

# Femininity Comes First to Television Reporter

By Linda Eardley

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For the only woman news staff reporter on a St. Louis television station, Miss Betsey Barnette, BJ '70, is amazingly young and consistently feminine — two qualities that could be considered disadvantages in the fast-paced, aggressive world of electronic media. But after watching her on film and talking with her in person, one gets the feeling that her youth and femininity mean neither naivete nor weakness and that Miss Barnette has a promising future in a career dominated by men.

Miss Barnette, 22 years old, began January 18 as a reporter for KMOX-TV. Since September she had been at KMOX behind the scenes as a writer-editor, writing scripts for silent film, re-writing wire stories and editing other reporters' film.

Now she is planning her own assignments, going out with a camera crew for interviews, editing her own film and writing scripts for her own stories.

"The time spent in front of the cameras is actually minimal compared to the other work involved," Miss Barnette explained after three days on her new job. "For example I'm working on a three-part series on suburbia. I'll be telephoning and interviewing a lot to get background information. I must decide what aspects to focus on and talk it over with the producer and director. Then there is more interviewing, shooting silent film, editing and writing scripts and introductions for each part.

"I'm going to try to work in some of Margaret Mead's theories too so that will take additional research," she added.

Miss Barnette turns heads, not because of the cameras accompanying her, but simply because she is attractive. Her light brown hair is in a shoulder-length youthful style that is swept to the side. She stands

an erect, poised five feet, four inches. Her smile, wide and accented by her brown eyes, would help relax any interviewee.

Although this is her first full-time job, Miss Barnette has a relatively extensive background in journalism. Her grandfather, George Starr Lasher, was the founder and director of the Ohio University School of Journalism. Her father was a reporter for the *Buffalo Evening News* and later editor of the *Amherst Bee* in New York. Her mother currently writes for the *Amherst Bee*.

While in college, she did a newscast once a week for a semester at a television station in Columbia and she was cohostess of a two-hour radio show. She spent one summer as a music librarian at a television station in Buffalo, N.Y. and another summer as a reporter and copy editor at the *Buffalo Evening News*.

"Actually," Miss Barnette said, "it doesn't seem like I did too much in radio and television at school. I spent most of my time editing the *Maneater*, the campus newspaper.

"I prefer television work to newspaper work. Television can have more impact, but this means it must

be twice as careful in presenting the news.

"Some persons in television work think of it as show business. There is a certain amount of glamour involved. We have to think of appearances and watch our ratings. But to me, it's not show business, but news work."

Miss Barnette said she thinks television work is opening to women in metropolitan areas.

"Personally, I wouldn't particularly care to cover a riot, but there is no reason why I couldn't be at the police station covering another aspect of the story."

Miss Barnette contends that while a reporter must build up an aggressiveness, a woman reporter can keep her femininity.

"Be polite and courteous and be yourself," she advises women. "There is no need to try to act like a man. A woman can give a fresh new angle to stories men have been doing for years." □

*Editor's note: Betsey Barnette authored the article on intervisitation which appeared in the March-April, 1970 Missouri Alumnus.*

