

**Two apology emails from Columbia Journalism Review reporter, Bruce Porter:
One to Beata Mostafavi, *Flint Journal* reporter, the other to Porter's source, Marcy**

> -----Original Message-----
> From: "Bruce Porter" <bp9@columbia.edu>
> To: "Beata Mostafavi" (address redacted)
> Date: 01/19/11 10:30 AM
> Subject: Marcy
>

Dear Beata—

I have no defense for what I did, just a reason, so please let me tell you what happened after we talked at the library that Friday.

The following day, through an amazing set of circumstances, we found Marcy's name and saw that she was living in Hawaii, married with four children, and that afternoon went to the house where she grew up on [REDACTED], thinking to ask around the neighborhood if anyone remembered the family.

Dan was in the street shooting me as I walked up to ring the bell, and this friendly middle-aged woman answered the door, trying to keep three or four large lively dogs from racing out of the house. We're looking for someone who remembers the [REDACTED] who used to live here, I told her.

Well, I'm a [REDACTED], she said, matter of factly. I'm [REDACTED].

You're Marcy!? I said, practically shouting at her. Really? I'm Bruce Porter. Remember me? Remember the Newsweek article a long time ago?

So that was the big moment. Suddenly, before we'd had any chance to prepare for it, we'd found her. We were both truly stunned.

We spent another hour or so talking. She was still very angry over the Newsweek article, which had greatly upset her parents, her mother especially. I had to tell her it was all going to happen again, that the Journal was running a story tomorrow about our search. And that upset her some more. She felt the Newsweek piece had presented her as not a nice person and that more publicity would carry that impression into the present.

Eventually she calmed down a little, but after we left we found the Journal article on the website and saw that not only was there the story, but the WNEW interview was also being made available, a highly emotional and personal phone call that the radio reporter had duped her into making on air. That was when I called your office phone to protest.

That Saturday night Marcy called me at the hotel, a call I dreaded. Now she was really upset, having listened to the tape. The calamity I had once visited on her I was doing all over again. We

talked for more than an hour about the situation, and she agreed to have lunch the next day and drive us around Flint.

Before we flew back on Sunday I remember the last thing her telling us was that she was not happy being identified as living in Flint, that people would call, bother her, etc. I hasten to add, however, that she did not ask me to tell you she was still married and living in Hawaii.

So anyway that was on my mind the following Wednesday I think when we talked on the phone. I should have done what you suggested, to tell the truth and we devise some way to deal with it. Instead, of course, I didn't. I resolved not to lie directly—I'm not so sure I was completely successful in that—but to answer questions in a way that no one would know she was now living back in Flint.

Again, I apologize for what I did and am sorry for all the grief I must have caused you at the paper. At Columbia I frequently use ethical lapses on my part as bad examples for the class to thrash out. This is probably the worst thing I've done, and I hope you'll forgive me.

Best,

Bruce

-----Original Message-----

From: Bruce Porter <bp9@columbia.edu>

To: Marcy (address redacted)

Sent: Sun, Jan 23, 2011 5:19 pm

Dear Marcy—I wanted to write to apologize for the not-very-good job I did dealing with the Flint Journal when they called to ask me what happened to our search. I should have leveled with the reporter Beata Mostafavi instead of leaving her with the impression that you were still living in Hawaii. That wasn't good for anyone, as it turned out, and I really regret it. Usually, believe it or not, I have pretty good judgment about things, but that was a serious mistake and I hope you'll forgive me.

I also wanted to tell you that, last week, shortly after talking to Chris, Dan was taken to the intensive care unit at the hospital in Santa Monica with a bleeding ulcer. He lost two-thirds of his blood and for a day was in very bad shape. It was a scary moment; his wife flew out. But he's ok now and today went home to his apartment out there. You read about these things happening to other people, then when it strikes so closet to home it feels unreal.

In the mail I'm sending you a copy of a New Times Magazine article I wrote about adopting our daughter Hana from China. She was on the cover. You had expressed interest in that and I thought you'd be interested.

Hope your winter isn't too severe, and, again, that the attention from the Journal fades into the background.

Best,

Bruce