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The Columbus Dispatch

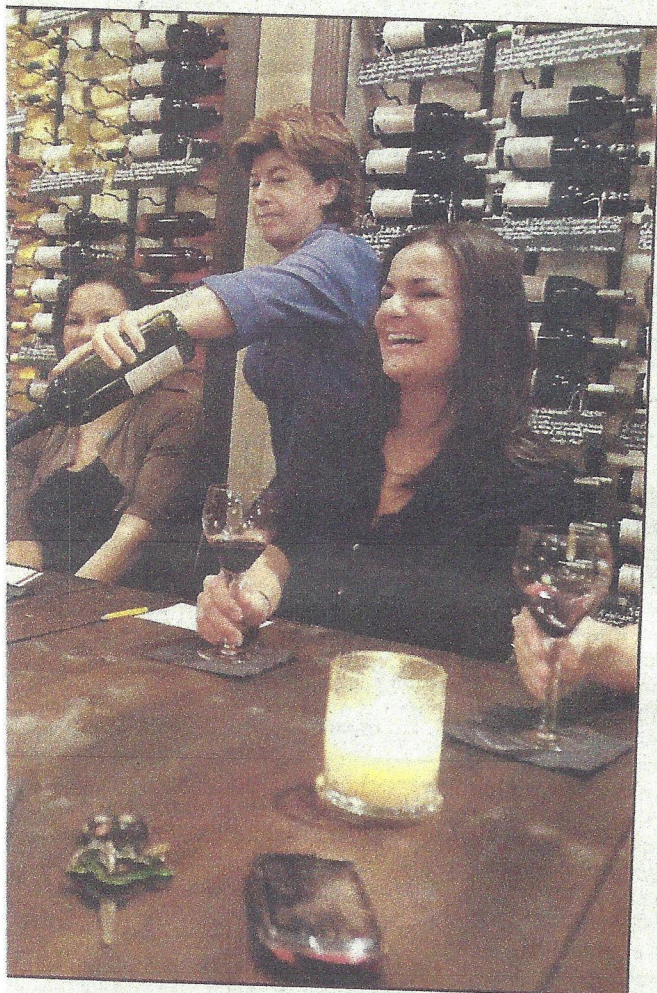
SATURDAY
SEPTEMBER 24, 2011

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Coming Monday

MONITORING CHILDREN

The pros/cons, the devices



te at Camelot Cellars.

COURTNEY HERGESHEIMER | DISPATCH PHOTOS

DOERS



*First Person is a weekly forum
for personal musings
and reflections from readers.*

FIRST PERSON

'Mad Men' sexier than ad agencies of real '60s

Nearly 50 years ago, I was 18
and working as a secretary in
New York advertising.

Today, my life seems a million
miles from those *Mad Men* days.

I moved to the Big Apple from
Pompano Beach, Fla., in 1964,

taking up resi-
dence at the
Barbizon Hotel
for Women,
whose notable
tenants in-
cluded Grace
Kelly and Liza
Minnelli.



MELODEE
CURRIER

One of my
girlfriends on
the sixth floor
was Jaclyn
Smith, who

later found fame through the TV
series *Charlie's Angels*.

In the Emmy-winning *Mad
Men*, the Barbizon once housed
Bethany Van Nuys, one of the
post-divorce love interests of
lead character Don Draper.

Parents of the 1960s felt safe
sending their daughters to live
there because men weren't per-
mitted beyond the lobby.

While there, I attended secre-
tarial school for a year on Park
Avenue — where I was required
to wear gloves and a hat.

Then, after graduation, I re-
mained at the Barbizon.



Sondra Slone add oak chips to the wine.



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CONTEST WINNER | NO. 57

Super effort soared to top

Nick Liberati, it might be said, arrived on *The Dispatch* caption-con- test scene faster than a speeding bullet.

While perusing Dispatch.com recently, he responded to a call for entries to our 57th "blank" panel, which depicts a man asking a sales clerk about a Superman costume. "It just came to me," said Liberati, 21, an aerospace-engineering student at Ohio State University.

The first-time entrant's ingenuity resonated with our judges, who declared his entry the best of the best.

"I loved the unique perspective," said Jeff Stahler, creator of *Moderately Confused*, the panel featured in the contest.

"It was quick and easy to understand — which, in cartooning, is key."

To read the winning entry, see Page D5.



Nick Liberati

► COMING OCT 15: finalists for contest No. 58 and the next panel

Then, after graduation, I remained at the Barbizon for two more years, working as a secretary for several advertising agencies — including Doyle Dane Bernbach (known today as DDB), the Ted Bates Agency and Young & Rubicam — as well as the advertising departments of Avon and PepsiCo.

In those days, secretaries worked 9 to 5, with no overtime. The job involved little stress; the atmosphere was fun, laid-back and creative — not unlike that of the AMC series.

Two-hour drinking lunches, as on *Mad Men*, were common. Smoking was constant, but no one seemed to care, because most people smoked.

At Christmastime, the agencies had lavish parties at swanky venues such as the Waldorf.

As the show portrays, too, most of the people with whom I worked commuted to the city from New Jersey or various areas of New York.

Contrary to the glamorous sex kittens depicted on *Mad Men*, though, the women I knew were average-looking. Most wore daytime dresses or skirts and sweaters, not pearls and cocktail attire. On a typical workday, I might wear a miniskirt, poor-boy sweater, Mary Jane shoes and false eyelashes.

Likewise, the men in the office weren't debonair Don Draper types but exceptionally mainstream.

The sexual climate in the agencies where I worked was subtle, not brazen — probably no different from other workplaces of the time.

Sexism, however, was blatant.

On my first day as a temporary secretary at the Ted Bates Agency, two account executives threw money on my desk and demanded that I buy cigarettes for them.

The first day, I complied; the second, I refused.

If I wouldn't buy their cigarettes, the executives suggested, I should leave. But I called the

See **FIRST PERSON** Page D2

fall sale '11

bedroomsfirst

The bedroom superstore.



DAILY ALMANAC

Today is **Saturday, Sept. 24**, the 267th day of 2011. There are 98 days left in the year.

HIGHLIGHTS IN HISTORY

- On **Sept. 24, 1789**, Congress passed the Judiciary Act, which provided for an attorney general and a Supreme Court.
- In **1869**, thousands of businessmen were ruined in a Wall Street panic known as "Black Friday" after financiers Jay Gould and James Fisk tried to corner the gold market.
- In **1948**, Mildred Gillars, accused of being Nazi wartime radio propagandist "Axis Sally," pleaded not guilty in Washington to charges of treason. (Gillars, later convicted, served 12 years in prison.)
- In **1955**, President Dwight D. Eisenhower suffered a heart attack while on vacation in Denver.
- In **1961**, Walt Disney's *Wonderful World of Color* premiered on NBC.
- In **1963**, the U.S. Senate ratified a treaty with Britain and the Soviet Union limiting nuclear testing.
- In **1976**, former hostage Patricia Hearst was sentenced to seven years in prison for her part in a bank robbery carried out by the Symbionese Liberation Army. (Hearst was released after 22 months after receiving clemency from President Jimmy Carter.)

FIRST PERSON

FROM PAGE D1

employment agency that got me the job and was told I needn't acquiesce: I wasn't the men's personal slave.

In those days, women were routinely referred to by first names or as one of "the girls"; men were called "Mr."

And female managers? I had a female boss once, but they were extremely scarce.

I don't recall ever seeing bottles of liquor floating around the office, but post-work happy hours were popular on Fridays — and every other day of the week.

During one happy hour in the Pan Am building, a girlfriend and I met the founder and vice president of a large advertising agency. Before we left, he handed us his business card and said we should apply for work at his agency.

A few weeks later, I decided to apply, writing on the employment application that the vice president was a good friend. I was practically hired on the spot.

On my first day at work, I poked my head into his office and asked whether he remembered me. I told him I had mentioned his name when I applied for the job — which was fine with him, he said.

He had an open-door policy, so I stopped by often just to chat.

People watch *Mad Men* because of the office scandals, but my experience suggested otherwise.

Were the show truly based on an average day at an ad

Have an essay?

We invite readers of all ages to submit a personal essay of musings or reflections for First Person. The guidelines:

► A range of styles and subjects (but no political/opinion pieces) is encouraged, with a preference for content of a topical nature.

► Your writing must be original and previously unpublished. It can be funny or serious, local or global, but it must be your own.

► A submission should run no longer than 18 column inches (about 700 words).

► No pay is provided. No publication guarantee is granted.

► All text is subject to editing.

► The writer should be identified by name, age, occupation, hometown and phone number. Anyone selected for publication will be asked to supply a photograph or have a photo taken.

► A submission used becomes the property of *The Dispatch*; it cannot be reproduced elsewhere without our permission.

Send submissions by mail to:

Mary Lynn Plageman,
Managing Editor/Features
The Dispatch
34 S. 3rd St.
Columbus, OH 43215

Or email.....talking@dispatch.com

agency five decades ago, it would undoubtedly prove less exciting.

Like staring at a clock, waiting for happy hour.

Melodee Currier, 64, of Dublin left New York in 1968 to marry a public-relations executive and start a family.

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