

Lucy Smithwick

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Every day at lunch, Dannye Romine Powell and Lew Powell would meet at the escalators in the old Charlotte Observer offices to share their news and a coffee before going back to work.

Until Lew was laid off from the Observer in 2009, this is how they would spend their daily breaks. The two worked together for about 35 years at various desks around the newsroom.

“It was wonderful, working in the same room with my wife,” Lew said in an interview. “We understood the attraction of the Observer, the pull of the Observer, the distraction of the Observer. When we came home in the afternoon, we didn’t have to explain why our minds were still spinning about what was going on.”

Half of Lew’s 35 years at the Observer was spent at the features desk and the other half was spent as Forum editor where he reviewed letters to the newspaper and also was an occasional columnist.

Dannye, on the other hand, has spent 45 years there now. She was hired in 1975 as the book review editor. 17 years later, she became the local front columnist. 20 years after that, she switched back to the book page, where she has stayed since.

She has seen a lot of change in journalism during her time at the Observer as well as various other publications and writing careers.

“The world and newspapers have become so much more socially aware, so much more integrated,” Dannye said. “I don’t believe there was a black reporter at the Durham Sun in the early 60s. The newspaper business has gone from typewriters to computers to the internet. I mean it’s just a world of difference. It’s like going from being a granddaughter to a great-grandmother.”

The world has changed since Dannye and Lew have been in journalism, but what has not changed has been their character as journalists.

“In 1969, Gay Talese did a book about the New York Times called *The Kingdom and the Power*,” Lew said. “In it, he said that two characteristics of journalists tended to be shyness and curiosity, and that journalism enabled us to overcome the shyness and to make use of the curiosity. One thing I've learned is that it's a big world and journalism gives you a lot of opportunity to explore it, to educate yourself and to change your mind about things.”

What both kept them in the field of journalism in the first place was the atmosphere of the newsroom as well as their relationships at the Observer.

“Working in a newspaper is probably the most fun I have ever had a job,” Dannye said. “The people who work at newspapers are bright and funny and lively and fun. No matter if there's any news going on, the people are just wonderful to work with.”

Lew echoed this statement.

“People were quick, smart and always willing to get a discussion going about things,” he said. “We all had the same mission. But, I mean, I feel lucky that the years I was up there and elsewhere, that was definitely the sweet spot for daily journalism.”

Their shared years at the Observer have only made their experience in journalism better, and they both said that it was good being together.

“We were saying to Lew’s good friend, Ed Williams, that we wondered what it would be like to be married and working in the same place,” Dannye said. “Ed said ‘Think of it this way. You and Lou will be seeing each other when you're at your freshest during the day. It was really very nice having each other in the newsroom. But being in a newsroom was ideal. I just loved it. I have no regrets whatsoever.’”