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To Blair Summer School Of Journalism

Young Editor Wins Scholarship

By EDNA GUNDERSEN

Administrators at Ysleta High School call him the "typewriter-happy journalist."

He's 16-year-old Sergio Arturo Troncoso, winner of the Blair Summer School of Journalism scholarship sponsored by The El Paso Times and The F. E. Gannet Newspaper Foundation. The scholarship furnishes \$800 for tuition fees, all travel costs, expenses for books and a side trip to Washington, D.C. Troncoso will attend various journalism classes from June 25 to July 29 in Blairstown, N.J.

And he's rarin' to go. A junior at Ysleta, Troncoso has served for the past year as editorial editor of the biweekly student newspaper, Pow Wow. Next fall, he'll become editor, and he says the Blair School opportunity will provide "the most important aspect of journalism — experience."

"I'm happy and grateful for the chance," he adds. "Journalism has helped me a lot. Not just in my writing, but in speaking and getting along with people. The things I've learned will be an asset in any field."

Though Troncoso's background in journalism is fairly extensive by high school standards — he's been writing actively for Pow Wow since his freshman year — he has not made a career commitment. In addition to newspaper writing, he's considering the paths of law and political science. He hopes to attend Columbia University in New York or Harvard University in Cambridge, Mass.

The tall, lanky native El Pasoan, a member of Who's Who in American High Schools, says encouragement from family members involved in journalism led him to seek work on the school newspaper. His 19-year-old sister, Diane, was Pow Wow editor when Troncoso hopped on the bandwagon, and his brother, 18-year-old Rudy, was sports editor. But the greatest influence probably came from his grandfather, Santiago Troncoso, who was publisher of El Dia, the first daily newspaper in Juarez.

However, it was enjoyment and challenge rather than family tradition that caused Troncoso to stick with his newswriting activities.

"It was my own doing to stay on Pow Wow," he insists. "Nobody ever pushed me into journalism. I tried it and I liked it."

What's the attraction? Surprisingly, it's neither glory nor power that pleases Troncoso.

"I enjoy the pressure of deadlines," he says bluntly. "I like sweating it out. To me, it's not like work at all; it's like a really tough game. It's also rewarding to see your work in print. It makes you realize you've accomplished something."

After serving as Pow Wow's news editor and feature editor, Troncoso had some reservations about accepting the position as editorial editor, a job, he surmised, that might subject him to much criticism and ire of fellow classmates. Unexpectedly, the reverse occurred. Troncoso wrote editorials that seemed harmonious with student sentiments. He won more admiration than resentment.

"If I could prove my point, I never got any flack," he explains. "You have to be diplomatic about editorial writing. You have to be responsible for your claims and attacks and you better have facts to back them up. Also, I'm careful not to embarrass people or make a fool of myself. Most people say they're in agreement with my point of view."

Troncoso had delved into almost every subject that affects modern teen-agers — from sex education to marijuana laws to plummeting Scholastic Aptitude Test scores to school spirit and student apathy. He's examined many national and local political issues, including the Panama Canal treaty and confrontations between illegal aliens and U.S. Border Patrol agents.

He explains his attraction to controversial topics with, "I like to argue a lot. Politics gets people talking, arguing and understanding. And I like to get involved and keep in touch with what's happening

in the world."

By monitoring school activities and comparing them to the "real world," Troncoso says he has discovered a sad dilemma — that contemporary high school systems are not preparing students adequately for careers and survival. But part of the blame, he adds, must be placed on the students themselves, who seem to lack drive.

"Even I can remember when school was harder and more challenging," he says. "Now, school is very easy and you don't learn as much; you don't have to spend much time studying. The classes just aren't very demanding. But if you really want to learn, you can. It's up to individual motivation."

The growing lack of concern and direction, Troncoso says, can be seen in today's declining newspaper readership.

"People don't want to put out the extra effort — the thinking process reading requires. It's easier to sit back and watch news on television because it's all done for you. People are getting lazy."

The lackadaisical syndrome apparently also has crept into the Pow Wow newsroom, resulting in frustration felt by a handful of busy bees, including Troncoso, who have become annoyed at languid staffers.

"Sometimes, I wish I could do the whole newspaper myself," Troncoso says with irritation. "I see so many mistakes and weak spots. Some staffers don't seem to care."

But Troncoso is not without hope. As next year's editor, he plans to run a tight ship replete with hard-working crewmen. And he intends to continue writing when time permits.

"The paper needs a lot of improvement," he contends. "I'm going to manage it the best I can. I'm optimistic."

Troncoso is the son of Rodolfo and Bertha Troncoso of 9301 San Lorenzo. He has two brothers, Rudy, 18, and Oscar, 14, and a sister, Diana.



SERGIO ARTURO TRONCOSO
... "typewriter-happy journalist"

—Times Staff Photo