By Kaitlyn Johnston

As a design intern with The Working Press, which covered The Society of Professional Journalists National Conference & Journalism Convention in Atlanta from Sept. 5-7, 2008, I stepped outside my comfort zone as a designer and dealt with the many issues of designing a daily newspaper: space, time and newsprint.

It was great to get my hands dirty with the faded colors of newsprint and the ink bleeding onto my fingers. In Atlanta, I worked with a lot of really cool, hard-working student journalists representing all corners of the country. Getting to know the other 11 interns was invaluable. I'm so grateful for the opportunity from SPJ and the funding I received from the IUP SPJ chapter to help offset the cost of travel expenses.

Angela Tuck, of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, oversaw the entire operation and worked from early in the morning until midnight when we sent the final pages to print. Ten other professionals advised our writing, photography and design during the course of the convention. I most closely worked with J. Ben Kelly, of The Clarion-Ledger in Jackson, Miss., and one student designer, Nicolas Gowens, of Morehouse College in Atlanta. It was great to get to know Ben and Nick, and I learned a lot about newspaper design from them, too.

One of my favorite aspects of the internship was collaborating with photographers Kenneth Cummings, of Tennessee State University, and James Brosher, of Indiana University, to create and design photo essays for the daily two-page spread. We created one that showed the beauty of scenic Atlanta, one that offered an inside look the Georgia Aquarium, one of the world's largest aquariums; and my personal favorite, one that told the story of Atlanta's homeless finding hope and faith from Rodney Holder, pastor of Imman-u-el Reminent Church. Ken and James are truly gifted photographers.

Professional adviser Saeed Ahmed, of CNN, guided the interns on a tour of the CNN headquarters at midnight on Friday. Our after-hours tour guide gave us the total package: We each did our best Rich Sanchez impression at the anchor's desk and saw a live weather update of category 3 Hurricane Ike and Tropical Storm Hanna. As we toured past Saeed's desk at the CNN Wire, he received a report that a 4.0 magnitude earthquake struck California. Without missing a beat, Saeed and his coworker Alan Duke pounded out a release and posted it before the Associated Press – total bragging rights for these guys.

While not a lot could beat the VIP access to CNN, I was also granted access to some SPJ events, including the closing ceremony final ceremony inducting new officers and awarding journalists for their work and contributions to the society. Jim Schaefer and Mike L. Elrick, of the Detroit Free Press, accepted the Eugene S. Pulliam First Amendment Award for breaking the news of Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick's lies under oath, which resulted in his resignation Sept. 4, 2009 – the same day that The Working Press reporters arrived in Atlanta. The timeliness of Kilpatrick's resignation intersecting the SPJ Convention schedule reminded each and every attendee why SPJ works to protect the ideals guaranteed by the First Amendment.

Read The Working Press online at http://www.spj.org/wp.asp

Complete issues (PDF)

Friday, Sept. 5, 2008 http://spjvideo.org/wp/WorkingPressFriday.pdf

Saturday, Sept. 6, 2008 http://spjvideo.org/wp/WorkingPressSaturday.pdf Sunday, Sept. 7, 2008 http://spjvideo.org/wp/WorkingPressSunday.pdf