

Anita Vogel: Network correspondent

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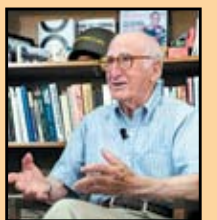


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Anita Vogel: Network correspondent



by Jo Nelsen

"I'm five feet from Bill Clinton. He's either going to brush by me or take my question," Anita Vogel describes the scene. She's on location in a noisy Vegas casino where Mr. Clinton made a surprise visit. She's been warned he's not taking questions, and security pushes her away. "It can be intimidating," she admits. But the petite Ms. Vogel elbows her way forward. "What are they going to do, arrest me?" she wonders. "I just felt intuitively that Bill Clinton was not going to walk by a live microphone."

It was pandemonium, hordes swarming around him. Fans shouted slogans and waved political signs. Vogel circled patiently, updating the anchor at the station, cheerfully assessing her position. Suddenly, when the timing was right, she made her move, thrusting her arm into the center of the crowd. The former president turned. Eye contact. She had him. Every question was addressed. He commented on the caucus sites, possible voter suppression, and the unfair advantage given some. "Everyone should have equal access," he concluded.

Vogel tells me, "I don't know whether I'll ever encounter as exciting an interview. My Blackberry was exploding for ten minutes afterwards!"

She ascribes her success to luck – stars and planets aligning, talented anchors, photographers, producers, and experts in the control room. "It was a team effort," she says. "I just kept my eye on the goal, as any good reporter would do."

Vogel is quick to credit others, but I watched the interplay, and believe me, her success is due, in no small part, to her own talent, courage, and persistence. Behind the delicate exterior lies a feisty spirit with the unwavering desire to get to the truth. It's not luck, but hard work that has earned Anita Vogel the coveted position she has held for the past six and a half years: Los Angeles-based correspondent for Fox News.

The glamour and grind

If you've ever thought the job of reporting might be cushy, here's the scoop. Vogel's out of bed at 5:10 and at the office by 7. To catch up on the news she reads 15 online newspapers – all before an 8:30 meeting with co-workers in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle via conference call. Then she pitches a story to the bureau chief, and collaborates with a producer to write it. Vogel mentioned there's support available from a research database she called "the brain room," and while this assistance sounds appealing, we know whose intelligence puts it all together. Extreme versatility is required, with stories ranging from American Idol to America's homeless, but by 4 o'clock the story is ready for airing.

If there's breaking news, Vogel is sent



Left: Anita on the job. Below: Anita on the set at the Fox Studios in New York. Below left: Anita on the job covering the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans.



out on assignment. Three packed suitcases are always ready in the back of her car: one with professional suits, another with fire attire, and a third full of rain gear for hurricane stories.

"Katrina was rough," Vogel recalls thoughtfully. "Conditions were the worst I'd ever seen, and it's the story that's made the biggest impact on me. I just couldn't believe it was happening in the United States."

The making of a reporter

From the start, Vogel has known exactly what she wanted to do. Watching local news on television at age 5 or 6, she remembers thinking: "That is so cool. It's what I want to do. I could be good at that."

The University of Southern California wasn't a school she could afford, but it was where she wanted to go (UCLA had no journalism program at the time.) So, she explained, she went ahead and got a few scholarships, her mother helped as much as she could, and she took out student loans, confident she'd be able to pay them back. Vogel graduated from



Anita reporting from the red carpet at the Grammy Awards.

USC in the late 1980s, with a bachelor of arts degree in broadcast journalism and political science, and finished paying off student loans two months ago.

The professional journey

Out of college, at 23, she worked at ABC News in Washington as a desk assistant for *This Week with David Brinkley* – a



Anita and Carrie Underwood.



Anita with her political science professor from USC, Dr Richard Dekmejian, photographed at the Debutante Ball.



Anita at the Grammy Awards.



Anita on the job covering the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans.

pretty good gig for starting out, and she could have stayed and worked her way up to becoming a producer. But Vogel knew she wanted to be a reporter. For that, she needed to find a job in a small town. So she began sending out resume tapes – hundreds of them, probably 500, she said. She was mostly ignored, seldom even received rejection letters, but she kept the faith.

“I figured that one day someone would call.” And one day someone did. It was Erie, Pennsylvania. She was ecstatic: “Yes, of course I’ll come for an interview,” she said and hung up before realizing she had no idea where Erie, Pennsylvania was. She found it on a map and spent the next two years there. It was advertised as a part-time position, and she was prepared to waitress to supplement her income. Upon arrival, it had become a full-time job, and that made her doubly determined: “I am getting this job,” she said to herself. “It’s meant to be!” And so it was. “Of course you never know when you start if you can do it,” she admits. But within the first few weeks she was confident it was a challenge she could handle.

Next, it was three years at a station in Jackson, Florida. Off she went from snow and cold to humidity and

heat. Weather shock! And after that, it was back to her beloved California. She worked at KCRA-TV (NBC) in Sacramento, where she covered the State Legislature and the Governor’s Office. “It was a great experience, and the people were wonderful,” she says. Actually, Vogel gave that same glowing assessment to every single job she told me about. The law of attraction at work perhaps.

When she wanted to come back to Los Angeles, Fox News had an opening. Again, Vogel claims the stars and planets aligned, and she was hired. “People enjoy working there and it shows,” she says. “It’s the best place to work. A perfect job for me. I get to live in L.A., where I grew up, and report on network-level stories. I am lucky and blessed to work there!”

Raised Armenian

Vogel’s mother, Mary, was born in New York and has a New York accent, but her Armenian grandmother lived with them while Vogel was growing up in California. There was no possibility of sneaking home late or disobeying rules, Vogel says with a grin. “I was raised Armenian!”

Vogel’s father, Sol, of East European descent, passed away when she was 11 months old. Her mother’s family had es-

caped from the small village of Evereg, Turkey, her grandmother’s father vowing: “We’re not going to let them kill us.” They plotted to give the impression of converting to the Muslim religion. Vogel emphasizes how difficult that would have been for Armenians, the first nation to officially accept Christianity, but it saved them. Her grandmother’s brother came to America in the early 1920s; her grandmother and sister waited in Cuba for citizenship.

Vogel’s mother wanted to raise her and her brother, Mark, in California. She had visited once and fallen in love with it, so when Vogel was two years old, the family moved from New York to Tazana, where she still makes her home. “My mother is the guiding force of my life,” Vogel says. “She worked as a banker, an executive secretary, and earned a degree from Pierce College while raising two children and working to support them. Armenians are survivors. We don’t give up.”

Referring to the strength of the Armenian community today, Vogel believes that the Armenians’ focus on preserving their culture, language, and history is fueled by their near extinction. “I am an American of Armenian descent... American first,” Vogel says, “but I will do everything I can to help the Armenian

community counter the negative effects of history that affected my own family.” She is a member of the Armenian Professional Society and the Armenian International Women’s Association.

Vogel made her first trip to Armenia this month. She plans to visit the capital, Yerevan, and is scheduled to speak to students on the subject of Western media at the Golden Apricot Film Festival. I trust she has a fourth suitcase ready for fun.

Making a difference

Does she want to be a reporter forever? “I love the field of communications,” she says, “but some day I might like to teach, consult, mentor, or write a book.” And probably one day she will. She doesn’t wish to become an anchor, though she’s happy to be a reporter who can anchor.

She has won awards: that of the Pennsylvania Association of Broadcasters for Best Documentary, and she was part of a team honored with an Edward R. Murrow award and a Regional Emmy award for Best Newscast. Regarding what is most deeply satisfying about her job, Vogel answers: “I hope some good comes from the awareness I bring by putting a spotlight on a story.” She tells me with pride, “I am constantly amazed at how many people come up to me, much later, and recall a story. The level of remembering the details is amazing.” And that is her confirmation – someone who sees the story, is touched, moved, or learns something that will make a difference in their lives.

She’ll keep healthy, she says. She’s a runner, aspiring to a marathon. She believes in the Golden Rule. “Try to be a good person, non-judgmental” is how she sums it up. And Anita Vogel is certainly that. She is an inspiring role model, with her feet on the ground and her heart in her work, the healthy balance of life and career evident in the radiance she exudes.

She loves wine tasting, travel, friends, family and concerts. One day she hopes to marry and have children. With characteristic optimism, she believes, “If it’s meant to happen, it will yet.”

“Life is good” are her parting words.

What better news to report? What better prize? 