

WIFVV INTERVIEW WIFVV INTERVIEW WIFVV INTERVIEW WIFVV INTERVIEW WIFVV

Joyce Thierry and Michelle Demers

After four and five years on the WIFVV Newsletter, respectively, editors Joyce Thierry and Michelle Demers have handed over the reins, the return address stamp, and the remains of two bottles of red wine. The two reminisce about the road they've travelled.

Joyce Thierry: After five years, what's your favourite Newsletter memory?

Michelle Demers: It's not so much a particular event or issue, but that we accomplished what we set out to do. When Sharon [Gibbon] and I first took over, there was very little content and it was aimed at what I call WASPs - White Anglo Saxon Producers. We wanted the Newsletter to be a voice for the whole membership; we wanted to hear from writers and technical women, from lesbians and women of color. I'm also proud of the friendships that developed between myself and Sharon, and then between you and me. The Newsletter has been very much a blessing in that respect. How about you?

JT: I remember that first meeting at your place - I was absolutely terrified. The hand-over was fraught with difficulties and yet it was assumed I knew what I was doing. You were my saving grace.

MD: It was a baptism by fire for me, too. I knew only a little about printing and design at the beginning. I still cringe at the mistakes I made while learning. Like the issue where the pages are all in the wrong order (I was still learning Quark). Oh, and how we kept forgetting to change the date.

JT: Then you were a good actress. I was blown away by your confidence and generosity.

MD: And I by yours. It's always difficult when you get a new boss - Sharon and I had worked so well together and I had a lot of apprehension about someone I had never met taking over. I remember thinking, "If she's a bitch I quit." But you turned out to be so much fun.

JT: Well, actually, I had made it a condition of joining the Board that I wouldn't do anything associated with writing - how naive was that? At my very first Board meeting, I somehow found myself agreeing to become the Newsletter Editor because I was a writer and Sharon was leaving. It was kind of like I went to Vegas and woke up married. But what a ride the last four years have been!

MD: Like that time at your place when we were doing the mailing and you had bought wine - as usual - and a volunteer accidentally spilled a glass of it over a huge pile of already stuffed envelopes. We scrambled to clean up as many as we could but some we sent through anyway. I actually got one of them in my mail. I wonder what people must have thought of us then.

JT: Probably just figured we invited William S. Burroughs to the meeting.

MD: That's always my excuse. How else to explain how I ended up a writer?

JT: I hear ya. I started out doing biology field research. I was only a closet writer then because I didn't think I could make a living at it. But after my divorce I thought, "To hell with this, I'm

going to do what I want." Since then I've been a TV publicist and a producer's assistant, written documentary series, story edited and now have a healthy portfolio of spec scripts.

MD: My path here was circuitous as well. It's always been a tug of war with me, between my visual and literary sides - one has always been developed at the expense of the other. Then I met Paul Verhoeven, we struck up a friendship, and I gave feedback on a film he was developing. It was still years before I discovered my talent for screenwriting, but when I did, I realised I had found the perfect career that combined both skills.

JT: That's one of the things I love most

about TV - the eclectic variety of people.
MD: I love the fact that anything goes in this biz. On the down side, I have experienced a great deal of abuse in this industry and watched people violate every ethic known to humankind. I'll never understand why people think that in order to succeed it has to be at someone else's expense.

JT: It's true, we all have our battle scars, but I've also had a great number of really encouraging, supportive people who have mentored me and opened doors. This can be such a bizarre industry, we really need to help each other whenever possible. Like the way we do through WIFVV.

MD: WIFVV was a lifeline for me when I first came here. I was only in town a few months when I went to my first meeting and - kind of like you with the Board - found myself co-producing Shoot Out. Five years later I'm still writing the damn shot list. But I jest; it's been a great networking opportunity and my involvement with WIFVV has given me a very public face.

JT: My involvement with WIFVV began with a breakfast meeting six years ago. Since then I've been on numerous committees including a stint as President. You and I have both worn a variety of industry hats - from production office staff to writers to editors and, now, we're moving on. I'm heading off to India and Thailand for a year with my family to write a book and an MOW. And you? Which creative path is calling you at the moment? Writer or designer?

MD: Definitely writing. And maybe motherhood. And I'm going south. Before Christmas I had premonitions that I'd be moving to the States. In January, this was confirmed. I've had some preliminary offers to go to Los Angeles, and I have a new man in Vegas. How this is all going to pan out I have no idea, but I've reached a point in my life where I no longer try to control my destiny too much. I'm just looking forward to whatever adventure the Creator has planned for me!

JT: Ditto. I think that's the key to success in this industry. Leave yourself open to adventure and new opportunities.

“It was kind of like I went to Vegas and woke up married.”

- Joyce Thierry



International Women of Mystery (and Letters)
MICHELLE DEMERS (left) & JOYCE THIERRY (right)

Thanks to Joyce and Michelle on behalf of their readers for entertaining, informing and surprising us.
Love from the Newsletter Committee.