

PCNY Luncheon
Planes, Trains and Automobiles:
Working with the Travel Media in Challenging Times

Melissa Biggs Bradley, Travel Editor *Town & Country*: Thank you. That's very nice, Nancy. Sometimes, not always necessarily, did I know I was signing up to share my life with our *Town & Country* readers, but it's been a lot of fun.

As Nancy said, what I do at *Town & Country* is a combination of our features, but it has always been our travel. We do travel features in a lot of our issues, I don't believe the June one outside actually has just a regular travel feature, but it always has our monthly column, which is sort of a mini feature, and then a mix page with smaller items. I rely on publicists to get a lot of the story leads that we do.

What separates what I really like for *Town & Country* -- and I'll tell you in a few minutes about the next project that we're launching which is a *Town & Country Travel* magazine, and I'll be overseeing both the travel at *Town & Country* and the new magazine -- is people who really understand the magazine. Different from what Ray said, we are not trying to cover the world for all people. We are trying to cover the world for a very select group of readers, and what's important is to understand who those are and who we speak to.

My biggest pet peeve is when people call me up and say, "I have a pitch I want to send you, what's your address?" And the first thing that tells me is if you don't know my address, you don't have a copy of the magazine in front of you because it's right there on the masthead. And if you don't know my magazine, you're not going to know the kind of pitch that's going to work for us. We have, as I said, a very distinct mission for the kind of stories that we want to do, and publicists who really understand who we're speaking to. And, in general, I don't love phone calls, but if people call me up and they know who we are and they know the kind of story we have, they can get a great story in the magazine. But it's taking the time and the effort to really target the kind of thing that we do and to focus on who we're speaking to. Basically, that's the most effective way to reach me.

The reason that we're doing a new magazine at *Town & Country* -- it will be called *Town & Country Travel*, it comes out in October, the first issue. We'll do four issues in 2004 -- spring, summer, fall and winter. We will cover travel very much the way we've covered it in *Town & Country*, the main magazine, or the mother-ship as we're calling it sometimes. But basically what we've found was that after 9/11 the travel habits of American travelers, which were always different, diverged even more, particularly with very sophisticated travelers -- which were the ones we've always been speaking to -- really not changing their habits too much, whereas the majority of American travelers for whom travel was just a holiday or a once or twice a year vacation, something they were not as familiar with, changed drastically. You've got stories, as Ray said, on every travel magazine and the *New York Times* about drive vacations. Our readers are not taking drive vacations because of 9/11. They are 35-65 year old +, they're more female than male, they are people who have traveled their whole lives, they travel for business, they

travel for pleasure, they travel for family reunions, because they've got friends and family who live in different parts of the world and they're basically, to a certain degree, recession-proof. We're looking for a very small segment of the market. The bigger travel magazines that exist have 1 million circulation, and to get 1 million readers you have to cover an 18 year old to a 65 year old, someone who earns \$30,000 a year and someone who earns \$3 million a year. We don't want a big circulation, we want to speak to the same readers that we have at Town & Country as well as some new ones and possibly not all of the ones that we already have. But we want to talk to the people who are totally passionate about traveling, who are spending a lot of money on it, who believe it's one of the most worthwhile things to spend their money on.

For them it's a lifestyle, it combines shopping, it combines food, it combines culture, adventure, it's something that they're just not going to give up – not for terrorism reasons, not because of the economy. And even if they give it up because of the economy, this issue we came out with on March 19th, the next day we went to Iraq, and it was an Italy issue and it's one of our highest selling issues for within the past year. And part of that is whether these people are going on March 22nd they want to know about Italy. They live it vicariously, they'll store it, they'll keep it, they're planning a Tuscany vacation at some point and they want to rip the pages out and they want to go to these places. I bumped into somebody yesterday who got very angry when he found out where I worked, he said, "This is the lady! You ruined my life!" I said, "What are you talking about?" and he said we had run this tiny, less than an inch notice on a restaurant that happens to be the cover girl's favorite place to eat in Rome. It also is this man's favorite restaurant in Rome and he said, "You don't understand! This is a hole-in-the-wall, I love it, I don't send anybody there but my very best friends and you've ruined it! Already I've spoken to all these people who are planning on going!" And that's our reader, the type of person who uses what we publish to go to places. So it's not for everybody, it's very high-end. Luxury, I think, qualifies for the experience more than for the price tag. We don't cover places just because they're expensive; we cover places like this hole-in-the-wall in Rome because if you really know Italian food this is where you want to go.

So the best thing to do is to really get to know who our audience is and who the magazine is. We're going to be doing more of this, I'm sure you saw in the New York Times Business today the one segment of the travel market that is up this quarter is the luxury hotel business. We know from lots of research that this is the business that's growing within the travel segment, that's part of the reason that we're launching this new magazine, not only because they keep going but we know it's a growing part of the business. It's very good news, we're bullish on what travel will be over the next 5-10 years, it's something people care about so much that they're not going to give it up. They're going to change habits, maybe they're not going to Asia for the time being but they'll still look for exotic places where they can have wonderful adventures and experiences. Really the most important thing is: understanding who we are.

I, unlike Ray, do not like to get emails, in part because when I'm traveling I keep in touch with my office through email and if I'm online by telephone from South America and it's costing a lot per minute and I have to wade through 15 emails to get to what I really need

to know, I don't like getting that. I also have a big office with different sections, we have a section in the regular magazine called On the Town where we cover different city events, we have an In the Country section where we cover country living, they sometimes do hotels and I like to pass Things from the Editor and if I can write something on a press release and hand it off to them, that's the most effective way to do it. So I actually like regular mail. That's one of the things about these panels: you always get totally mixed messages because everybody likes different things. I would rather have things come by mail.

I definitely don't want someone to call and ask me if I received something because, as Ray said, if we're interested we'll get in touch with you. We're supposed to be reporters, we certainly can pick up the phone and get the information that we need.

So, know the magazine, send us information that's completely relevant, don't send us stuff that doesn't make sense, and if you really know the magazine and you have something that is specific to us that you can offer us exclusively or in a really timely way, that's worth picking up the phone call. I don't want to be getting the same thing that everybody else is getting; we want the magazines to be different. So when people understand what kind of places we're interested in, Town and Country -- in the travel magazine and in the regular magazine -- we really like to have a connection with real people. So when people call me up and say, "This fashion designer is starting a hotel and if you want you can be the person, we'd love to have you do a story on her introducing the hotel," it has a personal element. Or if this is a wonderful couple who left Mexico City and is very involved in the environment and they've built an eco-sensitive luxury resort and you can profile them plus the property, that kind of thing really shows me that somebody really understands our reader and our magazine, and if they're coming to me with it before anyone else has it, there's a good chance that we'll do something on it, it's really focusing on something that we're going to want.

Thank you.