***Building Your Career Roundtable***

***IRE Annual Conference 2017 Phoenix***

***With Christine Mai-Duc LA Times, Hilary Powell, Jill Riepenhoff***

***June 25, 2017***

Congratulate yourselves for being here on a Sunday morning.

They call this church for a reason. I’m going to preach at you for a minute.

Preach the gospel: The gospel of doing great journalism.

I want to ask you a question.

Why are you here?

Why are you doing what you’re doing?

Why are you practicing this craft of journalism in the first place?

What motivates you? What drives you? What makes you keep doing this despite long odds and lousy work conditions?

I want you think about this.

To me-

Journalism is about holding the powerful accountable. Giving voice to the voiceless. Telling great stories. Exposing wrongdoing. Telling stories that have never been told before. Uncovering things the elite and powerful don’t want made public.

It’s about bringing justice to injustice. Righting wrongs.

It’s about changing the world.

It’s God’s work. And you are an elite and select few on earth who get to do it. You are among the chosen for whom this is a calling. This isn’t a job. This isn’t a career.

This is a calling. This is making the world a better place…leaving a legacy.

Approach each and every story, each and every day, each and every job opportunity as such… approach it like it is… truly a calling.

I want you to close your eyes and imagine that you are a painter and you find yourself in a room with Picasso or Van Gogh or Michelangelo or Andy Warhol or Rembrandt

Or imagine that you are a baseball player and you find yourself in the same room with Alex Rodriguez, Ken Griffey Jr., Babe Ruth or Cal Ripken

Or you are a musician and you look up and find yourself with Pavorati, Yo Yo Ma, Eric Clapton, Mozart or Mick Jagger

Or you are a basketball player and you find yourself in the same room with LeBron James, Michael Jordan, Wilt Chamberlin, Kareem Abdul Jabar, Magic Johnson, Stephen Curry or Larry Bird

Or you are a writer…and there across from you is Maya Angelou, William Faulkner, Mark Twain, Ernest Hemingway

Now open your eyes… and look around you.

There they are… right in front of you…walking the halls with you!

Jill Riepenhoff – The Columbus Post Dispatch

Christine Mai-Duc –The Los Angeles Times

Hilary Powell - WSBT Television

Think about it

You are among greatness. Experience. Depth. Legends.

They are here. Superstars. Geniuses. Giants in our industry.

All you have to do is reach out… touch them…get to know them… introduce yourself to them…and learn from them… ask them questions.

Why wouldn’t you do that?

* Stay connected… push yourself to stay in contact…

Work these people …don’t be a pest but use them… bug them… seize this opportunity.

* Treat your career like you would a good story. Stay on it. Be relentless. Be passionate. Be dogged. Don’t give up.
* Work your craft. Do good work wherever you are and no matter what the circumstances. Bloom where you’re planted knowing that good work will be rewarded in due time.
* Invest in yourself. Go to conferences like this. It’s a good start. But take it even further. Go to Poynter. Seek other opportunities to learn and to network. For ten years I paid for myself to go to IRE. It cost between 2 and 3 thousand dollars but my wife and I agreed it was an investment in me and my career. And if I didn’t think it was worth it why would a manager or someone who might hire me? Believe enough in yourself to invest in yourself.
* Get out of silos. Get out of your comfort zone. Constantly challenge yourself. Make yourself uncomfortable. Dive in Deep and swim to the surface. When you get there get out of the pool and find another, deeper pool and dive in again and swim to the surface.
* Expect hardship. Expect low pay and abusive assignments. This business sucks. But it is the best thing in the world if you’re called to do it.
* Network, network, network
* Find good mentors and be a pain in their ass
* Practice. Practice. Practice your craft. Run out every ground ball.
* Go to where opportunity takes you. Be ready to move
* Dive in deep, swim to the top. Always grow.
* Stand out and be unique. Tell stories no one else can or will tell. Learn skills few if anyone else knows or can do. Find a niche.
* Adapt

--But MOST IMPORTANTLY…

* Find your passion.
* Do the work you are meant to do…do it well. Do it with passion and with a focus that comes with knowing you are doing God’s work. You are among a select and important group of people who can and will change the world.
* It is a calling. Remember that! You are witnessing and writing history. You are serving as the voice for the voiceless. You are holding the powerful accountable. You are changing the world.