10-27-1989

The Hilltop 10-27-1989

Hilltop Staff

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Come Inside This House
About EXTENSIONS...

Welcome to EXTENSIONS and the beginning of a renaissance of sorts for THE HILLTOP. EXTENSIONS was used by past Hilltop administrations as an additional means of informing the Howard University community.

It returns this year to hold true to the tradition of THE HILLTOP—the nation’s largest black collegiate newspaper. EXTENSIONS will publish periodically and focus on topics relating to Howard with a more scrutinizing eye and hopefully produce in-depth coverage of the university as never before.

It seemed only appropriate to mark the return of EXTENSIONS, after an eight-year absence, with an up close and personal look at THE HILLTOP.

Being a tenured Hilltopper myself, the idea of showing Howard University what “The Top” is all about seemed simple, but after diving into the task, uncovering 65 years of history amounted to more than a stroll across The Yard.

Because of the richness of HILLTOP history and the limited space here in the EXTENSIONS supplement, many things will have to be left out. It seems a shame to discuss HILLTOP history without mentioning, in detail, the story behind the formation of the Hilltop Policy Board—the administrator, faculty and student group regulating THE HILLTOP.

The paper has been censored by the administration, its legal publisher, broken stories THE WASHINGTON POST was forced to follow and has even been the site of a couple not-so-bad parties.

The pages of THE HILLTOP have told students of corruption in student government, administrative failures and triumphs, and even what fashions were in for the year.

The history of the university is intertwined with the paper. Problems with THE HILLTOP produce problems with Howard—as was seen in the student protest of 1983 when a HILLTOP editor was expelled because she did her job.

EXTENSIONS won’t be able to tell every story, such as how the paper gained a staff advisor, but it will be a combination of history and current events to convey the importance of THE HILLTOP to Howard University.

You’ll see what A Day In The Life is like at “The Top,” get a glimpse of some distinguished HILLTOP Alumni (a glimpse because the list is too numerous to mention), hear what professionals from the mainstream press have to say about the paper, get a detailed history of “Hilltop Happenings” since 1923 and even learn some HILLTOP secrets that some staffers won’t admit to.

This should not be seen as an attempt to unnecessarily glorify THE HILLTOP, rather it is an expose of the inner workings and history of an institution that is sometimes more “Howard” than Howard University itself.

The staff of EXTENSIONS and THE HILLTOP hope this premier issue meets up to the standard of past Hilltoppers and Howardites young and old.

ROBERT J. VICKERS
Hilltop Special Projects Editor
Table of Contents

Hilltop Alumni answer the question: "Is there life after The Hilltop?"

Candid comments from professional journalists in the mainstream press on The Hilltop and the Howardites that The Hilltop produces.

It takes a full seven-day week to produce The Hilltop. People pop in and out of the office for brief moments but never get the full picture. Take a hard look at the paper in 24 hours of its production on a Thursday night.

What does a burning cross, a corpse-like mannequin and Howard Security have in common? They all tie in to The Hilltop and the folklore that follows its yearly production.

After 65 official years of publishing, The Hilltop is still going strong, or is it? Glance back at the history of Howard's most prestigious student organization.

Each school and college within Howard University is allowed a student representative to the Hilltop Policy Board — the governing body of the newspaper. Comments and suggestions about THE HILLTOP should be directed to the respective representative on the board.
From The Hill... To The Top

By ANDREA MOREHEAD

They are people born with the quest for knowledge and share that knowledge through the written word—for all to see and for all time. They are not overzealous, but they demand the truth.

They are THE HILLTOP staff.

Since the weekly, student-run newspaper began publishing some 65 years ago, the reporters, editors and administrative officers of THE HILLTOP have been dedicated to campus journalism. They were not the only reporters who skipped a class to cover a story.

What happened to the campus editors who starred into glaring computer terminals for hours on end, checking for mistakes?

And what happened to the editors-in-chief whose position literally became a full-time job?

In line with Howard University's producing some of the most influential blacks in the world, the legacy of THE HILLTOP lives on as well.

Former HILLTOP staffers have moved on and taken bigger jobs in print journalism, broadcasting and even the government.

Stephanie Stokes Oliver, a former HILLTOP feature editor and reporter from 1970 to 1974 is now an editor with ESSENCE magazine.

A Seattle, Wa. native, Oliver said her experience writing and editing for THE HILLTOP prepared her for her first job at GLAMOR magazine.

"The hands-on experience in publishing was the best experience I could have ever had," said Oliver. "To have the responsibility and freedom to write and get paid was great."

THE HILLTOP was the first place Oliver told a reporter an article "just didn't work" and she concededs even as an editor of the nation's premier magazine for "today's black woman" she still tells reporters the same thing.

She said her most memorable experience working for the newspaper was interviewing Stevie Wonder after a concert on campus.

"After I interviewed him, I knew I would like journalism," she said. "And THE HILLTOP was a great way to get my feet wet. It gave me a lot of confidence."

Another confident HILLTOP alumna is Jawana Richards, editor-in-chief of the paper in 1973.

"I had to learn how to handle problems in budgeting and run my paper with an allotted amount of money," said McIntyre, now a sales manager with THE ATLANTA JOURNAL AND CONSTITUTION.

Alumni of THE HILLTOP make their presence known as journalists, businessmen and politicians.

He contends his experiences at THE HILLTOP allowed him to "work with some good minds and write things about my people."

McIntyre said he is impressed that the tradition of THE HILLTOP lives on.

"THE HILLTOP is a wonderful place for young black intellectuals to get that real world atmosphere," he said. "It produces great minds."

Because of THE HILLTOP, "I will always be a writer," said McIntyre. "It's in my blood."

Valca Valentine also has writing in her blood because of THE HILLTOP.

Now a feature writer for THE CHARLOTTE OBSERVER, in Charlotte, N.C., Valentine acted as a business reporter and local/national editor during her time at Howard—from 1979 and 1987.

She said working for THE HILLTOP allowed her to learn from her mistakes.

"I learned the importance of meeting deadlines which is a habit now," said Valentine. "I also learned to get two sides of a story."

She said she learned this lesson when Janice Mc Knight, 1983-84 HILLTOP editor-in-chief, wrote, what Valentine considered, one-sided articles about sexual discrimination in Howard administration.

"The administration and (former university) President James Cheek would not allow us to print certain administrative rules and policies, so our paper was censored" by the administration, she said.

Valentine is confident, though, because of such experiences.

"Howard will let you know you can do anything," said Richards, adding she was one of her favorite HILLTOP administrations was that of the 1981-82 Editor-in-Chief Isabel Wilkerson.

"We wanted to give the paper a professional look (that was) distinctive," said Wilkerson, now a rising reporter with THE NEW YORK TIMES.

Under Wilkerson's leadership, THE HILLTOP placed second in the Society of Professional Journalists' regional collegiate competition.

"It was the first time for THE HILLTOP and we paved the way for acceptance of future HILLTOPs," said Wilkerson.

Her managing editor, Joseph Perkins, who now serves as deputy assistant to U.S. Vice President Dan Quayle, said he will always hold his experiences at the paper close to his heart.

"THE HILLTOP is preparation for what goes on in the real world," he said. "Students don't know what it takes to put out a paper. There is nothing like THE HILLTOP. It is more an integral part of Howard than most student papers."

Perkins, who was an editorial writer with THE WALL STREET JOURNAL before joining the Quayle staff, added: "In my five years at THE HILLTOP, there was nothing like my time at THE HILLTOP."

Wilkerson agreed: "There were 12,000 people out there waiting for me to do my job. And if I didn't get the paper out I let them down."

"It's the best journalism experience you can get on this campus if you want to be in journalism," she added.

Darryl Richards credits his current success as a sports writer with THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS to his past success at THE HILLTOP, under the 1983-1984 administration of then Editor-in-Chief Henry Hall.

The former HILLTOP sports editor said he was able to get his first journalism internship with "my first six clips (articles) which were published in THE HILLTOP.

"THE HILLTOP made me excited," said Richards, "I began living to write. I have a lot of pride (in that work) and enjoyed working there," he added.

Richards said HILLTOP staffers earned respect among professionals because of the number of former Hilltoppers who have gone on to make an impact in professional journalism.

"It makes me feel so good to know (Hilltoppers) are getting their first jobs after graduation and are having really good careers," he said. "To know that blacks have conquered many odds because of the experience gained at THE HILLTOP is wonderful."

But Richards contends: "We need to produce more talented black writers and I know THE HILLTOP is helping in that effort."

"THE HILLTOP prepared me very well for the real world and it gave me the opportunity to grow and build, both as a writer and a person," added Richards.

"When I think of Howard, I think of THE HILLTOP."
Pros on THE TOP

Throughout the history of THE HILLTOP, many writers and editors who have gone on to make their mark in some of the most prestigious newspapers in the country. Most of them will say, without hesitation, they got their start at "The Top" and learned more there than in their classes. But what do the professionals in the mainstream press think of former Hilltoppers who now work on their staffs?

Compiled by George Danis

"We have had several HILLTOP editors work for us as summer interns. We are delighted when former HILLTOP staffers become part of our staff."

—Lawrence O'Donnell
WALL STREET JOURNAL Associate Editor

"THE HILLTOP doesn't have much of an impact with Howard graduates. I can't really see a major contribution that THE HILLTOP makes to the careers of the graduates of the journalism school."

—Alice Bonner
GANNET Recruiter and Howard Alumnus

"It is really good that students at Howard have an excellent school paper that gives budding journalists a chance. The school can be very proud of the paper."

—Shelia Wolf
CHICAGO TRIBUNE Recruiter

"I've found (Hilltop Alumni) to be above average reporters."

—Greg Moore
BOSTON GLOBE

"We've had several former HILLTOP staffers who have excelled as journalists. (Hilltoppers are) mainstays on our staff. We've been extremely pleased."

—Paul Delaney
NEW YORK TIMES
Life on The Hill: 
A day in the life

It seems common to hear Howland campus complain on Friday mornings.

"Why is THE HILLTOP out so late?"

"We haven't gotten a issue at the College of Dentistry for three weeks!"

"Our staff have been working hard and I didn't say that!"

What follows is an inside look at what the staff goes through - one day out of their seven-day production schedule.

So the next time the paper comes out late, or someone's name is spelled wrong, think about walking a mile in a Hilltopper's shoes.

By ROBERT J. FICKERS
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 14, 1989

It's 6 a.m. This week, THE HILLTOP is budgeted for 16 pages - predetermined by the amount of subscriptions sold for the week. Only the Local section, one section out of 10 is completed. Editor-in-Chief Alonza Robertson begins the third floor pressroom to talk with Chief Copy Editor Rebecca Little. He wants to chart the progress of the remaining sections, assuming more than half of the paper.

Little oversees three copy editors, who revise articles in conformity to the newspaper's style, and then refer to the typesetting machine in the basement. Since the typesetting equipment is limited to three computer terminals and only one of them can send copy to the typesetting, Little has compiled about 12 pages to send, but isn't sure how fast the machine on pace, she sends out four pages.

The production crew filters into a narrow corner containing light-sensitive paper. It must not be exposed to light until it is inside the typesetting machine through a "developer" machine, containing three typesetting machines in the basement. Robertson has compiled about 10 pages - predetermined by the This holds up the section editors from completing their pages.

"It's 6:25. Robertson is concerned. An hour has passed, and his weekly 5 p.m. meeting, but Robertson is satisfied, but still angry. Robertson has been checking the time all night. Headlines are sent and sent again, copy is lost and corrections always seem to make it drag on for the rest of the night, section editors struggle against the clock trying to make the midnight deadline."

For the rest of the night, the staff works through the night to make the next day's issue. Copy is lost and corrections seem to make it drag on for the rest of the night, section editors struggle against the clock trying to make the midnight deadline.

Robertson is satisfied, but still angry.
State of The Hilltop Addresses

Zack Burgess
Hilltop Managing Editor

I can vividly remember coming to Howard University with no direction. A new person in a new place. I can recall walking past this little white house at 2217 4th St., N.W. and immediately becoming proud that my college newspaper was the nation's largest black student newspaper—with no idea what this place was about or the work that people put in to it day after day.

Then, there was sophomore year, quite bored with my student activities and decided I was going to give journalism a shot. The first story I wrote was for the International page of The Hilltop.

Here I was thinking the story was really good, then again, that story had no quotes and I didn't interview a single soul. I have since forgotten what the story was about.

Then there was the following year and The Hilltop was without a Sports Editor—so I lied my way into the job. Here I was begging Ms. Leslie Lewis, university, and then-Editor-in-Chief Naomi Travers to give me a shot, constantly talking about what a great job I could do with the sports page.

Well, I was in for an experience.

That first week I didn't leave The Hilltop until seven o'clock Friday morning, and I argued with this girl who knew nothing about sports almost everyday that week.

Well today things are quite different. I get mad at people who lie to me about their qualifications and extremely angry with people who don't think enough to ask questions when covering an event.

Then there was my second year as Sports Editor. Man was I excited. I walked around The Hilltop with a little chip on my shoulder, because I thought no one on Howard's campus could tell me anything where sports was concerned (sometimes I still have a tendency to think this way).

But, former Editor-in-Chief Suzanne Alexander crushed that little ego, dismissing me from my duties, sending me packing. Yes, my ego was crushed and I felt as if I had lost my girlfriend.

Well, today I'm back at The Hilltop, but this time in a totally different capacity—I'm Managing Editor this year and the responsibilities that go with the job are insurmountable.

You constantly see a staff of 70 people get flustered when there are only three terminals to work on and one is often broken.

The job is taken quite seriously, I'm sure I speak for the entire staff. Each week these people try to make you the best paper they possibly can.

A lot has been learned in this house: hard work, unselfishness, togetherness and love for people, you never thought you could.

Many of us are stressed, trying to juggle our books, school, and what little social life we can manage to come up with. So, next time you wonder where The Hilltop is, just think about the people down at that little house on 4th and Bryant, and remember that we are people too.

Lori Buckner
Hilltop Associate Editor

When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for a staff of professional journalists to assemble the 'Nation's Largest Black Newspaper' in an oddily haunted house, you can be sure The Hilltop is alive and well.

Hilltop was born, that may be a bit strong, but we're doing the best we can. Sometimes I think the newspaper is produced on luck and perseverance. Working here is now your mother calls a "character-building experience.

Computers—the few we have—break down regularly. Long, irregular hours give way to a revolving staff box. The first few weeks of each year are like journalism boot camp: little sleep, bad food, no social life and an average of 16 credit hours to squeeze somewhere in between.

So, date, we have lost four staff members.

Still, as far as I am concerned, you've got to love it. Call me a newspaper nerd (occasionally, I've been known to walk around with line tape stuck on my shoe), but I get a rush with each Friday's issue.

It's an addiction. By Thanksgiving, we'd have our own chapter of Hilltoppers Anonymous: "Hello, my name is Lori and I've been a Topaholic for three years."

Perhaps it's more today's environment than the work that keeps me here for so long.

Besides the fact that after a few months you have no other friends because you have no life to speak of, 2217 4th St. is compelling because it holds some of the best people, crickets, mice and ghosts I've ever encountered.

We keep the ghosts on staff so that we have someone to blame the typos on. The crickets have been here a while, and the mouse is new but my life is not nearly as exciting without it. My colleagues are the big family I never had. We fuss, fight, play and work as hard as any family there is.

Masochism is in vogue here. Hilltop women have concluded that PMS affects both genders and computers, too. Stress is always on the menu but there is always comradery for dessert.

It's only October and I'm proud to have legs like She-Ra from scurrying up and down the mountains of stairs. I am inspired to keep going when I see the successes this place has produced over the years. I am even more encouraged that they are sane, contributing members of society. There is hope for me yet.

Do I worry about the future of The Hilltop? Worry, no but I will always care.

I know the paper will survive if for no other reason, because the game is not over. Despite the tough times, The Hilltop makes me laugh. Chances are that upon graduation all the bad memories will fade away. Only the fond ones will remain.

Right. Nevertheless, I love my job.
Once upon a time there was this house...

By CRISTAL BARON

On any given day at Howard University you can see Fine Arts students playing music on the Yard and a crowd in the Punch Out. But at night, you could see a student climbing on the roof of THE HILLTOP office building and being arrested by Howard security.

That’s the type of thing Hilltoppers do after spending long hours in “The House” at 2217 Fourth Street.

However, there is a good reason why Alonzo Robertson’s former managing editor and the current editor-in-chief, was climbing on the roof.

One night last spring, the hinges on the front door of the office broke and the door was wedged shut. The staff couldn’t get out.

With no other way out of the building, Robertson climbed out of the second story window, onto the roof, down the building and almost to safety.

“How’d it hold right there. What are y’all doin there?” Howard University’s security division was on the job.

“It must have looked pretty strange—the window wide open, the lights on, curtains blowing in the wind and me climbing on his pole,” said Robertson.

Like Robertson, Hilltoppers have many tales to tell about things that have happened in and around their house.

“It’s more than just a newspaper,” added Robertson. “We eat, sleep and party. We do everything here.”

The house itself has its own folklore. It was once thought that Charles Drew, the pioneer of blood plasma, once lived in THE HILLTOP house, but he lived around the corner.

Staffers have passed down the tale that when Drew was a surgeon at Freedmans Hospital, now the School of Communications, he brought hearts like the walls are beating like Drew’s hearts.

So it is in this house, he added. “I’ll never do that again.”

HILLTOP stories are not always so serious. In fact, the house is rampant with practical jokes.

Paul Davies, staff artist for the last four years, said when Bryant saw what she thought was a corpse, she came running up the stairs screaming.

Former production assistant Herb Eaton had designed a life-size mannequin of himself for a class project and had stored it at the house.

It Really Happened!

*Current Managing Editor Zack Burgess once had a gun pointed at his head when he was accosted by Howard Security officers. Burgess, who first tried to flee, but threw his hands up when the officers caught up to him, was entering the School of Communications late at night from an unauthorized entrance.

*Film Director Spike Lee once made a personal visit to THE HILLTOP to correct a report that Vanessa Williams walked off the set of School Desec.

*The last three editors of THE HILLTOP were members of black greek organizations, which has led Staff Artist Paul Davies to dub the paper “The Greektop.”

*During the 1985-86 administration of Carol Winn, the staff tried to remove Winn from her post. Undaunted, Winn hired most of the staff and hired a new staff composed mostly of Freshman.

*When actor Eddie Murphy was rumored to have been dating a Howard coed, reporters from the tabloid press called THE HILLTOP looking for information.

When one reporter reached then managing editor Alonzo Robertson, Robertson refused to comment on the record. The following week, STAR magazine quoted someone named Al Roberts, HILLTOP managing editor, on saying, “Eddie Murphy has not been on this campus. If Eddie Murphy was on campus I would know it.”

“That thing was eerie even though you knew it was dummy,” said Davies. “Purvette was acting like it was the anti-Christ.”

HILLTOP stories are not always so serious. In fact, the house is rampant with practical jokes.

But the papers’ most famous practical joke came with Editor Naomi Travers in the April 1, 1988 issue.

Under “THE HILLTOP” masthead, headlines read: “Hilltop sued for libel, Tuition will be free in fall,” and “21 paternity suits filed against student.”

Accompanying the libel story was a picture of Traverson and former business manager Malcolm Carter leaving the office, covering their faces. Theaternity picture story featured staff photographer Paul Woodruff saying: “I didn’t know I was so potent.”

Robertson, then campus editor, said he didn’t think Traverson was serious about publishing that page.

Because the paper had developed a reputation on campus for breaking scandalous stories, the libel story, which led the page, received the most response among students.

That Friday, staffers said they heard responses like “Serves them right,” and “It’s about time.”

People thought they were real stories,” said Robertson. “We got them good that time.”

But to Robertson’s dismay, THE HILLTOP has also been on the other end of practical jokes.

“One night someone called in a cross-burning on the yard,” said Davies. “You would have thought everyone on staff ran back. We flew up there.”

Everybody bolted,” added Robertson. “When we got to the yard, it was like slow motion. Everyone slowed down. We looked to the right and looked to the left,” but no cross.

“We even started looking for burn marks in the grass,” he said. “All we could say was, ‘We’ve been suckered.’”

In the day-to-day workings of the paper, strange things continue to happen—things disappear and equipment breaks down.

The ghost of Charles Drew gets the blame for those too.

“Something won’t allow this paper to be printed smoothly,” said Robertson. “I’ve spent four years trying to figure out what. Everything will be going well; then the power will go out; the computers will break down and the machines won’t work.”

Robertson added that he knows the house is haunted because he once spent the night there alone.

“I had just gotten back in town, but it was too late to move into my dorm room, so I decided to sleep in THE HILLTOP page,” he added.

Robertson said that night he heard a heart beating, chairs squeaking and doors slamming.

“I was there by myself and the phone would ring and when I picked it up, there was just a dial tone,” he added. “I’ll never do that again.”

Current Tempo Editor Keith Alexander agreed with Robertson.

“I don’t believe in ghosts, but something strange is in this house,” he added.

Hilltop History Makers

In February of 1983, students staged a protest, seizing the administration building, when then-Editor-in-chief Janice McKnight was expelled from Howard after she wrote articles claiming sexual discrimination in the administration.

Former Editor-in-chief Carol Winn (1985/86) once fired 14 staffers, leaving her with staff of nine.
In the current administration, students face the same demands. It is a full-time job with part-time pay, say editors past and present, that has always been hampered by inadequate equipment and poor facilities.

In the mid-1970's did the paper add computer equipment to its operation. Before that it was a multi-step manual process similar to early 20th century printing.

New equipment, purchased less than two years ago, is already semi-functional.

The university's history is dotted with student protests, but at least once THE HILLTOP was the focus of one.

In the 1982/83 academic year, then-editor Janice McKnight was relieved of her duties and eventually expelled from the university.

The controversial actions of the university stemmed from articles written by McKnight that alleged sexual discrimination in the university's administration.

For three days, after McKnight's expulsion, which was said to have been based on her falsified application for admission, students rallied on the Yard in front of the administration building, admonishing what they interpreted as HILLTOP censorship.

McKnight who took the case to court and sued the university for an undisclosed amount, was later readmitted, but publication of THE HILLTOP ceased after spring break of 1983 until the following year.

The Hilltop Board was organized to act as a liaison between the university president and the paper. The board consists of student representatives from each school, and a business manager of THE HILLTOP, and various university administrators and faculty.

Before the board was established, the university president was directly responsible for the publication, though far removed from the actual process.

The paper's annual budget must be approved by the board.

The paper's $240,000 budget, the largest of any student organization at Howard, is primarily funded by staff-generated advertisement and subscription sales. About $125,000 comes from student activities.

In the early years, money for THE HILLTOP was appropriated through the student council, which could make arbitrary cutbacks based on disinterest with the paper's coverage.

During those years, said John, THE HILLTOP had an erratic publication schedule.

The current future of THE HILLTOP may also be erratic.

In a September meeting with the Hilltop Policy Board, current Editor Atanza Robertson pleaded for additional funding and a new facility to house the paper.

Plans are pending to demolish the house where the paper currently operates.

"We have to move on," he told the board members, "or we're going to stop moving."

Robertson, a staff member since entering Howard, said he is not concerned about pending plans to demolish THE HILLTOP house because, "Our building is falling down.

In the three-hour meeting, Robertson reminded the board of the chronic equipment failures.

The only reason the paper continues to publish, "added Business Manager Donald Christian, is because of our editor-in-chief / manager."

The board agreed that the paper's condition is urgent, but told Robertson that Student Activities did not have the $54,000 needed to refurbish THE HILLTOP.

The board suggested Robertson seek a small business loan outside the university, but before the suggestion could be validated by vote, a board member left and the voting quorum was lost.

"If we spend the money that we have now (on new equipment), you can have a good paper but for the rest of the semester," he said. "But, the way things stand with the broken-down equipment we have now, there may not be a HILLTOP next week."

The future of THE HILLTOP, arguably Howard University's most prestigious student organization, is in jeopardy.
Making It Work

Copy Editor Donna Lee (front) laments over editing a poorly written story, while sports reporter Bruce Speight puts the finishing touches on a game story.

Production Manager Sereita Cobbs (left) helps Editor-in-chief Alonzo Robertson remove jammed paper from The Hilltop’s developer, part of the paper’s problem-ridden typesetting computer system.

The Campus page, edited by Sheila Maxwell, is one of the six sections designed each week in the basement of The Hilltop.

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