



## Pip McCormac

Commissioning Editor (Lifestyle), *Sunday Times Style*, columnist for *Attitude*, regular contributor to *Elle Decoration*, *Glamour*, *Stylist*, *Harrods Magazine*, *BA High Life*, [AHICA.COM](http://AHICA.COM), [StyleJunkee.com](http://StyleJunkee.com), former Lifestyle writer, *Grazia* (LSJ PG Diploma 2004)

**Lorna on Pip:** Whenever I meet a new group of students I find myself looking at the very spot where Pip used to sit lapping up my every single word in lectures with acute concentration. I knew from the first time he sat in a lecture with me that he had zero self-doubt, and that is a sure route to success. Zero self-doubt isn't the same thing as self-confidence, as self-confidence can translate as self-delusion, and self-confidence without drive is wasted.

I can't remember exactly what my question was, but I do remember Pip's very first answer in a lecture. He outlined the different ways in which several publications profiled Katie Price, including how she was photographed. With the exception of two other people, everybody else in his class sniggered. Yet his answer was proof that he was on his way to joining the media because at the start of the course he genuinely loved it (as opposed to being in love with the idea of being part of it).

Before the course ended Pip applied to do some writing for a legal publication. I overheard another student who was also applying say that Pip would be no competition as he wasn't interested in 'serious' subjects. Yet I knew Pip would get the work, just as I knew that it would be temporary and that his ambition to work for a lifestyle title would very soon be fulfilled. Pip didn't make the classic mistake many wannabe journalists make: to wait for that dream job to come up. His attitude was to take any paid writing opportunity, whilst also applying for work experience and positions on his dream titles.

A lot of people starting out assume that writing for consumer press is easy, that there's nothing to it, and they don't need to work at it. Pip, on the other hand, wanted to learn as much as he could from me. When a student shows me respect, it's a sure route to getting the most out of me, and the best from me, including an amazing reference or recommendation.

**Pip on Lorna:** I still use the things I learnt from Lorna at LSJ on an almost daily basis. I remember turning up and assuming that all women's magazines were the same, and being shocked when Lorna said that the way *Glamour* covered a story would be different from how *Cosmopolitan* did it. I still remember this when I read various magazines and try to work out what their angle is, and as I write for them I always try to make sure I fit into their agenda or point of view.

Most of my classmates were scared of Lorna. She took no nonsense, and yet seemed to approve of fluffy subjects which my classmates thought were ridiculous, such as when I wrote about *Coronation Street*. I loved it – she was a published writer who had written for titles I could only dream of contributing to, and to me she knew everything, and was firm, but fair, and so full of knowledge. The other person in my class who responded positively to Lorna now works in the national consumer press in women's weeklies.

## **Pip's favourite Lorna Rules on successful freelancing and how to get ahead in journalism:**

These are the following key points Lorna taught me about journalism that I still refer to regularly:

- Within the first two paragraphs of any article, there will be one sentence which exactly sums up the angle of the piece, and you must remember this when writing a feature.
- Write a feature with the publication it's intended for in front of you. Copy the way they structure it, and the tone they use.
- When you're pitching to publications, pitch for a specific section, as proof you understand how the magazine works.
- **Don't pitch feature ideas as a freelancer on Mondays. It will seem desperate, like you've been waiting all weekend.**
- If all you read is London Life (a free London paper at the time) you might as well take your journalism diploma and throw it in the bin. I remember Lorna literally throwing a copy of the paper into the bin as she said this. Dramatically. With a loud BANG.
- Absorb everything in the media. Now that newspapers are available online there is no excuse.
- Smile, and be polite at all times, especially when you are on work experience and being asked to make tea.
- Magazines like to pigeonhole writers, and like to go to an expert on an area when they're commissioning writers. Specialise early, and stick to it.
- On a press trip, there will always be one person on the trip that nobody likes, and if you haven't worked out who it is within the first half an hour, it's you. I quote this ALL the time – particularly on press trips, always in reference to the one person the rest of us don't like.

All of the above is true, and forms the basis of any advice I would give to anyone going into journalism.

**Pip's golden tip:** If you are starting off now, train as a digital journalist, not a print one. It's the future, and where all jobs will soon lie. Anyone who picks up those skills now will be in high demand in a few years' time.