

10 Things I wish I'd known

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of Chicago's Northwest and West suburbs

- 1) Grammar and style are important; news judgment is more important.
Being able to write clearly and spell are just as important as good news judgment.
- 2) What are my company's overall goals and how do I fit in?
- 3) It won't hurt me to be nice to my colleagues instead of trying to one-up them. The more defensive I am, the more insecure I look.
- 4) The importance of peer and vertical management.
- 5) I'll live a lot longer if I take a dinner break but not in the middle of breaking news.
- 6) How to resolve conflicts without crying or screaming — or both.
- 7) Next month's paper is more important than the next day's.
- 8) You don't look stupid for not knowing something and looking it up.
- 9) Good journalism starts long before the reporting/editing starts.
- 10) The story is always the thing: Never put my own fears, pressures and personal opinions before readers' needs.

Upon arrival at the Pearly Gates, a reporter is issued a harp and wings by St. Peter. But the journalist wonders why the wings are on the small side. "Wing size is determined by the amount of abuse you have had to take in your lifetime," St. Peter says. "See these tiny butterfly wings? I give these to publishers, who take hardly any abuse from anybody."

"When the reporter pointed to a pair of wings with the spread of a condor, the heavenly gatekeeper said, "Those are for night editors." Suddenly a roar could be heard from a huge jumbo jet approaching, and St. Peter said, "Duck -- here comes a copy editor."

Gypsy da Silva, legendary copy editor at Simon & Schuster