

Shortly before her death in June, author and filmmaker Nora Ephron sat down with Pete Hamill, veteran journalist and distinguished writer-in-residence at the Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute, to talk craft and reminisce about the *New York Post*. The event can be viewed at nyuprimarysources.org.

On the old *New York Post* city room

NORA EPHRON: It was so dirty. It was sooo dirty. And it had no air-conditioning, of course. And when you came into the newsroom, there was a door with glass on it and someone had written in the dust on the door the word "filthy," and spelled it p-h-i-l-t-h-y.... But it was romantic in its own way, that room. You didn't even have your own desk, by the way. You had to troll for a desk.

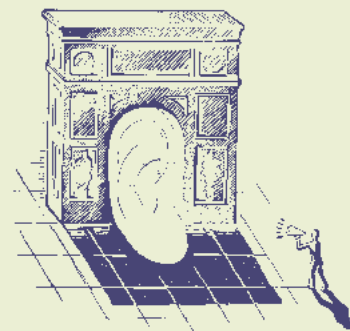
PETE HAMILL: Or a chair! They were always two chairs short.

EPHRON: Yes, and all the chairs were broken. And everyone smoked and you'd put your cigarette down on the desk and it would burn into [it]. And that was part of why we all loved it. It was really fun being a reporter at the *New York Post*.

HAMILL: To give you a sense of where it was, where Battery Park City is, it was right across the street, 75 West Street. There was no Battery Park City then; it was the United Fruit Company piers, and in the summertime the windows were all open because, as Nora says, [publisher/owner] Dorothy Schiff would never pay for air-conditioning for the working stiffs at her newspaper. So from the bowels of these fruit delivery ships would come the most gigantic mosquitoes and flies. And we'd be sitting there at our typewriters going whack [*hits table*] and whack [*hits table*]. And we were never happier. At least I wasn't.

EPHRON: I did love it, I did. I thought, "I'm gonna do this forever."

HEARD ON CAMPUS



On being a newspaper journalist

EPHRON: I was clever and I could write a sentence, but I was very lucky because they kind of knew I was a new kid and I was \$98 a week. My first week I had turned in a story and [editor] Fred McMorrow came over to my desk and sat down and let me watch him cross out the extra words. One of the things he told me was absolutely the opposite of what I learned in my journalism class in high school. He said, "Never start a story with a quote. We always want to know who's saying it." That kind of thing was so great, but it was a long time before I really knew how to write a story.

HAMILL: The learning process, particularly on a tabloid like the *Post*, was amazingly quick because the staff was so small. There weren't so many specialists. If there was a fire at a school, you didn't wait for the education editor to get in a cab and go out there. You went.

EPHRON: When I was there about four years, they asked me if I wanted to be a columnist, and I didn't know how to write a column. Four years [after that], I was writing a column at *Esquire*. So I'm just a big believer in assembling it little by little...trying to put yourself in someplace where you can write and write and write and write...and then, eventually, you can *write*.

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COVER ILLUSTRATION © JAMES BENNETT

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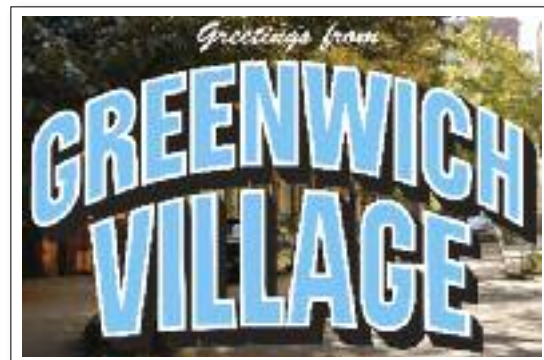
behind the scenes

In a culture where it's especially fashionable to be "busy, busy, busy" with a nonstop personal life, it helps to have some grandiose markers to remind us that we're inevitably part of something bigger. Two such events—this summer's Olympic games in London and the upcoming U.S. elections—will help to make 2012 a year remembered for its collective moments of awe and evaluation, be it of great heights reached on the field or preposterous gaffes made into a microphone.

Similarly, the three features in this fall's *NYU Alumni Magazine* offer a chance to put seismic cultural shifts into perspective while helping us to imagine our own place within them.

"Planet of the Apps" (p. 36) ex-

plores the ubiquity of mobile applications, and the way they've transformed our cell phones from a means of communication into vehicles for an entire lifestyle. The industry is also one of the few clear



winners in a rather foggy economy. "Table for One" (p. 30) checks in on another phenomenon—the fact that 32 million Americans now live alone. As that number continues to rise, the article considers how we'll have to accommodate this domestic

revolution. Lastly, "Story of the Streets" (p. 42) remembers the bicentennial of the greatest change to hit New York since Henry Hudson first mapped the Narrows. The creation of Manhattan's famed "grid" in 1811 dramatically altered the city forever, and a new book and exhibit help contextualize just how brazen a project it was.

While the grid has simplified how city slickers navigate New York, it seems we're still always trying to find our footing as we stride faster and faster into the future.

Hopefully stories like these help us take stock, personally and collectively, for a few moments, to stare at what's happening and wonder what it's all about.

—The *NYU Alumni Magazine* team

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JAMES BENNETT has produced conceptually humorous illustrations for publications including *Vanity Fair* and *Sports Illustrated*. He has also worked on *New York Times* best-selling children's books with Jerry Seinfeld and Carl Reiner.

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Issue #19 / Fall 2012

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"THE CITY, IT CHALLENGES YOU TO DO BIG THINGS," SAID U.S. SUPREME COURT JUSTICE SONIA SOTOMAYOR AT NYU'S 180TH COMMENCEMENT. THE BRONX NATIVE GREW UP A FEW BLOCKS FROM YANKEE STADIUM, WHERE THE CEREMONY TOOK PLACE.



POWER

STAR

TOP-DRAW PERSONALITIES SPOTTED ON CAMPUS



FIVE-TIME NBA CHAMPION AND BUSINESSMAN EARVIN "MAGIC" JOHNSON JR. WAS A GUEST SPEAKER AT THE SCPS TISCH CENTER FOR HOSPITALITY, TOURISM, AND SPORTS MANAGEMENT ORIENTATION.



STERN HOSTED THE TRIBECA DISRUPTIVE INNOVATION AWARDS, WHICH HONORED SINGER JUSTIN BIEBER (ABOVE) AND PRODUCER RICK RUBIN (TSOA '85).



VICE PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN SPOKE ABOUT NATIONAL SECURITY IN VANDERBILT HALL.

We Hear From You



Thanks to all who responded to the Spring 2012 issue. Please keep the letters coming...



EDITORS' NOTE: We received an unprecedented number of e-mails and letters in response to the previous comments on our Fall 2011 cover story on Edith Windsor (GSAS '57) and her landmark court challenge of the Defense of Marriage Act. This is just a small sampling.

FEATURING PRIDE

Thank you for not backing down about your decision to feature gay marriage in the alumni magazine. I am appalled at the negative responses you received. Did they actually attend the NYU that I attended, that I work at, and that I love? NYU has been voted the most queer-friendly university for many years in a row—and for good reason. We are an open and ethical institution that fights discrimination of all kinds. We led the way for queer rights, having one of the first gay groups at any American university. We started the first gender studies program in a university. We have a lot to be proud of.

Marvin J. Taylor (GSAS '97)
Director of NYU's Fales Library and Special Collections
New York, New York

I moved to New York, and attended NYU, in the early 1980s. To live in New York then was to watch class-

mates sicken, and in some cases die, because of something called the "gay plague." [...] But to live in New York was also to meet women and men who saw this place as a refuge. And while I can't say I saw no homophobia at NYU, it was very much the exception rather than the rule. Mostly then, lovers supported each other and families welcomed them—but not always. So, just as with the civil rights movement and the women's movement: When love doesn't win, the law must step in. And someday it will.

Martha Garvey (TSOA '84)
Hoboken, New Jersey

As an alumnus of NYU, I haven't been the most open-handed contributor. But when I read the letters page of the most recent issue, I was moved to action. I made a hefty gift (for me) to the LGBT Student Services Fund, and I thought to alert as many [friends] as I could to a shameful situation: We allow small-minded bigots to speak out, while we complacently imagine that battles have been won. Well, they're not, and maybe never will be.

Gary Bradley (WSC '67)
New York, New York

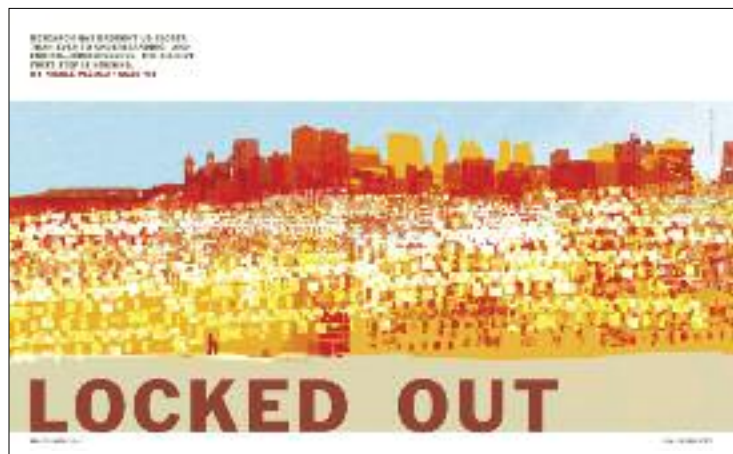
It takes courageous people, such as Edith Windsor, to stand up against bigotry and fight for civil rights for all Americans. [...] I have had one partner for 38-and-a-half years and have had to put up with discrimination throughout the country, even in NYC. Marriage is so much more than a religious ceremony; little things like denying access to care for, or even visit, your partner in a hospital still happen. And let us not forget the 1,200 federal, state, and local

laws on taxation, adoption, health care, child care, and employment, which continue to discriminate against many Americans.

John R. Kalbach (WAG '71)
Miami, Florida

The [letter writers] do not realize that the women in the story are daughters, sisters, aunts, and friends to us all. I am the mother of a gay woman, who is married and herself the mother of twin boys with a third on the way. She in no way threatens the institution of marriage—rather she strengthens it. She and her partner both have PhDs, both are university professors, and both are phenomenal moms. [...] What strikes most of us who know gay people is that they are exactly like everyone else. [...] If we were all as capable of loving as your subjects, our world would be a far better place.

Eileen Sharan Smith (WSC '56)
Great Neck, New York



Please send your comments and opinions to: Readers' Letters, NYU Alumni Magazine, 25 West Fourth Street, Room 619, New York, NY, 10012; or e-mail us at alumni.magazine@nyu.edu. Include your mailing address, phone number, school, and year. Letters become the property of NYU and may be edited for length and clarity.

Thank you for the excellent magazine you put out. I always feel so proud to have graduated from NYU when I read it, and to see [the university's] ongoing commitment to diversity, human rights, education, arts, and more. Please know that your work is noticed and so appreciated.

Nancy Flaxman (WSC '68)
Novato, California

A HOME FOR ALL

I think Nicole Pezold wrote an excellent article regarding homelessness and housing ("Locked Out"). I work in the field of developing and managing permanent supportive housing for those who are homeless and have severe and persistent mental illness. I know firsthand the challenges that my nonprofit clients face.

David Brainin (WSUC '74)
Columbus, Ohio

YOUR GUIDE TO THE SCHOOL CODES

THE FOLLOWING ARE ABBREVIATIONS FOR NYU SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES, PAST AND PRESENT

- ARTS** - University College of Arts and Science ("The Heights"); used for alumni through 1974
- CAS** - College of Arts and Science ("The College"); refers to the undergraduate school in arts and science, from 1994 on
- CIMS** - Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences
- DEN** - College of Dentistry
- ENG** - School of Engineering and Science ("The Heights"); no longer exists but is used to refer to its alumni through 1974
- GAL** - Gallatin School of Individualized Study, formerly Gallatin Division
- GSAS** - Graduate School of Arts and Science
- HON** - Honorary Degree
- IFA** - Institute of Fine Arts
- ISAW** - Institute for the Study of the Ancient World
- LAW** - School of Law
- LS** - Liberal Studies Program
- MED** - School of Medicine, formerly College of Medicine
- NUR** - College of Nursing
- NYUAD** - NYU Abu Dhabi
- POLY** - Polytechnic Institute of NYU
- SCPS** - School of Continuing and Professional Studies
- SSSW** - Silver School of Social Work
- STEINHARDT** - The Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, formerly School of Education
- STERN** - Leonard N. Stern School of Business, formerly the Graduate School of Business Administration; Leonard N. Stern School of Business Undergraduate College, formerly School of Commerce; and College of Business and Public Administration
- TSOA** - Tisch School of the Arts, formerly School of the Arts
- WAG** - Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, formerly Graduate School of Public Administration
- WSC** - Washington Square College, now College of Arts and Science; refers to arts and science undergraduates who studied at Washington Square Campus through 1974
- WSUC** - Washington Square University College, now College of Arts and Science; refers to alumni of the undergraduate school in arts and science from 1974 to 1994

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