprah Winfrey, Ben Stiller, Jeffrey Star, Stockard Channing, Tim Daly, Nicole Kidman (gets restraining order against photographers).

### **Jan. 28-30, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Oscar nominee Hilary Swank.

Life front: Cover story of Hilary Swank's Oscar chances with large photo.

### **Jan. 31, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Green Day singer Billy Joe Armstrong. Newline photo of

## Appendix L (Continued)

Sammy Sosa teasing story about possible trade. Teaser about Michael Jackson criticizing media leaks.

Life front: Skybox photo of *Forty Shades of Blue* star Dina Korzun. Story above fold about Oscar movies with photo of Clint Eastwood and Morgan Freeman. Cover story about Green Day with large photo of band. Lifeline photo of *Survivor* winner Richard hatch with story about upcoming reality shows. Briefs about Bob Dyland, Merle Haggard (touring together). Head photo of *Medium* star Patricia Arquette with brief about show.

### **Feb. 1, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of all-woman rock band Placenta singer Rachael Yellow. Newline photo of Michael Jackson with teaser about his trial beginning. Newline head photo of Barry Bonds teasing story of his knee injury.

Life front: Cover story about all-women rock bands with photo of Placenta and Joy Rose of Housewives of Prozac. Lifeline head photo of *The Sopranos* star James Gandolfini with story about syndication of show. Head photo of Tom Brokaw with brief about upcoming book. Brief about David Letterman paying tribute to Johnny Carson.

### **Feb. 2, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of famed feminist Gloria Steinem teasing feature story.

Life front: Cover story of Steinem, 70. Rail story about *CBS Evening News* changes with photos of Bob Schieffer and Dan Rather. Lifeline head photo of Marlon Brando with brief about new video game of *The Godfather*. Brief of Patricia Heaton (new TV deal) and Snoop Dogg (lawsuit filed against him).

### **Feb. 3, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of Martha Stewart teasing story about new TV show. Newline

## Appendix L (Continued)

teaser about celebrity couples needing thick skin to survive media glare.

Life front: Story above fold about Stewart's new show with photo. Cover story featuring *CSI* star William Peterson with large photo. Story at bottom of page about *Million Dollar Baby* with photo of Clint Eastwood and Hilary Swank.

Lifeline head photo of singer Kenny Chesney with brief about album sales. Brief about singer Houston gouging out an eye during a suicide attempt.

### **Nov. 18, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of William Shater teasing interview story.

Life front: Skybox photo of TV star Marianne Jean-Baptiste teasing story about TV shows. Story above fold about George Bush's kissing habits in the White House with photos of him kissing Condoleeza Rice and Margaret Spellings. Cover story about Shatner's career, personal life. Story at bottom of page about show trying to copy new hits with photo of *Desperate Housewives* stars Teri Hatcher and Nicollette Sheridan.

Lifeline head photo of rapper Eminem with story about song rankings. Photo of *People* magazine cover featuring Jude Law with brief about him being named sexiest man. Other briefs about rapper Young Buck (suspect in stabbing) and actor Vincent D'Onofrio (hospitalized).

### **Nov. 17, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of *Lost* star (name unknown) teasing story.

Life front: Skybox photo of *Lost* star Naveen Andrews teasing story.

Lifeline head photo of Bob Dylan with brief about his song topping magazine survey.

Head photo of Jennifer Garner with brief about *Alias*. Other brief about Usher and Alicia Keys topping radio surveys.

## Appendix L (Continued)

### **Nov. 16, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of Patti Davis teasing interview talking about her father, Ronald Reagan. Newline teaser about actor Hugh Laurie joining cast of *House*.

Life front: Cover story about *House* with photo of Hugh Laurie. Cover story featuring life of Davis. Story at bottom of page about new R&B singer Lil Jon with photo. Lifeline head photo of Omarosa of *The Apprentice* with brief about reality stars. Brief about Tom Hanks' possible casting in *The Da Vinci Code*.

### **Nov. 15, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of group Destiny's Child teasing story about latest CD. Newline teaser about death of rapper ODB.

Life front: Story at bottom of page about Destiny's Child's music review with photo of group. Lifeline cutout photo of supermodel/actress Rachel Hunter with brief about new reality show *The Real Gilligan's Island*. Brief about Clay Aiken (singing in holiday show), Lindsay Lohan and Wilmer Valeria (splitting up) and R.Kelly (rapper Jay-Z's friend charged in his assault). Brief with headline "Celeb legal woes: on the docket" mentioning Bill Maher, Cameron Diaz and boyfriend Justin Timberlake and Rod Stewart.

### **Nov. 12-14, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of actress Renee Zellweger teasing interview story. Skybox photo of NFL star Brett Favre teasing story about NFL games.

Life front: Skybox photo of child star Freddie Highmore teasing movie review of *Finding Neverland*. Cover story about Zellweger's career and life. Story at bottom of page about rapper Eminem's music review of latest CD with photo. Rail photo of actress Keira Knightley with story about film *Domino*. Photo of singer Flavor Flav and Brigitte

## Appendix L (Continued)

Nielsen with story about their upcoming reality series.

### **Nov. 11, 2005**

Front: Newline teaser “Celeb nuptial freebies scrutinized” mentioning recent wedding of Star Jones.

Life front: Skybox photo of actress Sharon Warren teasing story about her life. Story above fold about show *ER* with photo of guest star Ray Liotta. Story at bottom of page with headline “Star Jones says ‘I do’ to wedding freebies.” with photo of couple Al Reynolds and Jones. Newline briefs of The Beatles and Jerry Seinfeld. Head photos of Ray Charles (different story) and Rodney Dangerfield with briefs.

### **Nov. 10, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of singer Kenny Chesney teasing story about Country Music Awards. Newline teaser of interview story of new NBC news anchor Brian Williams.

Life front: Cover story above fold about Williams. Story in center about Country Music Awards with photos of Chesney, Leann Rimes and Gretchen Wilson. Newline briefs about Nicky Hilton (getting an annulment) and Chris Kattan (developing TV series).

### **Nov. 9, 2004**

Front: Skybox teaser photo of singers Gretchen Wilson and Shania Twain teasing preview about The Country Music Awards.

Life front: Story above fold about *Desperate Housewives* with photo of stars Marcia Cross and Steven Culp. Cover story about Twain’s career and life with large photo packaged with teaser down rail about CMAs with photo of Wilson. Brief about Jim Belushi and Burt Reynolds filing separate lawsuits. Brief about Ewan McGregor (making musical debut in London).

## Appendix L (Continued)

### **Nov. 8, 2004**

Front: No celebrity presence.

Life front: Skybox photo of Raj of *The Apprentice* teasing story about reality shows.

Lifeline cutout photo of actress Sarah Michelle Gellar with story about top TV characters of all time. Head photo of Ruben Studdard with brief about his workout.

### **Nov. 5-7, 2004**

Front: No celebrity presence.

Life front: Skybox photo of actor Christopher Reeve as Superman.

Cover story about TV show *Arrested Development* with large photo of cast, including Jason Bateman. Rail head photo of Patricia Arquette with story about show *Medium*.

Brief about actor Vin Diesel's latest project with photo. Photo of singer Mario with story about upcoming album.

### **Nov. 4, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of *The O.C.* star Mischa Barton teasing review of show. Newline teaser "Celeb news not safe from satirists."

Life front: Story above fold with headline "Coming soon: Celeb news served satirically" with photo of comedian Greg Giraldo. TV review at bottom of page of *O.C.* with photo of Barton and co-star Benjamin McKenzie. Lifeline photo of singers Jay-Z and R.Kelly with story about album sales. Brief about Grand Funk manager killed in domestic dispute.

### **Nov. 3, 2004**

Front: No celebrity presence.

Life front: Skybox photo of actors Larry Hagman and Patrick Duffy teasing story about

## Appendix L (Continued)

*Dallas* reunion special. Lifeline brief about Rob Lowe (show canceled), head photo of wrestler Chyna with brief about reality show.

### **Nov. 2, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of Jon Stewart teasing feature story about him. Skybox photo of Kobe Bryant teasing NBA preview. Newline photo of Ellen DeGeneres teasing story about her show.

Life front: Skybox photo of *Crossing Jordan* star Jill Hennessy teasing story about sweeps. Story above fold about DeGeneres talk show success with photo of her with actor Tom Hanks. Cover story of Stewart with large photo of him and smaller photos of two magazines with him on cover. Story at bottom of page about classic movies on DVD with photo of Clark Gable kissing Vivien Leigh in *Gone With the Wind*. Head photo of Sylvester Stallone with brief about his new magazine. Brief about singer R. Kelly suing singer and tour partner Jay-Z.

### **Nov. 1, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of singer Elton John teasing story about his Vegas show, new CD. Newline teaser about singer R. Kelly leaving stage of tour with singer Jay-Z.

Life front: Story about feud between R. Kelly and Jay-Z with photo of Kelly. Cover story of feud. Cover story about John with large photo. Story at bottom of page about politically charged songs with photo of rapper Eminem. Head photo of Lindsay Lohan with brief about her recovery from illness. Photo of *Ray* star Jamie Foxx with brief about movie sales.

### **Oct. 29-31, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of female cast of *Desperate Housewives* teasing story behind the

## Appendix L (Continued)

scenes of show.

Life front: Skybox photo of actress Nicole Kidman teasing story. Cover story about *Desperate Housewives* with large photo of female cast. Movie review at bottom of page of *Ray* with photo of star Jamie Foxx. Rail photo of actors William H. Macy and Keke Palmer with story about cable movie *The Wool Cap*. Photo of Tori Amos with story about her latest projects.

### **Oct. 28, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of *Ray* star Jamie Foxx teasing story.

Life front: Cover story about movies depicting music stars with large photo of Foxx, inset photo of Ray Charles, photo of Johnny and June Carter Cash, inset photo of actors Joaquin Phoenix and Reese Witherspoon. Story at bottom of page about Oscar award possibilities with photo of unnamed actor in *The Motorcycle Diaries*. Lifeline head photo of Rod Stewart with photo about album sales. Head photo of LeAnn Rimes with brief about her hosting reality show.

### **Oct. 27, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of actor Annette Bening teasing profile story.

Life front: Cover story of Bening with large photo.

Lifeline head photo of actor Ving Rhames with brief about latest TV project. Briefs about Bruce Springsteen (stumping for John Kerry) and Donnie Wahlberg's (latest TV project).

### **Oct. 26, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of Ashlee Simpson teasing profile story. Newline teaser "Stars using Net to reach fans teasing story about celebrities bypassing traditional media



## Appendix L (Continued)

announcements. Teaser about Annette Bening interview coming Oct. 27

Life front: Skybox photo of Lindsay Lohan teasing story about her illness. Story above fold about Ashlee Simpson with photo. Cover story about moview with sex, violence and gore with large photo of Ned Bellamy and Danny Glover, stars of *Saw* and smaller photo of Johnny Knoxville and Tracey Ullman, stars of *Dirty Shame*. Story at bottom of page with headline “Celebrities let their Web sites do the talking” with photo of Britney Spears’ Web site. Lifeline head photo of singer Terri Clark with story about performers for American Music Awards, obit brief of acclaimed singer Robert Merrill.

### **Oct. 25, 2004**

Front: Newslite teaser about actor Ben Affleck’s latest movie not doing well.

Life front: Story above fold about movie releases with photo of actress Sarah Michelle Gellar. Cover story of TV infomercial host Billy Mays as genre celebrates 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Lifeline photo of Ashlee Simpson with story about her messed-up performance on *Saturday Night Live*. Head photo of Brandon Routh with story about him being new Superman for next movie. Brief about Madonna’s latest project.

### **Sept. 28, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of Sarah Jessica Parker teasing story about HBO’s success. Teaser photo above fold of Jay Leno and Conan O’Brien teasing story about Leno announcing retirement in 2009.

Life front: Story above fold about Conan O’Brien taking over *Tonight Show* in 2009 with photo of Leno with Oprah Winfrey. Cover story about HBO with seven photos of stars in various shows, including Parker. Lifeline head photo of *American Idol* finalist Kimberley Locke with brief about her tour. Briefs about Mick Jagger (latest song) and Chaka Khan

## Appendix L (Continued)

(son arrested).

### **Sept. 29, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of Jamie Foxx teasing inside profile story.

Life front: Skybox photo of cast of *Lost* teasing inside story. Story above fold about new show *Kevin Hill* with photo of star Taye Diggs. Cover story about Jamie Foxx with large photo. Lifeline head photo of Loretta Lynn with brief about recent awards.

### **Sept. 30, 2004**

Front: No celebrity presence.

Life front: Lifeline photo of band Green Day with brief about album sales. Briefs about Al Franken and Mel Brooks with head photo.

### **Oct. 1-3, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of actress Eva Longoria teasing story about *Desperate Housewives*

Life front: Cover story about *Housewives* giving new TV portrayals of mothers with photo of female cast plus 10 small inset photos of past TV shows. Story at bottom of page about film “What the #\$\*! Do We Know?” with photo of star Marlee Matlin. Lifeline head photo of David Hasselhoff with brief about latest project. Brief about Robin Williams’ latest project.

### **Oct. 4, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of Conan O’Brien teasing story about late-night shows.

Life front: Skybox photo of Bruce Springsteen teasing inside story about voting. Cover story about late-night shows with large photos of O’Brien, Leno, Jimmy Kimmel and David Letterman. Story at bottom of page about Cat Stevens (Yusaf Islam) with photo.

Lifeline head photo of singer/actress Beyonce Knowles with brief. Other briefs about Ed

## Appendix L (Continued)

Harris (Broadway director debut) and Justin Timberlake (latest movie role).

### **Oct. 5, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of music legend Bob Dylan teasing interview story. Newsline photo of Janet Leigh (woman in shower in *Psycho*) teasing obit.

Life front: Story above fold about *Desperate Housewives* helping ABC with photo of stars Teri Hatcher and Nicolette Sheridan. Cover story about Dylan with large photo.

Lifeline photo of Leigh teasing inside story. Head photo of Charlize Theron with brief about her back injury on movie set. Other brief about Penn actor family winning award.

### **Oct. 6, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of Rodney Dangerfield teasing obit story.

Life front: Skybox photo of supermodel Giselle Bündchen teasing story. Cover story about Leonardo DiCaprio's role in *The Aviator* with large photo of him with Gwen Stefani with head photo of co-star Kate Beckinsale. Lifeline head photo of Jennifer

Aniston with story of her and other actors helping to get out the vote. Brief about Elton John accusing Madonna of lip-syncing.

### **Oct. 7, 2004**

Front: Teaser photo above fold of Howard Stern, teasing inside story about satellite radio deal. Newsline teaser about Donald Trump, others sliding in reality ratings.

Life front: Lifeline photo of Ozzy Osborne with brief about his battle of the bands. Brief about Loretta Lynn suing for song rights. Head photo of Hilary Duff in brief about album sales.

### **Oct. 8-10, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of actors Jimmy Fallon and Queen Latifah teasing story about

## Appendix L (Continued)

Fallon leaving *Saturday Night Live*.

Life front: Skybox photo of Madonna teasing inside story about summer tours. Cover story about Jimmy Fallon's career future with large photo and smaller inset of Fallon with *Live* co-star Tina Fey. Movie review at bottom of page of *Friday Night Lights* with photo of star Billy Bob Thornton. Rail photo of singing legend Frank Sinatra with story about upcoming album release. Head photo of actor Ricky Gervais with brief about *The Office*. Photo of John Travolta and Kirstie Alley with story about upcoming reality show *Fat Actress*.

### **Oct. 11, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of actress Lindsay Lohan teasing story about female stars. Photo above fold of Christopher Reeve as Superman teasing feature obit. Newline teaser about Britney Spears' marriage to Kevin Federline.

Life front: Story above fold about box office rankings with photo of Billy Bob Thornton of *Friday Night Lights*. Story at bottom of page about young female celebrities with magazine covers featuring Lohan Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen.

Lifeline photo of Carlos Santana with story about survey of worst guitar riffs of all time.

Other briefs about rapper Sigel (sentenced on gun possession charge).

### **Oct. 12, 2004**

Front: Cover story about actor Christopher Reeve's movie roles, battle with paralysis with large photo. Teaser about singers John Mellencamp and Travis Tritt teaming up on a duet.

Life front: Skybox photo of musician Ryan Cabrera teasing inside story. Story at bottom of page about Mellencamp and Tritt song with photo of two performing together. Lifeline

## Appendix L (Continued)

head photo of actress Bryce Dallas Howard with brief about award. Photo of *Desperate Housewives* female cast with brief about success of show.

### **Oct. 13, 2004**

Front: Newslite teaser about Nicky Hilton's marriage troubles.

Life front: Skybox photo of *Lost* star Evangeline Lilly teasing inside story. Lifeline head photo of Diana Ross with brief about tour. Briefs about Christopher Reeve (family funeral service) and Eminem (BET video ban).

### **Oct. 14, 2004**

Front: No celebrity presence.

Life front: Story above fold about Celine Dion and Anne Geddes collaborating on a project with photo of two together. Story at bottom of page about box office sales with photo of Debbi Morgan, star of *Woman, Thou Art Loosed*. Lifeline head photo of Lindsay Lohan with brief. Other briefs about "The Beatles," Tom Cruise, Oprah Winfrey and celebrities such as Clay Aiken presenting at upcoming awards show.

### **Oct. 15-17, 2005**

Front: Skybox photo of triplets Nicole, Jaclyn and Erica Dahm of show *Renovate My Family* teasing story about sexy stars. Cover story of Broadway Joe Namath about getting his life back on track.

Life front: Cover story of home improvement shows going glamorous with photo of three Dahms, Carter Oosterhouse and Amanda Epperson. Story at bottom of page about Chris Rock hosting the Oscars with photo. Rail head photo of Gabrielle Union with story about upcoming *Honeymooners* remake. Photo of Catherine Zeta-Jones and Antonio Banderas with story about their movie, *The Legend of Zorro*.

## Appendix L (Continued)

### **Oct. 18, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of TV personality Katie Couric teasing inside story.

Life front: Story at bottom of page about Couric's latest book with photo. Lifeline briefs about Melissa Etheridge (recovering after surgery) and Britney Spears (taking time off).

### **Oct. 19, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of *Desperate Housewives* star Eva Longoria teasing story about TV hit shows.

Life front: Skybox photo of actor Hugh Jackman teasing inside story. Cover story about TV hits with large photo of Eva Longoria and co-star Ricardo Antonio Chavira with five smaller inset photos of other show clips. Lifeline head photo of *American Idol* singer Tamyra Gray with brief about her Broadway debut. Brief about Richard Dreyfuss (shoulder injury), Kirk Douglas and Jerry Lewis (both award winners).

### **Oct. 20, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of first-lady hopefuls Laura Bush and Teresa Heinz Kerry teasing story about poll of first lady position.

Life front: Skybox photo of Martin Sheen of *The West Wing* teasing story about show. Story above fold about Jon Stewart's new book with photo of book cover. Cover story about first lady poll with photo of Bush and Kerry. Rail headline "Nirvana, celebs unite for Kerry campaign with brief. Head photo of TV personality Bill O'Reilly with brief (accused of sexual harassment).

### **Oct. 21, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of Miss America Deidre Downs teasing story about ABC dropping telecast of show. Lifeline teaser about actor Paul Giamatti feature story.

## Appendix L (Continued)

Life front: Skybox photo of James Gandolfini and Ben Affleck teasing inside story about celebrity athletes.

Story above fold about ABC dropping Miss America with photo of Downs. Cover story about Giamatti's career year with large photo, three inset photos. Story at bottom of page about actor Jim Carrey going evil in his latest movie, *Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events* with photo. Lifeline head photo of George Strait with brief about album sales. Head photo of Jennifer Garner with brief about her latest project. Brief about Bill O'Reilly (ratings high despite scandal).

### **Oct. 22-24, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of actress Renee Zellweger teasing inside story.

Life front: Skybox photo of Ozzy Osborne and wife Sharon teasing inside story about couple. Cover story about holiday movies with large photo of Zellweger, smaller photos of Tea Leoni and Adam Sandler in *Spanglish* and Tom Hanks in *The Polar Express*. Story at bottom of page about TV show *Jack & Bobby* switching days with photo of stars Christine Lahti and Matt Long. Rail photo of musician Kenny G with brief about new album. Head photo of actress Jill Hennessy with brief about *Crossing Jordan*.

### **Sept. 1, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of partial cast of *The Real World* teasing story about show's longevity. Photo above fold of Arnold Schwarzenegger with cover story about GOP election strategy.

Life front: Cover story about *World* with large photo of latest cast.

Lifeline head photo of actress Bitty Schram with brief about Golden Globe nomination.

Brief about Charlize Theron (injured on movie set).

## Appendix L (Continued)

### **Sept. 2, 2004**

Front: Cover story above fold about judge dismissing Kobe Bryant's rape case with photo.

Life front: Rail photo of TV personality Chris Matthews with story about TV election coverage. Lifeline head photo of singer Tim McGraw with brief about record sales. Head photo of singer George Jones with brief about upcoming tribute.

### **Sept. 3-6, 2004**

Front: No celebrity presence.

Life front: Skybox photo of Reese Witherspoon teasing story about upcoming movies.

Cover story about fall TV lineup with large photo of *Desperate Housewives* star Felicity Huffman, smaller photo of *Lost* stars Dominic Monaghan and Evangeline Lilly. Story at bottom of page about Anita Baker with story about veteran artists making comebacks with photo of Baker. Rail photo of Jessica Alba in movie poster for *Sin City* with story about how popular the sexy poster is on the Internet.

### **Sept. 7, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of Bill Clinton teasing story about his recovery from surgery.

Life front: Skybox photo of *The Real World* cast teasing story about new season. Rail photo of singer Alan Jackson with story about new song *USA Today*.

Lifeline brief about Ivana Trump (show opposite ex-husband's). Head photo of Jerry Lewis with brief about telethon. Other briefs about singer Mark McGrath and band R.E.M.

### **Sept. 8, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of actress Gwyneth Paltrow with teaser "Gwyneth on being a mom."



## Appendix L (Continued)

Life front: Story above fold about show *Joan of Arcadia* with photo of star Amber Tamblyn. Cover story about Paltrow with large photo. Lifeline head photo of actress Cheri Oteri with brief about possible new show.

### **Sept. 9, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of actor Matt LeBlanc with photo teasing review of his new show *Joey*. Cover story about NFL season with large photo above fold of quarterback Peyton Manning.

Life front: Skybox photo of actor/comedian Martin Short teasing inside story. TV review at bottom of page of *Joey* with photo of stars of LeBlanc, Paulo Constanzo and Drea de Matteo. Lifeline briefs about singer Tracy Chapman and actress Nicole Kidman.

### **Sept. 10-12, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of Jamie Foxx teasing story about fall films. Newline teaser about Tony Danza launching a new talk show.

Life front: Cover story about six fall movies with six photos of the stars of each. Rail head photo of *American Idol* with brief about next album. Rail photo of Noah Wyle with brief about latest TV movie role.

### **Sept. 13, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of actress Charlize Theron teasing story about her injury on movie set. Newline teaser of story about guitar legend Les Paul.

Life front: Skybox photo of Les Paul teasing inside story. Story above fold about Theron's injury with photo. Story at bottom of page about singer Usher adding songs to CD with photo. Rail teaser about new TV season with photo of *LAX* star Heather Locklear with Blair Underwood. Newline briefs about Madonna and singer Celine Dion.

## Appendix L (Continued)

### **Sept. 14, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of Matthew Fox, Evageline Lilly and John Holloway of *Lost* teasing story about ABC shows. Cover story about Oprah Winfrey's \$7 million car giveaway with large photo. Newline teaser about singer Nelly's latest music and acting projects. Life front: Feature story in center of page about Nelly with large photo. Story at bottom of page about Jennifer Lopez's latest projects, personal life with photo. Standalone photo of royal family Prince Charles, Princes Harry and William to commemorate Harry's 20<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### **Sept. 15, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of Gwyneth Paltrow and Jude Law teasing story about film *Sky Captain*. Newline photo of Donald Trump teasing inside story. Life front: Story above fold about show *NYPD Blue* with photo of producer Steven Bochco, stars Dennis Franz and Mark-Paul Gosselaar. Cover story about film *Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow* with three photos featuring Paltrow and Law. Lifeline brief about TV personality Star Jones.

### **Sept. 16, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of *CSI: NY* stars Gary Sinise and Melina Kanakaredes teasing story about *CSI* franchise shows. Teaser photo above fold of Martha Stewart's pending prison time. Life front: Skybox photo of Gwyneth Paltrow and Jude Law teasing inside story. Story above fold about *America Idol* winners with photo of Fantasia. Cover story about *CSI:NY* and sister shows with photos of Sinise, *CSI:Miami* star David Caruso and *CSI* stars Marg Helgenberger and William Petersen. Story at bottom of page about Hollywood working

## Appendix L (Continued)

to make sports films realistic with photo of actress Kirsten Dunst. Lifeline head photo of Elton John with brief (receiving honor). Brief about Usher (award nomination).

### **Sept. 17-19, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of trio group Destiny's Child.

Life front: Skybox teaser about TV personality Star Jones on red carpet. Cover story about fall music with large photo of band U2, smaller photo of Beyonce Knowles of Destiny's Child. Story at bottom of page about TV personality Jon Stewart's book release with photo of book cover. Rail brief about Nat King Cole CD release.

### **Sept. 20, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of Emmy winner Meryl Streep teasing story about awards. Newline photo of Britney Spears and husband Kevin Federline with headline "Spears weds one more time."

Life front: Story above fold about Spears' wedding with photo of couple. Cover story about Emmy awards with photos of Streep, Al Pacino and Sarah Jessica Parker. TV critique at bottom of page about Emmy broadcast with photo of host Garry Shandling.

Lifeline brief about Madonna with headline: "Paparazzi trail Madonna in Holy Land."

Brief about actor Macaulay Culkin being arrested on drug charges. Head photo of Jason Alexander with TV lineup. Briefs about new Miss America Deidre Downs and rapper Jay-Z.

### **Sept. 21, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of Michael Chiklis portraying Thing in *Fantastic Four* teasing inside story.

Life front: Skybox photo of *The Sopranos* stars Drea de Matteo and Jamie-Lynn DiScala

## Appendix L (Continued)

teasing story. Cover story about Emmy after-parties hiring “eye-candy” to please stars. Rail story about *Fantastic Four* with photos of stars Jessica Alba, Chiklis, Chris Evans and Ioan Gruffudd. Lifeline head photo of singer Avril Lavigne with brief about upcoming tour.

### **Sept. 22, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of *Lost* stars Matthew Fox, Evangeline Lilly and Josh Holloway teasing review of show. Newline teaser about Martha Stewart reporting for prison in coming weeks.

Life front: TV review above fold of *Lost* with photo of star Dominic Monaghan. Cover story about tragedies of rock band The Ramones with large photos of John Cummings, Douglas Covlin and Jeff Hyman. Lifeline brief about Sean Penn (reading audio book of Bob Dylan).

### **Sept. 23, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of Stephen King teasing inside feature. Newline photos of covers of *People* and *Us Weekly* with headline “Britney’s ‘wedding’ unveiled.

Life front: Skybox photo of Ben Affleck and Jennifer Garner with teaser headline: “Ben, Jen, look like a couple.” Story above fold about network TV battles with photos of Donald Trump and William Petersen of CSI. Lifeline photo of singer Nelly with brief about album sales. Head photo of Rosie O’Donnell with brief about her being sued by artists.

### **Sept. 24-26, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of actress Susan Olsen with teaser about return of Brady Bunch. Cover story about gold medalist Paul Hamm with picture of him on show with Ellen

## Appendix L (Continued)

DeGeneres.

Life front: Cover story about *Brady Bunch* 35 years later with large photo of cast, inset photo of Partridge Family teasing inside story. TV preview at bottom of page about TV film *Clubhouse* with photo of stars Kirsten Storms, Mare Winningham and Jeremy Sumpter. Rail photo of *Gilmore Girls* guest stars Stephen Mailer, Normal Mailer with Lauren Graham with brief about show.

### **Sept. 27, 2004**

Front: Skybox photo of TV fitness guru Jack LaLanne teasing feature story. Newline teaser about singer John Fogerty's latest project.

Life front: Cover story about LaLanne profiling him at age 90 with large photo of him now and smaller photo of him then. Lifeline photo of Julianne Moore with brief about box office sales. Head photo of actress Bebe Neuwirth with brief about latest project. Brief about Bob Dylan talking about his early celebrity.

## Appendix M. Celebrity Story Presence on News Front During Sample Period

Cover story about Martha Stewart, Aug. 26-28, 2005

Cover story about Roger Clemens, Aug. 23, 2005

Cover story about Hilary Clinton, July 19, 2005

Cover story about Lance Armstrong, July 25, 2005

Cover story about baseball star Rafael Palmeiro, Aug. 2, 2005

Anchor Peter Jennings' obituary, Aug. 8, 2005

David Letterman/Indy 500 story, May 23, 2005

Cover story about NFL quarterback Brett Favre, Aug. 12-14, 2005

Super Bowl cover story featuring quarterbacks Donovan McNabb, Tom Brady, Feb. 2-4, 2005

Prince Charles wedding story, Feb. 11-13, 2005

Michael Jackson trial story, Feb. 18-20, 2005

Oscar awards cover story about Clint Eastwood, Martin Scorsese, Feb. 22, 2005

Baseball steroids cover story featuring Sammy Sosa, Mark McGwire, March 18-20, 2005

Bill Clinton heart surgery story, March 9, 2005

Hollywood stars using security experts for movies story, March 8, 2005

Pope John Paul II illness story, April 8-10, 2005

Cover story about Christopher Reeve, Oct. 12, 2004

Cover story about *American Idol*, March 30, 2005

Cover story about former NFL star Joe Namath, Oct. 15-17, 2004

## Appendix M (Continued)

Pope John Paul II obituary, April 4, 2005

Photo teaser of Prince Charles, April 5, 2005

Pope John Paul II story, March 28, 2005

Cover story about renowned preacher Billy Graham, May 16, 2005

Cover story about Shaquille O'Neal -- Hollywood to South Beach, May 10, 2005

Cover story about network anchors, April 27, 2005

Arnold Schwarzenegger story, Dec. 30, 2004

Cover story about Dan Rather, Nov. 24-25, 2004

Cover story about Steven Spielberg, June 24-26, 2005

Cover story about Billy Graham, June 27, 2005

Michael Jackson trial story, sidebar, June 14, 2005

Summer concerts story featuring Mick Jagger, Bruce Springsteen, Paul McCartney, June 17-19, 2005

Graphic of TV's top dad, Bill Cosby, June 17-19, 2005

Arnold Schwarzenegger story, Jun 10-12, 2005

Celebrity story about Social Security featuring Julia Roberts, Tiger Woods, June 1, 2005

Celebrity pop culture cover story, June 2, 2005

Cover story about Mike Tyson, June 3-5, 2005

Cover story about NFL playoffs featuring Tom Brady, Jan. 13, 2005

Cover story about Johnny Carson obituary, Jan 24, 2005

Cover story about Paul Hamm gold medal in Olympics, Sept. 23, 2004

Cover Story about Oprah Winfrey car giveaway, Sept. 14, 2004

Arnold Schwarzenegger cover story, June 10-12, 2005

Appendix M (Continued)

Kobe Bryant rape case dismissed story, Sept. 2, 2004

Cover story about NFL featuring Peyton Manning, Sept. 2, 2004



Appendix N. Tabloid-Like Stories on Life Front During Sample Period:

- Oct. 20, 2004: Brief about TV personality Bill O'Reilly being accused of sexual harassment.
- Oct. 18, 2004: Brief about singer Melissa Etheridge recovering from surgery.
- Sept. 20, 2004: Story above fold about Britney Spears' wedding with photo of couple.
- Sept. 21, 2004: Cover story about Emmy after-parties hiring "eye-candy: to please stars.
- Sept. 23, 2004: Skybox photo of Ben Affleck and Jennifer Garner with teaser headline: "Ben, Jen, look like a couple."
- Oct. 26, 2004: "Celebrities let their Web sites do the talking," with photo of Britney Spears' Web site.
- Oct. 6, 2004: Brief about singer Elton John accusing Madonna of lip-syncing.
- Oct. 11, 2004: Story at bottom of page about young female celebrities with magazine covers featuring actresses Lindsay Lohan, Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen.
- Jan. 25, 2005: Story at bottom of page about future of former couple Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston with head photos of both.
- Jan. 26, 2005: Brief about reality TV star Richard Hatch's tax-evasion arrest.
- Jan. 27, 2005: Brief about actress Nicole Kidman getting a restraining order against photographers.
- Feb. 2, 2005: Brief about lawsuit being filed against rapper Snoop Dogg.
- Feb. 3, 2005: Brief about singer Houston gouging out an eye during a suicide attempt.
- Nov. 18, 2004: Story above fold about George Bush's kissing habits in the White House

## Appendix N (Continued)

with him kissing Condoleeza Rice and Margaret Spellings.

Nov. 10, 2004: Brief about Hilton heiress Nicky Hilton getting an annulment.

Nov. 8, 2004: Brief about singer Ruben Studdard's new workout regimen.

Jan. 11, 2005: Teaser above fold photo of Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston with teaser headline: "What now for Brad and Jen?"

Jan. 13, 2005: Skybox photo of Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward with teaser headline: "Celebs' love stories." Brief about Prince Harry apologizing for wearing a Nazi outfit.

Jan. 19, 2005: Brief about actress Gillian Anderson's wedding.

Dec. 21, 2004: Brief about rapper Young Buck being charged in stabbing. Brief about actor Josh Brolin cited in lawsuit.

Dec. 29, 2004: Brief about wedding of CBS TV personality Julie Chen and Viacom co-president Les Moonves.

Dec. 30, 2004-Jan. 2, 2005: Brief about rapper Ja Rule hosting party where there was a shooting. Brief about Johnny Depp being most searched celebrity on Internet data base.

Jan. 5, 2005: Photo and brief about singer Seal and supermodel Heidi Klum about upcoming wedding.

Jan. 6, 2005: Skybox photo of TV stars Kelly Ripa and husband Mark Coneseulos teasing story about their personal life.

June 1, 2005: Brief about actor Christian Slater arrested on sexual groping charges.

June 9, 2005: Story about star antics before movies come out with photo of Russell Crowe.

June 21, 2005: Story at bottom of page about casinos using celebrity images on their

## Appendix N (Continued)

gaming chips.

July 5, 2005: Cover story about celebrities who publicize their religion with photos of Mel Gibson and Jim Caviezel, Richard Gere and Madonna.

July 6, 2005: Brief about wedding day of Ben Affleck and Jen Garner.

Nov. 19-21, 2004: Story at bottom of page about male frontal nudity in movies with photo of Peter Sarsgaard and Colin Farrell.

Nov. 23, 2004: Cover story of singer Gwen Stefani talking about life, long and celebrity with large photo.

Nov. 29, 2004: Brief about actress Shelly Long being OK after drug reaction to pain medicine.

Nov. 30, 2004: Story at bottom of page with headline: "Celebrities want to be alone -- or do they?"

Dec. 6, 2004: Cover story of actress Lindsay Lohan's life with several photos.

Dec. 7, 2004: Lifeline brief about top-paid stars with photo of Julia Roberts. May 3, 2005: Lifeline photo of *Vanity Fair* cover of Angelina Jolie with story about her interview in magazine.

May 5, 2005: Skybox teaser about celebrity mothers.

May 11, 2005: Skybox photo of actress Renee Zellweger and musician Kenny Chesney teasing story of their surprise wedding.

May 17, 2005: Cover story with headline "Secret celebrity ways (and how they got that way)."

March 24, 2005: Brief with photo of Whitney Houston entering drug rehab treatment.

March 28, 2005: Brief about actor Tom Sizemore being sentenced to jail, treatment

## Appendix N (Continued)

center.

April 5, 2005: Photo of *Vanity Fair* magazine cover with stars of *Desperate Housewives* with story about issue.

April 7, 2005: Teaser about Prince Charles' weddings.

April 19, 2005: Story above fold about wedding of reality stars Amber Brkich and Rob Mariano. Brief about Tom Snyder being diagnosed with leukemia.

April 21, 2005: Cover stories about celebrity magazines.

March 3, 2005: Photo of actors Charlie Sheen and wife Denise Richards with brief about pending divorce.

March 7, 2005: Brief of man being convicted of stalking actor Mel Gibson.

March 10, 2005: Briefs about Prince Charles' upcoming wedding and actor Bill Cosby being named in sexual assault civil lawsuit.

March 15, 2005: Brief about Billy Joel entering rehab.

March 21, 2005: Brief about judge ordering man to stay away from singer Janet Jackson.

Feb. 18-20, 2005: Story about five actress facing down turning 40 with photos of Nicole Kidman, Julia Roberts, Naomi Watts, Katherine Zeta-Jones, Halle Barry.

Feb. 11-13, 2005: Photo of *People* magazine front of actress Julia Roberts and her twins babies with story.

Feb. 14, 2005: Briefs about singer Christina Aguilera getting engaged and actor Matthew Perry being hospitalized with drug reaction.

Feb. 15, 2005: Story above fold with headline: "Magazines can't break up with Brad and Jen." with photos of three magazine covers with couple on front.

Feb. 17, 2005: Story above fold with headline "Media, fans increasingly spill TV secrets"

## Appendix N (Continued)

with photo of *Desperate Housewives* women.

Feb. 7, 2005: Cover story about Fashion Week with headline “Celebs turn up runway lights” with photos of actress Ashley Olsen and singer Lil’ Kim.

Feb. 10, 2005: Brief about actor David Caruso’s wife filing for divorce.

May 24, 2005: Brief about singer Bobby Brown’s entourage getting hurt in a fight.

May 25, 2005: Skybox photo of Natalie Portman teasing story about female celebrities who have pulled off “no-hair” look.

Aug. 30, 2005: Brief about actress Gwyneth Paltrow telling *Time* magazine talking about Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston’s relationship and how they shouldn’t have talked to the press.

Aug. 25, 2005: Lifeline brief about Justin Timberlake winning an apology and damages from a British tabloid in lawsuit.

Aug. 23, 2005: Brief about Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston’s divorce papers signed.

July 28, 2005: Brief about Kate Moss winning a libel suit against the United Kingdom’s *Sunday Mirror*.

July 21, 2005: Cover story about celebrities; relationship with paparazzi with photo of George Clooney.

Aug. 22, 2005: Brief about rapper Eminem being treated for sleeping pill addiction.

Aug. 17, 2005: Brief with headline: “Gossip Up, News Down on magazine rack.

America’s obsession with celebrities shows no signs of letting up. *People*, *Us Weekly*, *In Touch* and *Star* all saw their circulation numbers climb, while *Time* and *Newsweek* saw their rack sales fall.

Feb. 17, 2005: Brief about actress Ashley Olsen suing *National Enquirer* for libel and

## Appendix N (Continued)

false light invasion of privacy.

Feb. 24, 2005: Brief about actress Natalie Portman angering Jewish worshippers.

April 26, 2005: Brief about Dixie Chicks member Emily Robison having twins.

April 28, 2005: Brief about Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie being on a beautiful people list.

June 14, 2005: Cover story about Michael Jackson's future after trial with photo of him and his Neverland Ranch. Brief about *Us Weekly* tightening its policies about paparazzi photos, specifically those taken with reckless means.

Dec. 10-12: Cover story of Leonardo DiCaprio's upcoming role and his personal life with large photo. Story at bottom of page with headline: "Magazines await first photos of Julia's Twins" about Julia Roberts new twins

Nov. 18, 2004: Brief with *People* magazine cover of Jude Law and him being named sexiest man.

Nov. 15, 2004: Brief with headline "Celeb legal woes: on the docket" mentioning Bill Maher, Cameron Diaz and boyfriend Justin Timberlake and Rod Stewart.

Nov. 4, 2004: Story above fold with headline: "Coming soon, Celeb news served satirically: with photo of comedian Greg Giraldo. Brief about singer Grand Funk's manager being killed in a domestic dispute.

Oct. 19, 2004: Brief about Richard Dreyfuss injuring his shoulder.

Sept. 1, 2004: Brief about actress Charlize Theron being injured on a movie set.

Sept. 3-6, 2004: Rail photo of actress Jessica Alba in movie poster for *Sin City*: with story about how popular the sexy poster is on the Internet.