

The American Reporter Digital Daily - Media Giraffe Profile

The American Reporter Digital Daily

Joe Shea - Editor-In-Chief

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About

Joe Shea is a name to know in journalism. He is the creator and editor-in-chief of the first-ever digital daily newspaper, The American Reporter, and is also known by his past work in the journalism field and as a community activist. Shea has had a long-time stint in reporting at such organizations as the Village Voice, L.A. Weekly, and CBS Television, and, years ago, also partnered with a friend to write The Beverly Hills Goldbook, a series of travel books exploring many great cities of the world. Shea may also be recognized as the man who took on the Communications Indecency Act in the 1997 Supreme Court Case, *Shea v. Reno*, which he won for his stand against government censorship over the internet.

A native of Goshen, New York, Shea knew from a very young age that he wanted to be a journalist. From giving faux news reports as a child in his rural farmhouse, to his growing interest as a teen where he started his career in youth politics, Shea has been involved in the journalism field for as long as he can remember. His motivation for community activism and politics came from his grandfather, John Shea, who was elected Sheriff of New York in 1909, and his uncle, William Shea, who was elected in 1954 to the New York State bench.

Shea received his first big chance in reporting when he covered the Harlem riots on the night Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. died and his submission to the Village Voice was chosen over 18 others for publication. He also worked for the Village Voice as a freelance war correspondent in Northern Ireland, India, Vietnam and the Philippines, and was responsible in 1976 for the withdrawal of President Ford's nomination of Patrick Delaney to the Securities Exchange Commission, after he revealed inconsistencies in Delaney's resume in an article written for the Village Voice.

In 1995, at a time when journalists started to worry about their futures in the declining newspaper business, Joe Shea and others took action to change what they feared news media may become. The American Reporter digital daily newspaper was started on April 10, 1995 with the intent of "giving reporters direct interest in their work," said Shea.

The first efforts to create the digital newspaper were taken back when Shea was responsible for a journalism community message board; the content of which, caught interest from journalists nationwide. A single message Shea sent out in response to a newspaper reporter, commented that they should start their own paper. Within over 30 reporters wrote back right away, all wanting to help undertake the project.

Because of Shea's background as a long-time reporter and the connections he has kept from his run in the journalism field, the team of people which came together to work for the American Reporter was vast and credible. There have been first-time writers fresh out of college along with Pulitzer prize-winners, all of whom, Shea readily credited in the creation of such a progressive news organization. One such person responsible for support is Bill Densmore, the director and editor of Media Giraffe, who provided the digital paper with LISTSERV capability in 1995 through 1998, as well as their reader registration and original functioning Website. "I have a great many people to be grateful to for their invaluable help over the years, but none more so than Bill Densmore," said Shea.

11 years later, The American Reporter is still recognized as the first ever digital daily newspaper and now has over 5,000 articles posted at one time and has about 350 people who have equity in writing for them. The paper used to be an affiliate of The Society of Professional Journalists but now holds no political or corporate affiliation. Each story carried by the paper earns equity for the correspondent in profits from advertising and subscriptions, and income when their stories sell to other newspapers. It is still one of the few newspapers where the journalists, themselves, own the paper.

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