

Inside 'The Intern'



TOM BURTON

San Jose's Matt Mansfield, Orlando's Bonita Burton and Phoenix's Tracy Collins select the final five.



CASSIE ARMSTRONG

One of the teams designs pages for the competition. The lead story: a string of alligator attacks across Florida.



WILLIAM COUCH

Each candidate made a campaign poster and all 10 were arrayed in the lobby of the hotel.



CASSIE ARMSTRONG

It's 4 a.m. and news is breaking, time to wake up and get to work. No designing until the entire team is out of bed!



TOM BURTON

Where's Donald Trump? The interns get to town and head to the Sentinel's boardroom for tough questioning.



CARRIE HOOVER

The interns at Disney World.

How a crazy idea for SND Orlando uncovered 10 remarkable young journalists

By Bonita Burton
AME/visuals, Orlando Sentinel

Come to Orlando, win a job! That premise, hatched in an airplane conversation between site chair Cassie Armstrong and I, would begin an 18-month adventure down many unexpected roads. Our hope was that "The Intern" would be an entertaining way to give a student their first professional break. But in the end, all 10 finalists showed they have what it takes to make it at a major metro. And we found ourselves deeply

invested in each one of them.

Those of you at SND Orlando saw many of the theatrics — but you didn't see everything. Here's a glimpse behind the scenes of this exciting competition:

THE BIG IDEA

Students from around the U.S. would apply for a chance to win a paid summer internship at the Orlando Sentinel, The Arizona Republic or the San Jose Mercury News. Judges from each paper would meet to select 10 finalists, who would arrive a week early to test their journalistic mettle. Judges would narrow the field from 10 to five, and the audience would vote for the top three. Those

three would compete in one last battle of visual wit, the winner of which would get first choice of internships. The second-place winner would choose second, and the third-place winner would be awarded the third internship.

Inside info: Orlando Sentinel Design Editor Stephen Komives secured a Gannett Foundation grant to cover registration and lodging for all 10 finalists. As for the internships themselves, well, it should be said that neither the Republic's Tracy Collins nor the Merc's Matt Mansfield batted an eye when I came calling. (In the spirit of parity, we picked three CCI-based papers in warm climates). Tim Harrower, who hosted the final game-show challenge, was a tougher sell. Tim had done

several quick courses with me, but he vowed to never reprise the Design Bowl he did in D.C. three years ago. I finally shamed him into participating by sending him a picture of my newborn daughter with the note: "If you can say no to this face, I'll stop pestering you." He graciously signed on.

THE CALL GOES FORTH

Interested students were asked to complete a brief application, write a 250-word essay and attach their five favorite clips. Some applicants got creative. Others played it straight. More than a few were downright kooky. One thing was clear: These kids meant business!

Inside info: Two days before the May 31 deadline, we had a grand total of three applications(!) As I began to sink into despair, Cassie assured me, "They're college students. They procrastinate." Sure enough, nearly three dozen applications arrived that weekend — most of them in urgent overnight packaging.

THE JUDGES MEET

In June, Tracy Collins and the Merc's Stephanie Grace Lim flew to Orlando to select the final 10. The decisions weren't easy, and the debate raged for hours. Some applicants had inspiring essays but weak portfolios. Others had killer pages but little to say about them. A mixture of passion and potential won the judge's hearts. We were confident we had the right 10: William Couch, Barbie DeSoto, Stephanie Guigou, Tory Hargro, Carrie Hoover, Joey Kirk, Billy Kulpa, Nina Mehta, Tiffany Schwarz and Tawanna Sikes. Each finalist was asked to produce a 60-second video (watch them at www.snd.org) and a campaign poster to introduce themselves to the audience.

Inside info: In the interest of good video, we deliberately made roommate assignments based on people we thought would NOT get along. William and Joey, Billy and Tory, Stephanie and Barbie, Tiffany and Tawanna, Nina and Carrie — let the cat fights

begin! Boy, were we wrong ... even before the workshop began, most of them had tracked each other down through Facebook or News-PageDesigner and struck up friendships.


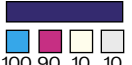




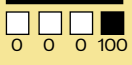



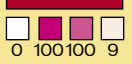





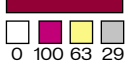


THE FINALISTS ARRIVE

One by one our 10 finalists arrived at Orlando International Airport the Sunday before the workshop. Sentinel staffers transported them to the world's largest Marriott. We'd given them only sketchy details about how the next few days would unfold, so they didn't know what to expect.

Inside info: Barbie wins the prize for most arduous journey. She had to leave Salt Lake City about 3 a.m. to get to Orlando on time. Tiffany was in a car accident en route to the airport and missed her flight — and nearly missed the first leg of the competition. Joey's luggage got lost, and he had to take a midnight taxi to Wal-Mart that night.

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MEET THE INTERNS!

	Where are you interning next summer?	After next summer, what's your dream job?	If you could ask Tim Harrower any question at all, what would it be?	What was your favorite thing about being a part of The Intern?	If you could give the design children of the future some advice, what would it be?	What should newspapers do to be relevant to young people such as yourselves?	Your Favorite color?
 WILLIAM COUCH <i>University of Michigan</i> Graduating: April 2007	The Arizona Republic	Designing at a publication where the people are wonderful and the opportunities are endless.	What was the inciting moment at which point you knew you wanted to pursue journalism?	Meeting so many amazing industry professionals, people knowing your name before you do theirs.	Have passion. Everything will work itself out when you're doing what you love.	Rid the long-held notion that you're generating content first and foremost for print.	A deep blue  100 90 10 10
 BARBIE DESOTO <i>Brigham Young University</i> Graduating: Hopefully April 2007	Nowhere definite yet. But I would adore working at The Virginian-Pilot, The South Florida Sun-Sentinel, Seattle Times or San Francisco Chronicle!	Working at one of the papers I just mentioned.	Do you have some pride in the fact that your news writing book is so well designed? Cause obviously you're the man, Tim.	The friends I made in the nine others. Also the mentoring of the judges.	Don't be afraid to go for it, to be crazy, to test every limit!	Young Americans seem to be U.S.-centric and ignorant, which I find totally irresponsible.	100% cyan  100 0 0 0
 STEPHANIE GUIGOU <i>Bowling Green State University</i> Graduating: In 2008	The St. Petersburg Times	Designer for the Boston Globe Magazine	Can I have a copy of the new reporting book?	Learning that the most talented people in the design field are also the most generous.	Creativity knows no safe bet - no mold. Design from your heart, for the industry's survival.	Tabloids just make sense - but keep the information smart and relevant to us. Charticle, anyone?	Red  0 100 100 0
 TORY AMON HARGRO <i>Alcorn State University</i> Graduating: Summer 2006	The Poynter Institute	Any job that gives me the flexibility to pursue my life goals would be a dream job. But, art director-online/multimedia has a nice ring to it.	Haven't you always wanted a black son?	Meeting nine amazing artists who could change the world.	If you learn the art of good story telling, your design will be ground-breaking.	Good stories appeal to everyone. Even blog-podwebsters.	Black  0 0 0 100
 CARRIE HOOVER <i>Michigan State University</i> Graduating: May 2007	The San Jose Mercury News!	To work for as a designer for a newspaper where my ideas and creativity are welcomed, but balanced with responsibility.	Do you miss life before you became a superstar author/game show host extraordinaire?	Learning from nine talented and unique students, and in doing so I learned a lot about my own potential.	If you learn the art of good story telling, your design will be ground-breaking.	Publish concisely, clearly, and invitingly through every facet. Think like a reader; don't accept less.	Red  0 100 80 0
 JOEY KIRK <i>Texas Tech University</i> Graduating: May 2007	Not too sure right now. Going to the Poynter Institute as a summer fellow.	Become a sports page designer for a daily publication, then move on to become a design editor.	What can I do to become better at designing?	Being treated like a rock star, and getting to know a lot of designers.	Don't be afraid to take chances, because it might just work in your favor.	Become more interactive, whether through online content or in the newspaper.	Red  0 100 100 9
 BILLY KULPA <i>Northern Illinois University</i> Graduating: May 2007 <i>(That is, if I pass Indonesian. Argh.)</i>	Orlando Sentinel, baby!	I'd really like to lead the visual team of a major magazine, or perhaps an extremely progressive newspaper.	When you were graduating, were you thinking "I'm going to be a visual journalist"? What do you think today's graduates should be thinking?	Realizing there's an entire community of visual journalists to look up and relate to.	Get out there! People want to hear what you have to say, and they're looking to you to change the world.	Exist for the Web, treat print as a final edition. Internet is the television of my generation. <i>That's 17 words.</i>	Billy's orange  0 55 100 10
 NINA MEHTA <i>Indiana University, Bloomington</i> Graduating: December 2007	The Indianapolis Star	I want to work with people and be involved with visual design, media and technology. The options seem infinite.	Is the rumor true that sans fonts are actually adolescent typesettings that have not yet grown their serifs?	Being welcomed into this community and gaining nine-plus lifelong friends... and scoring an internship!	Challenge and diversify yourself every way you can, your work will naturally benefit.	Communicate with us. We love to talk, especially if we feel like it is relevant.	Cyan  100 0 0 0
 TIFF SCHWARZ <i>The University of Alabama</i> Graduating: Dec. 2007	For now I have no idea, but I've been applying all over the country.	Working for a newspaper that allows for creativity and freedom, one that recognizes design is an important story-telling tool.	I hope that I didn't creep you out with all of that "stalking" talk? It wasn't serious, well not now. [Kidding...]	The entire experience was surreal. To just be nominated as one of the top 10 was amazing.	Try everything that strikes you, don't be afraid to fail, love what you do, stand out.	Be edgy, be crazy with ideas, great photos, don't make a committee to see what I like/want, ask me!	Alabama crimson  0 100 63 29
 TAWANNA SIKES <i>Florida A&M University</i> Graduating: Dec. 15, 2006	Not sure yet, but maybe Atlanta or Virginia area.	My dream job is to be a creative director or an entrepreneur. I like design, whether graphic, interior or illustration.	I would ask him how I would go about publishing my own design book.	My favorite part about being a part of the intern was meeting new people, and gaining the exposure of being a finalist celebrity!	I would tell them to study other designers and surround themselves with people who can teach them.	Newspapers should add the latest tools of the time that most young people are into. For example, music, movies, games, etc.	Mars red  0 100 100 0



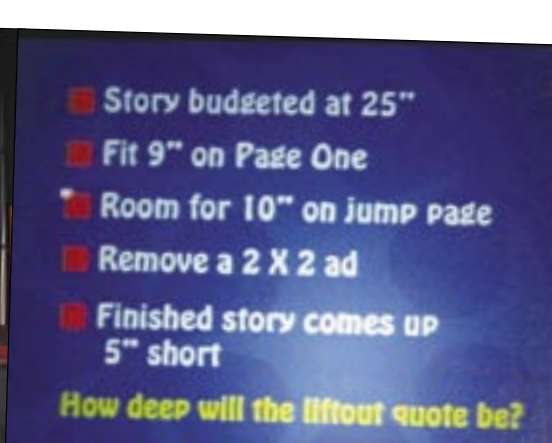
WILLIAM COUCH
Tory, Carrie and Tiff ride around in a giant Disney tea-cup.



CASSIE ARMSTRONG'S CAMERA
The Sentinel's Stephen Komives and Cassie Armstrong.



WILLIAM COUCH
The 10 interns line up on stage as they are pared to the final five during an SND lunch.



KENNEY MARLATT
Journalism or math? This question in Tim Harrower's news quiz left the entire room staring blankly.



MICHAEL STOLL
He looks good in white and he's cut out for the gameshow biz.



KENNEY MARLATT
The Newsers or Losers finally comes down the stretch. Carrie Hoover with only one point left to win.



KENNEY MARLATT
Nina Mehta and Scott Goldman. She'll be at the Indianapolis Star next summer.

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FIRST CHALLENGE: BOARDROOM INTERVIEWS

The group convened in the hotel lobby Sunday evening to head to the Sentinel newsroom. Tiffany's absence was more disturbing to the others than we thought – they assumed she'd been eliminated before the competition had even begun. But Tiffany found her way to the paper, where all 10 were brought into a boardroom to meet the judges. One by one, they were asked questions such as:

Why do you want to be a visual journalist?

Are your parents proud of what you've chosen to do for a living, or do they rationalize it?

What song typifies this week for you?

What is your signature color, and what is its CMYK value?

If you were a breakfast cereal, which would it be, and why?

Inside info: We removed all but five chairs from the boardroom as an intimidation tactic, curious to see which five would take a seat at the table. And the judges took their time entering the room, hoping to create an uncomfortable silence. But within minutes, our videographer urged us to "get in there, they're having a party." Sure enough, they held up just fine under Tracy's stern gaze and Matt's exacting tone. Even a mock CCI lesson by Chicago Tribune's Steve Cavendish didn't

rattle them too badly...

SECOND CHALLENGE: TEAM PAGE DESIGN

The group breathed a sigh of relief when they learned they'd be working in In-Design, not CCI. Each of them drew a card assigning them a role in creating a front page of "The Orlando Mercpublic." Each team had an editor-in-chief, a photo editor, a copy editor and two designers. They were given a story budget, a stack of photo proofs, a template and 90 minutes. The results were predictable, and the judges challenged the group to reach beyond the routine. We dropped them at the hotel at 11 p.m. with instructions to reconvene at 1 p.m. Monday for an "eight-hour, individual outdoor challenge."

Inside info: The big story on The Orlando Mercpublic's budget that day was the death of three women in alligator attacks around Florida. We gave the teams plenty of photos to choose from, as well as a few red herrings: crocodiles instead of alligators, captive gators instead of wild gators, statues of gators, etc. Only one team got tripped up, failing to recognize that two of the three victims' mugs were actually the same woman twice.

SECOND CHALLENGE, PART II: A RUDE AWAKENING

At exactly 4 a.m., all 10 cell phones rang with the urgent message that Osama bin Laden had been killed, and the contestants

needed to report to the lobby to remake their front page. They were told they couldn't proceed until their entire team arrived. These were by far the most intense moments of the competition, followed by more feedback from the judges. We praised them for kicking up the volume on their pages and stumbled off about 6 a.m.

Inside info: Yes, this meant that Sentinel staffers, Tracy and Matt pulled an all-nighter, too. (Who's brilliant idea was this, anyway?) William was the first to arrive, having just gone to bed after some late-night blogging. Tiffany was the last one off the elevator, just trailing Tawanna.

THIRD CHALLENGE: PHOTO SCAVENGER HUNT

We gathered Monday at 1 p.m. to introduce the individual challenge, a photo scavenger hunt at ... DISNEY! Whoo hoo! Contestants were given a disposable camera and list of adjectives to photograph such as "gooey," "exotic," "pathetic" and "frilly." The next afternoon, they'd have an hour to design a photo page with their pictures. Of course there was a twist: we switched their film with their roommate's. Hey, part of being a good designer is making the best with what you're given, right?

Inside info: We'd told the finalists they should wear comfortable shoes and be dressed for the Florida heat. Nina was convinced the event was going to be a physical challenge — like wrestling alligators — so she got up

early to do extensive calisthenics. At least two finalists did feel the physical strain: Tawanna had to lie down for a while at Disney, and Tory designed his photo page suffering the pain of a bulging disc in his back.

UNWINDING AT BO'S PAD

The first phase over, the finalists spent Tuesday evening at my home dining on barbecue and swapping stories around the pool. Each of them had a few final minutes in front of the camera, and they all described how close they'd become. "Friends for life" was an easy expression now. Contact information was shared. And reunion plans were already being made.

Inside info: I'll admit it. Emotions were running high — for the judges as well as the finalists. Someone new surprised us in each event, and we were amazed at how far everyone had stretched in just a few days. We were genuinely looking forward to working with any of these young journalists, and the conversation about the final five was much harder than any of us had expected.

ON TO THE CONFERENCE

Wednesday was a day for the finalists to relax before the conference kicked into full swing. They joined in on the student program on Thursday, and networked their little hearts out at the opening reception.

Inside info: SND President Christine McNeal bought casino night tickets for all students! Was this shaping up to be a great

workshop or what? Meanwhile, Sentinel photo editor Tom Burton was working furiously through the night to edit six hours of tape into an amazing 14-minute film to be shown at the general session lunch (see it for yourself at www.snd.org).

FINAL FIVE

The final five were announced at Friday's general session lunch: William, Nina, Stephanie, Carrie and Billy. And Billy, Joey and Tory won three of four summer fellowships at the Poynter Institute! Luncheon attendees dropped bingo chips into the ballot box of their choice. The votes were counted around 6 p.m., followed by a dry-run of Tim's quiz show finale (which Sentinel staffers completely bombed).

Inside info: Billy was so nervous he couldn't eat his lunch. He was almost as nervous as I was, backstage with a fantastic film that just wouldn't play. Tracy's technical expertise came to the rescue with just minutes to spare. Later, Tracy made a dash to Downtown Disney to purchase "crowns" for the winning three: a cowboy hat for Phoenix's intern, Mickey Mouse ears for Orlando's and a Giants ball cap for San Jose's. Nice touch, Tracy.

AND THE WINNER IS...

Who knew that "Gentle Boob Shot" is an anagram for "The Boston Globe?" Billy, one of the three finalists, did! He was joined by Carrie and William in the final round, Tim's "Newsers & Losers" design

trivia game. During the closing banquet, Tim grilled them on everything from the anatomy of type to the history of photography. Carrie claimed the crown with 10 points to Billy's seven and William's five. She chose the Mercury News, Billy's Orlando-bound and William's headed to Phoenix. Tracy, Matt and I couldn't be more thrilled!

Inside info: Patty Cox, AME at the St. Petersburg Times, told me she'd love to have the 4th-place vote-getter intern in St. Pete next summer — that's Stephanie! And Scott Goldman, AME at the Indianapolis Star, claimed No. 5 — that's Nina! Amazing that all top five went home with paid internships. And the available five were mobbed by hiring managers all night, a fantastic end to a fantastic week.

THE DENOUEMENT

We conceived "The Intern," believing it would open doors for a student or two in a meaningful way, and we were proud to bring it to this year's program. What we didn't foresee was how attached we'd become to each one of them, or how the gracious workshop attendees would make them feel like rock stars.

That's what the "Society" part of SND is all about.

William, Barbie, Stephanie, Tory, Carrie, Joey, Billy, Nina, Tiffany and Tawanna: Not only was it a pleasure to spend this week with you, it was a privilege. Thanks to everyone who worked so hard to make this dream come true.