

Women, stand up and be counted

In this business there is one job every reporter hates with a passion (but most would show less restraint describing it). It's that 'man on the street' interview that appears every Wednesday. In the office, it's most affectionately referred to as the "streeter".

Now, the streeter allows a journalist to experience the gamut of emotions—achievement, satisfaction, even a sense of purpose.

But usually, for most, it's an opportunity to learn how to graciously accept rejection.

Since pulling the streeter duty once every three weeks at this newspaper is as certain as death and taxes, I've learned to make it a learning experience, an opportunity to actually study the human animal up close and personal.

And sometimes what I see is a bit upsetting. Take last week's efforts. I had to poll the general public about which party they would be voting for in the upcoming June 3 election.

The first three responses were a piece of cake. Three men were very happy to respond, giving their opinions, with a few good quotes.

But after talking to the three men, I began looking for some women to comment, to balance the comments, gender-wise.

It bordered on impossible to find women who wanted to comment on the political scene. After an hour, I found two who'd take part.

Now that's not a major problem in itself, because I realize some topics appeal to males more than females, and vice versa.

I know, if the question related to health care, education or day care, all items that women tend to show more interest in, I'd have no difficulty getting a female point of view.

People have certain likes and dislikes in what they respond to, so I have no problem with them offering no comment.

But the reasons they gave for NOT responding to the question was what bothered me.

A
TED
BIT



Ted Brown

"Oh, I wouldn't want to comment on that—I just vote the way my husband tells me to..."

Or, "Politics? Geez, I've never voted in my life, so I'd find it a bit tough to have an opinion..." (spoken by a 30-something woman).

And how about "Oh, I wouldn't want to answer that. I might say something stupid and my boyfriend would make fun of me..."

In the year before the millennium, when we are so proud to be the enlightened generation, I find it disturbing I could encounter that many women believing they're still in the pre-suffrage era, with no solid opinions. And more sadly, no desire to change the situation either.

I thought how today's women have been fighting that attitude for years, yet I met three in one hour, willingly embracing that mindset.

Like, HELLO! We're not on the eve of 1900! We're about to enter the year 2000!

Perhaps no one told them they do have the vote, and equal rights as well.

With four daughters at home, I'm sensitive about this issue. Thrown into the same situation, I hope my girls would have an opinion, and be willing to defend what they believe in, not be content to simply parrot their significant other's opinion, without question.

And in doing so, they would assert themselves, standing up to be counted as credible, caring citizens.

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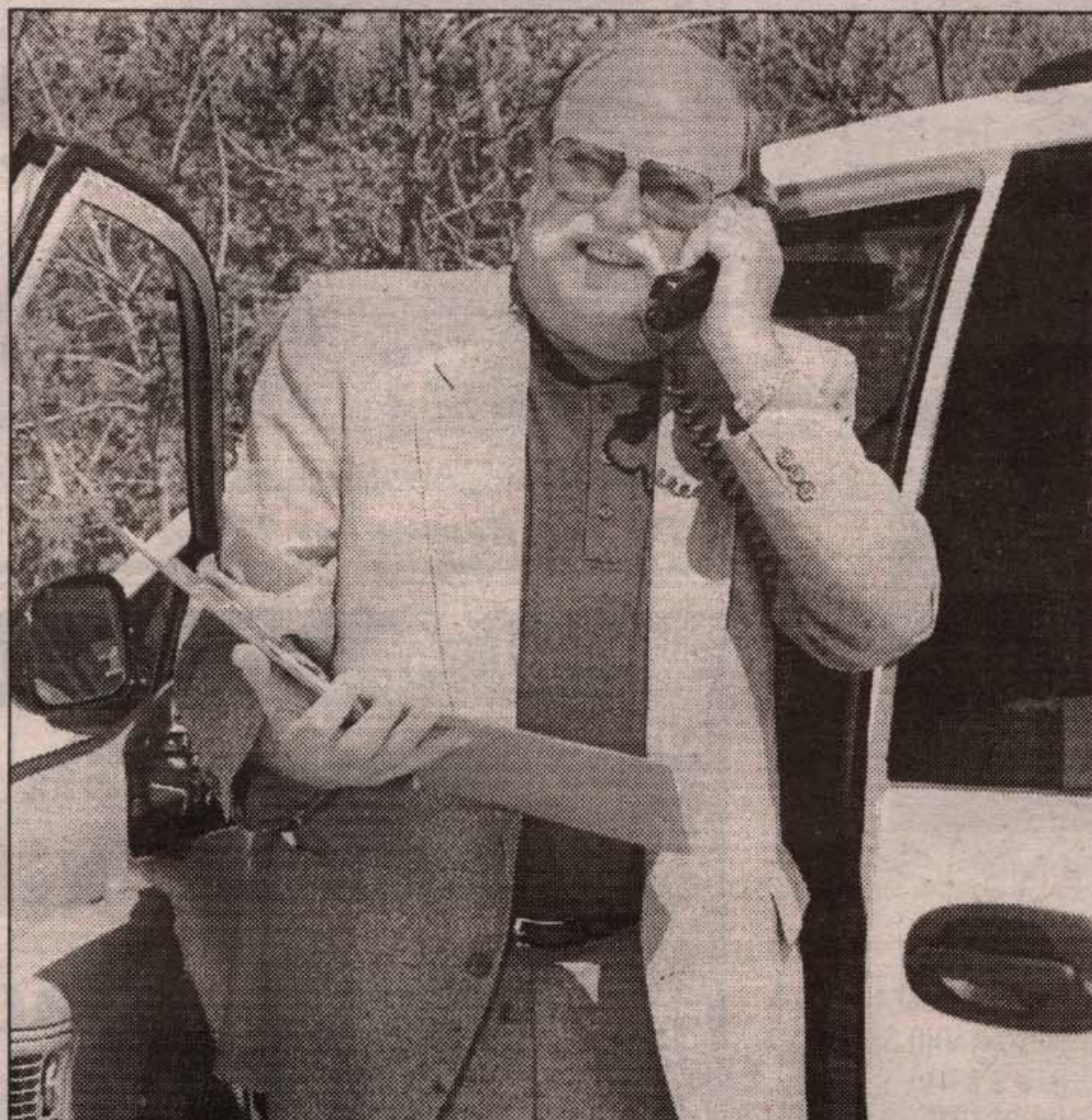
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