

East Wichita News

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A GARDEN SHOW Arranging What You Grow

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MAURICE EVANS Building 'MO' for Atlanta Hawks

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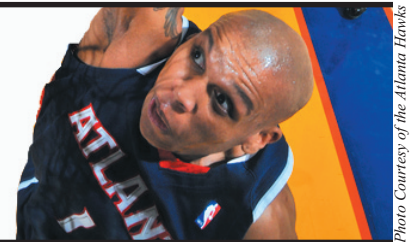


Photo Courtesy of the Atlanta Hawks

The Huxman's: Sweetheart Communicators

"A minister once said to me [that] friendship is the most important thing in a marriage. I've never forgotten that."

By Arlene Graber

She teaches it. He does it. Jesse and Dr. Susan Huxman are a couple that lives, breathes, and educates vocal and media communications. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, communication is the transmission tool used to share information with others. It can be traced as far back as ancient civilization with cave paintings, hand-drawn maps and hieroglyphics. Jesse is Director of Content at KPTS-TV, and Susan is Director of the Elliott School of Communication at Wichita State University. Individually, they each have a two-decade foundation of working experience in the field, and are experts in all areas of communication.

Today, the latest media trends involve technology driven largely by a consumer-driven society. How they



Jess and Susan Huxman

become proficient in the digital age is through education and first-hand experience. Never before has communications become more effective than through social networking with the likes of e-mail, facebook, blogging, and texting. Even so, Susan emphasizes that vocal communication with public speaking to inform

and educate cannot be underrated.

The Huxman's met at Bethel College in an audio editing production class. "I was totally overwhelmed and needed help," Susan said. "I looked around the class and decided Jesse was the most likely candidate that knew what he was doing."

"That was in the days when we used a grease pencil and eraser to edit," Jesse said, then chuckles saying, "After that she pretty much owed me a date, so that's where this all began."

Jesse graduated and went to work for a Hutchinson station, while Susan finished her degree. They married, and agreed to move to Lawrence for Susan to complete a Master's and a PhD degree. Jesse found work in Topeka as a DJ, and later in the production area of WIBW television.

"We loved Lawrence," said Susan. It was a great five years for them, but then it was time to move on. Armed with a doctorate degree, Susan sent resumes to

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COMMEDIA: Just for Fun!

By Cathy Feemster

It's baaaak! And it's just for fun. Wichita's spoof of itself and anyone else they can think of is coming to Wichita Center for the Arts. "Commedia: Mission Accomplished" is the title for this year's wacky, musical review of today's personalities and local foibles.

First produced in 1961 by the late Mary Jane Teall, Commedia has had several incarnations over the years, but local writers Jean Ann Cusik, Mike Whalen, Brandon Paulsen, Liz Willis, Tim Moore, and John Boldenow are promising a "no holds barred" irreverent production.

"This is a party with entertainment," said Cusik. She has been part of the production for years. "What sets Commedia apart is that we don't just do the news." Cusik gave us a sneak peek on some of the targets for their "friendly" comedy darts including: the fi-



John Boldenow, Brandon Paulsen, and Liz Willis have their hands out, asking for their part of the bailout in one of the skits at 'Commedia'.

nancial bailout; popular miracle drugs; and Billy May (you know him; he's the guy that sells Mighty Please see **Commedia**, Page 3

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The Huxman's

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three prominent colleges.

"Susan is too humble to say this," said Jesse, "but she was offered positions by all three—UCLA, Penn State, and Wake Forest, at Winston-Salem." In the end, she chose Wake Forest, because it felt right, and off they went again following Susan's career. "You know," Jesse said, "we talked about this when she was pursuing her PhD, and after investing all that time on her education, it seemed right to use it to the fullest, and I was lucky enough to find work in my field everywhere we moved."

His & Her Careers

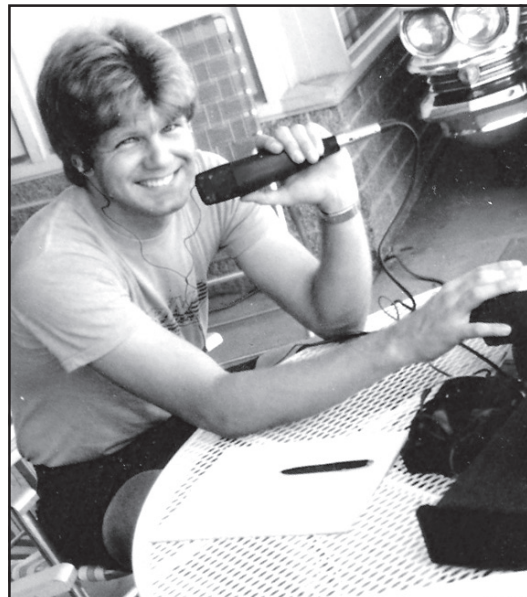
Susan is well aware of the sacrifices he made. "One of the many things I admire about Jess is that he is such a selfless person. He has turned down and/or adjusted career opportunities to make sure that the two-career couple thing can really work. This is so noble and rare when men today are still defined largely by their careers more than women."

At Wake Forest, Susan was hired as an assistant professor of speech communications and theater arts. Jesse continued mastering his skills as a commercial talent, writer, producer, consultant and manager in the fields of television and radio.

Safely grounded in careers, they began a family. They have three children, Julia, age 19, Emily, 14, Connor, 11. Susan says that when you have a family, you realize the importance of just that—family. So it was time to move back to Kansas. "It was important to us that we raise our children near our parents," Susan said. "The emotional support is nice on both levels. The kids have a close association with grandparents, and we have the benefit of our family near us."

Both Huxmans were hired at WSU. Susan obtained the position as assistant professor of communications and Jesse as an assistant professor of media. Jesse taught for seven years and was the first to incorporate studio B, where the WSU-TV campus television station airs by Cox cable on Channel 13, as part of his classroom curriculum. Jesse says it's most rewarding to watch his former students succeed in the business. Some include Jeremy Hubbard, now with ABC news, and Jeff Herndon, over at KAKE news, plus there are many working behind the scenes as photographers, producers and graphic artists.

Jeff Herndon, KAKE TV anchor/reporter, had Huxman for two years at WSU, said "Jesse was the one person that got me excited about journalism.



Left: Jesse Huxman is shown in 1985 at a live remote for WREN radio in Topeka.



Right: Susan and Jesse looked slightly different in 1982 when they became engaged to be married.

Jesse's love for broadcasting carried into the classroom. He brought such energy—way more than just books." Herndon, says that to this day, Jess stays in touch with his former students.

"Teaching is a great career choice, when raising a family," Susan said. "You have predictive schedules and on the college level, for us, one teaches two days, the other two or three days, allowing for one parent to be available at home at all times."

But then, Jesse became anxious to get back to the newsroom. "The turning point," Jesse said, "was the Oklahoma City bombing tragedy. It's important to get this kind of news to people instantly, and I missed that. I wanted to be in the flurry of instant news releases from global feeds."

News & Documentaries

For the next nine years, he would do just that producing news for KSN, as assistant news director. It was hectic on family life and eventually it was time for a change. "I can't tell you how many of my children's birthday parties I was late for, how many kid functions I couldn't attend, and numerous missed social engagements."

This was corrected when he was approached by an opportunity over at KPTS, where they were creating a new position, director of content. "It was a great fit for me, so in 2006, I moved to KPTS." Jesse was now freer to take a lead part in the children's activities, like coaching Connor's sports activities, and church activities, plus he was able to learn yet another part of the media world—public television.

"I love telling an entire story, not snippets or highlights," said Huxman. "Public television can help tell stories and produce documentaries like The

Piatt Street Plane Crash, The Dockum Sit-in, The Oil Boom in El Dorado, and Local Voices of WWII. "It's news that matters." Huxman is able to gain even more knowledge by producing social networking with facebook, a newsletter and the station participate in all kinds of educational programs.

All the while, Dr. Susan Huxman was rising through the ranks at WSU and was appointed interim director of the Elliott School of Communications in 2003 and director in 2004. It's stimulating each and every day," she says. "I like the administration part but love the teaching part."

"Her move into administration was kind of sad, in a way," said Les Anderson, associate professor in Dr. Huxman's department, "because she is one of the best teachers I've ever taught with and a top scholar in her field." But even though she isn't a full-time professor, Anderson says she's proved that she is an excellent and respected leader both here and on the national level, and makes sure she teaches at least one course each semester.

Dr. Huxman has authored several books on public speaking and critical writing and has published numerous articles in periodicals and scholarly papers. She received the WSU Board of Trustees Excellence in Teaching Award in 2006. "I will be a passionate advocate of higher education forever. I love the co-learning that takes place in the classroom. I am a Jayhawk, but if you want a communications degree, you need to be a Shocker," she said.

A 'Media' Household

Children in a household of media experts might be an exercise in 24/7 technology activities, however, the Huxman's stress that while technology

brings the world together, for children, it must be channeled to educate.

"For years, Jess and I conducted workshops on family life in a media age, in which we shared research on finding a healthy diet of media messages for children 10 and under," Susan said. "We don't have all the answers, but we enforce guidelines. We have three computers and three TVs, and all are in open/family areas. We monitor computer time, use parental controls on the TV's, and allow no TV during the school week, during the afternoon, or evening except for specials like cultural or sporting events."

Weekends are free for these activities, and they record favorite programs for weekend viewing. "We feel that too much solitary television or video games are non-productive and should be used in family times. For instance, we enjoy the Wii that demands several people playing and physical activity. We also stress reading newspapers and magazines, and are huge fans of KPTS which airs first-rate educational commercial-free programs for kids."

"Susan is amazing the way she deals with all the kids activities and events," said Jesse. "With all she does as director and professor, I don't know how she does it. I help of course, but she's the one who keeps us all organized."

They make it look easy, but the Huxmans' are raising three children, managing a home, conducting an active church life, and work full time, so stressful times do occur.

"It's like gardening," said Susan, "you have to tend to it, and that takes a lot of energy." There was the time when Jesse was earning his Master's degree from Kansas State University and would leave early and not return home until 2 a.m. most weekdays. Susan was juggling a new baby plus two other children along with a full work load. It was hard, but they were both committed to career goals and family so made it work.

Patience & Communication

"I think patience along with regular communication is terribly important," said Jesse. "We try to steal away for lunch now and then, and that's nice," said Susan. "We also text a lot," and then Jesse adds, "there are special weekend getaways for just Susan and me."

"A minister once said to me," said Jesse, "friendship is the most important thing in a marriage. I've never forgotten that and I know that for me if I have a problem with anything that is going on, Susan is the first person I talk to. It's nice to be able to count on her."