

# Photographer leaves Jamestown for national exposure

Mick Cochran looks for images you won't see elsewhere

By Susan Carroll

Former Jamestown Mick Cochran got his start in the newspaper business writing obituaries for his local paper. Today, he shapes the images that grace the pages of USA TODAY as director of photography for the nation's top-selling paper.

Cochran joined USA TODAY — based in McLean, Va. — in June after more than a decade with the Providence Journal. There, he served as art director and, most recently, editor for technology and development, where he was responsible for all aspects of newsroom technology, including digital imaging, remote transmissions, and archiving.

"In Providence, I had taken on a more technological role and I really want to get back into photography completely," says Cochran of his decision to leave the Journal. The move was also prompted by his desire for his work to take on a more national focus.

"With USA TODAY, there is no 'hometown' to cover," says Cochran. "Every story has to have a national impact."

In his new position, Cochran manages 16 picture editors who work on the paper's four sections: news, life, money, and sports. Plus, he oversees a staff of six photographers throughout the country and six additional national contract photographers. Also at his disposal are hundreds of freelance photographers, as well as pictures from the wire services.

While the paper has a lot of work to choose from, what the editors are looking for in a shot, explains Cochran, is something different: a picture that won't be on the pages of any other news publication. That effort is echoed



Mick Cochran is the director of photography at USA TODAY. Behind him are the Gannett and USA TODAY corporate offices in McLean, Va. Photo by Greg L'Heureaux

in his department's push toward more photojournalism and less portraits and sports pictures.

"The paper's focus on news is reflected in our photo selections," says Cochran. "We want our pictures to have depth as well. We want photo reportage."

The call is one Cochran is well-equipped to answer. "After 35 years in the business, it's easy for me to look at a whole take and figure out what has the most impact."

Cochran's instinct guides him regardless of the subject. From football's bowl games and the Academy Awards to disasters like Hurricane Katrina, his photographers cover all national events. And while Cochran works behind a desk much of the time, his role also takes him into the field occasionally.

This fall Cochran went to the Emmys, television's awards for programming excellence, and in February, he will head to Torino,

Italy, for three weeks with 60-plus photographers, writers, and editors to cover the 20th Olympic Winter Games.

"I'll be heading up the mountain coverage, where the skiing events will take place," says Cochran, who notes another team will be based in the city to cover sports in that venue such as skating.

In Italy, Cochran will be able to take on a more hands-on role, helping to edit and transmit pictures to the paper. The technology that enables him to send images instantly from his laptop is just one of the technological advancements that's changed Cochran's profession over the past few decades.

"There's no such thing as film anymore, no more need for darkrooms when you travel," says Cochran. "It's all digital."

Cochran thinks the shift has been a good one. "The quality of the digital photography today sur-

passes everything we've done before," he says.

His move from writing to photography has also been a change in the right direction. He graduated in 1970 with a bachelor's degree in English from Illinois College, where he picked up photography while on the newspaper staff. After a stint with the Jacksonville Journal in Jacksonville, Ill., he joined the State Journal-Register in Springfield, Ill., as a general assignment reporter.

"It was there that I really got my feet wet in writing and photography," says Cochran, whose last position at the Journal-Register was photo and graphics editor. He decided then that he wanted to focus on photography and design.

"It's what I've always loved and still do," says Cochran.

After living in Jamestown for 15 years, Cochran and his wife now reside in Reston, Va. He still owns his home in Jamestown where his son, Marcus, currently lives. Among the pictures that adorn the walls of Cochran's new home is a reminder of his former life on the island: a shot of him sailing in Dutch Harbor. The photographer? His son.

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## Teens must register for tables at the Teen Holiday Craft Fair

The second annual teen craft fair will be held at the Jamestown library on Saturday, Dec. 10, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Teen artisans who want to sell their craft items need to register by Saturday, Dec. 3 at 4:45 p.m. There is a \$10 fee for half a table. All proceeds from the sale of table space will go toward funding teen programs at the library. There is room for a maximum of 20 teen crafters.

To register, visit the library or call 423-7280.

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