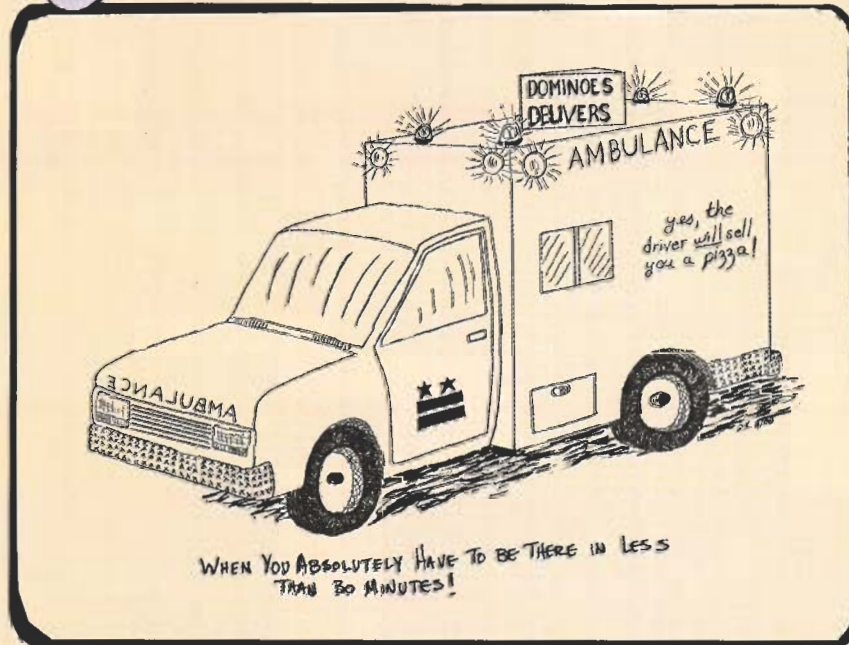


THE CARTOONIST AND THE FOURTH ESTATE



KING'S VERY FIRST CARTOON POKED FUN AT WASHINGTON, D.C.'S, INFAMOUSLY UNRELIABLE AMBULANCE SERVICE; ANOTHER, SHOWING AN INTERNET PORN FILTER BLOCKING A USER FROM VIEWING THE MONICA LEWINSKY REPORT, BROUGHT \$400 IN A CHARITY AUCTION AT THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB.



By Greg Rosenthal

DAVID KING CAME TO THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB IN 1990 WITH DREAMS OF BECOMING AN EDITORIAL CARTOONIST. AS HE EXPLAINED IT, "I HAVE A PRETTY GOOD WIT AND I CAN DRAW." HE'D BEEN WORKING AT CHADWICK'S, A WASHINGTON, D.C., RESTAURANT, WAITING TABLES WHILE WAITING FOR OPPORTUNITY TO KNOCK, BUT HE WAS READY TO MOVE ON.

"I had been at Chadwick's for awhile, getting itchy, when I found a job waiting tables at the press club," King said. "I figured if I had to wait tables while building my portfolio, it might as well be at the National Press Club, where I could meet people who could give me some exposure."

And meet people he has—although perhaps not in the capacity he expected. Armed with a degree in economics from UMUC, King has advanced quickly, now serving as the National Press Club's clubhouse manager, where he meets world leaders, celebrities, and authors on a daily basis.

"Just in September 2004, I saw [former Indiana University basketball coach] Bobby Knight, [Secretary of Defense] Donald Rumsfeld, [Secretary of Education] Rod Paige, [Secretary of the Treasury] John Snow, and [Secretary of Homeland Security] Tom Ridge," he said.

"In terms of meeting them or having a conversation, that's not my place," King added, modestly. "My role is to see them in and make sure their event goes smoothly." He is simply too busy to be star-struck.

In addition to running the National Press Club's formal dining room, The Fourth Estate, and its casual restaurant, The Reliable Source, King frequently coordinates events with the U.S. Secret Service to ensure the safety of high-profile guests. He has even doubled as club bouncer.

“When L. Paul Bremer [former administrator of Iraq’s Coalition Provisional Authority] was here in July 2003, someone got past us without press credentials and started yelling at him from the back of the room,” King said. “The man didn’t listen to me when I told him he was trespassing and was no longer welcome at the club. I had to give him a bear hug and carry him out of the room.” At 6 feet 4 inches and 180 pounds, King makes a tall and trim—but no less convincing—bouncer.

King also helps manage the club’s 10 conference rooms, which accommodate more than 200 events annually. All the rooms are equipped with robotically controlled cameras wired to transmit broadcast-quality signals anywhere in the world via satellite, fiber optics, or streaming Web video.

While King’s education has contributed to his success, his first few years in college would never have predicted it. Fresh out of high school, he enrolled at West Virginia’s Shepherd University (then Shepherd College) in 1976—and quickly ran into trouble.

But King still dreamed of becoming an editorial cartoonist, and from 1989 to 1993 he left college and his job at Merrill Lynch in order to devote more time to cartooning. His very first cartoon showed a Domino’s pizza delivery vehicle transporting hospital patients—a not-so-gentle job at Washington, D.C.’s, infamous emergency-response system, which most certainly could *not* guarantee on-time “delivery.”

During that period, King continued to wait tables to pay the bills, but new responsibilities were looming. While working at Chadwick’s, King had met his wife-to-be, Anastasia. And change was afoot at the National Press Club. The board of governors threw out the old management team, brought in two new managers, and promoted King from waiter to manager of The Fourth Estate.

“Once I was promoted I got interested in pursuing my degree, combining my floor skills in food and beverage with my background in economics and accounting,” King said. He enrolled at

THE UNLIKELY STORY OF A WOULD-BE EDITORIAL CARTOONIST WHO CAME TO RUB SHOULDERS WITH CELEBRITIES AND THE POLITICAL ELITE AT ONE OF WASHINGTON’S MOST FAMOUS HAVENS—THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB.

“I’d been raised in a conservative Christian home and had a pretty sheltered life,” he said. “I’d never gone to prom, never had a beer, and was completely unprepared for the experiences college offered. I lasted two years before flunking out.”

King soon atoned for that false start, though. He enrolled at Montgomery College, where he earned high marks for three semesters before transferring to the University of Maryland, College Park. There, he ran into trouble again, but for completely different reasons.

“I’m smart, but I was supporting myself and going to school at same time,” he said. “At College Park, I was taking daytime classes and I was working as a waiter in the evenings. When I started working two jobs, my grades went down.”

At the time, King was sharing a house with a UMUC economics graduate working for Merrill Lynch who helped King get a job as a branch office representative. “I worked there days, waited tables at night, and took all the classes I could,” he said.

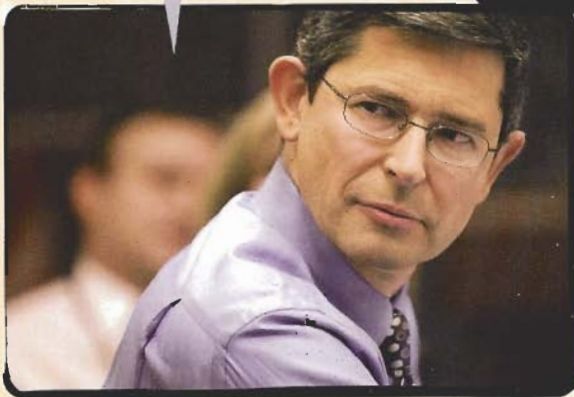
UMUC in 1994. John Bloom, the club’s general manager, quickly recognized King’s commitment and discipline.

“Dave is one of the few people I know who tried to better himself through education and stuck with it,” Bloom said. “A lot of people come into my office all gung-ho about taking courses. But after a semester or two, [their enthusiasm] sort of fades away. Everyone has a reason for why they can’t do it. The people who face the same challenges but manage to get it done anyway are the people you admire a little bit more.”

King, along with Executive Chef Jim Swenson, began offering Bloom fresh ideas for attracting members to the restaurants—karaoke, live bands, and Wednesday night lobster dinners. “When you have two restaurants with a club this size, it’s hard to keep both busy all the time,” Bloom said.

The club had long hosted “book rap” events, where visiting authors discuss their books, and King had started wine appreciation dinners at The Fourth Estate. Gauging the popularity of both

AS CLUBHOUSE MANAGER FOR THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB, DAVID KING MANAGES THE CLUB'S BANQUET AND KITCHEN OPERATIONS, OVERSEEING MORE THAN 2,000 BANQUET EVENTS AND 40,000 A LA CARTE COVERS EACH YEAR, A TOTAL OF \$7.5 MILLION OF CATERING AND A LA CARTE SALES.



events, King and Swenson suggested to Bloom that the club marry the two events, and the club's regular "book rap/wine dinners" were born.

"We had [celebrity chefs and authors] Jacques Pepin and Marcus Samuelson visit," he said. "They'd be out promoting their newest books and they'd come in, the chef would choose five to eight dishes, The Fourth Estate manager [Stratton Davis] would put together glasses of wine for each course, and the famous chef would talk about the course and what was in it and why it tasted the way it did."

Swenson is unequivocal about the results. "We had to work a long time to drag people into the restaurants," he said. "The wine dinners, the dinner specials, changing the menus daily—it all worked."

Through it all, King continued to draw—albeit a bit less formally. One illustration that King drew for a press club flyer advertising that week's lobster dinner showed a maitre d' perplexed that no one was calling for reservations while, behind the podium, a lobster had snipped the phone line with its claw. Another, more politically topical cartoon—showing an Internet porn filter blocking a user from accessing the Monica Lewinsky report—sold for \$400 at a "Cartoons and Cocktails" auction that the press club hosted to raise money for charity.

It might not have happened quite as he expected, but in a way, David King's dreams have come true.

King, who graduated from UMUC in 2000, currently lives in Washington, D.C.'s, Glover Park neighborhood with his wife, Anastasia—who now serves as creative director for the Peace Corps—and the couple's four-year-old daughter, Elise.