



Nataliya Vasilyeva

News Reporter, Associated Press, Moscow Bureau (LSJ PG 2007)

Lorna on Nataliya: Nataliya had such apparent drive, she was like a rocket revving up to be fired. I've noticed that Russian women have an intriguing mix of femininity and drive, and that when they have an ambition they approach it strategically. Nataliya was no exception. Instead of bursting into tears, or sulking, or demanding another tutor when she didn't get the grade she hoped for from me, she handled the situation in a business-like manner. In other words she behaved like a professional journalist.

In addition to this it was clear that Nataliya had a natural reporter's mind, which made it very exciting to work with her. Instead of announcing (as some students do) that if only she could cover a major political story or get to a war zone she'd do a great story, she found stories everywhere, from community centres and libraries to academic research on migrants in the UK. That's why I knew she'd shine and get to do the big stories some day.

Nataliya on Lorna: The LSJ was the place that gave me confidence in my abilities and also strengthened my resolve to become a journalist. Lorna's tutoring engrained professional ethics in me.

Before my first one-to-one session with Lorna I heard a rumour from another group that she was tough, but I discovered that this meant she was frank. I did feel disappointed that she didn't like some of my features or reviews, but I came to view this as a learning experience since the feedback was specific, rather than veiled or vague.

Her emphasis on being professional made any cheating virtually impossible. I remember working on one feature where I didn't have the time (or, most likely, felt too lazy) to get the quote I needed, and at some point I thought: 'It's so simple. It's just the kind of thing anyone might say.' And I decided to cheat and make up the quote.

But on the night before submitting the story, I realised that it wouldn't work. I remember thinking: 'Lorna will know, she'll spot that I've cheated.' So I had to walk into some restaurant (I don't even remember what the story was about), and get the quote I needed from the manager. This was the moment when I realised that I can't cheat in this job. I can proudly say now that I've never cheated in my stories since then.

Another thing I remember is her telling the class during the very first group tutorial session that features can be easy, which came as quite a shock because at that point I was thinking of elaborate pieces in the Guardian and the Independent as an unattainable standard. But as soon as she explained the basic 'formula' for writing features, namely getting the reader interested, the whole thing seemed easier and I soon found myself writing the stuff that I as a reader I would like to see in newspapers

Nataliya's life as a journalist in Russia: I've been working at the Associated Press in Moscow since June 2008 when I was hired as a junior business reporter. At that time, I had zero experience in business journalism, but I got familiar with the subject fairly quickly.

As the AP's Moscow bureau was getting smaller (halving from 10 to 5 staff between 2008 and 2012), I became involved in general news reporting. At the moment, I do general news and whatever big business news comes my way. Over the past few years, I've covered the 2008 financial downturn, the 2011 Russian parliamentary elections and the 2012 presidential election campaigns, the massive protest rallies in the winter of 2011/2012, terrorist attacks such as the 2011 Domodedovo airport bombing, the 2010 Moscow underground bombing, the manned spacecraft launches from Baikonur, Kazakhstan, and dozens of other top stories.

Some of my features, including last year's investigative piece on disastrous oil spills in Russia, and a first-person story about the fall of the Soviet Union, have received recognition within the AP and Moscow's journalist community.