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## Supreme Dedication

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## Supreme Dedication

April 01, 2009 | Teresa Dunham

*The FOX News Channel bureau in Washington, D.C., is filled with bursts of split-second, adrenaline-driven urgency. Reporters type quickly, keeping their tiny desktop news screens in their peripheral vision as they work. Personalities hurry in and out of a small make-up room and rush away for live shots in different studios or at remote locations — and in the midst of it all is Liberty University Class of 1993 alumna Shannon Bream. “Liberty Journal” staff traveled to D.C. recently to meet Bream and learn about her high-profile job as a FOX News Supreme Court reporter.*

FOX News reporter Shannon Bream is poised and articulate on camera. Every hair is in place; her wardrobe is professional, and her voice is steady — but the moments leading up to her live shots aren’t always peaceful.

“We may get a ruling from the Supreme Court where I’m running out on the [court] steps and having to digest a 100-page opinion in five minutes and be on the air explaining it in a way that makes sense to the viewers,” she said.

The final day of the court term in 2008 was one of those moments. Bream knew justices were going to deliver a controversial opinion on Second Amendment rights, so she laced up her running shoes and started sprinting the moment the case holding the court opinion was unlatched.

“Every camera from every network and every local station was lined up outside the Supreme Court, and it was my goal that I wanted to be the first reporter on with that information,” she

said.

Breathless, she glanced at the document and hurriedly absorbed its contents. Seeing the name of the justice who authored the opinion, she immediately knew what the court had decided — and she was the first person to deliver the information on-air.

“You just go on adrenaline so much,” she said.

## **From Courtroom to Newsroom**

Bream, who earned a law degree from Florida State University after graduating from LU, spent several years practicing law before transitioning into the broadcast world. Some colleagues called her crazy for leaving a prestigious, high-paying job for the uncertainty, long hours and shrinking paychecks of broadcast news — but she took a leap of faith.



“I’d always had a news bug. I just wasn’t sure how I would ever make a career out of it,” she said.

After graduating from law school, she started practicing law full time in Tampa. She also had a chance to work on a couple of stories for the ABC affiliate there — and her passion for broadcast news grew until she realized it might be time to make a career change.

“My husband, Sheldon, and I really spent a year in intense prayer and discussion about the move and sought counsel from people we trusted,” she said. “I’m a firm believer that the Lord gives us passions that He has equipped us to pursue and plants that seed in our hearts.”

By the time Bream made her decision to leave law, she said God had provided so much peace that she wasn’t afraid of the future.

“The first job I took — very unglamorous,” she recalled.

She made coffee, clipped newspapers, did entry-level tasks and took a huge pay cut — but she was just happy to be in the newsroom. Soon the news director there gave Bream her first big break when he told her she could do some on-air reporting as long as she continued performing her entry-level duties.

“I hadn’t even been there a year when the two bosses above me left the station, and the new guy who came in and took over told me I was terrible, that I would never make it in television and that I never should have quit being an attorney,” she said.

Bream found a private editing bay and cried, but she came to a conclusion: “I knew that I had a love and a passion for news, so I thought, ‘OK, I need to get better, and I need to not give up.’”

Even before the new boss offered his critique, she’d been told that her voice was too high-pitched. She signed with an agent to market her anyway, but she spent several months without a job.

“It is a competitive business, and there are a lot of ups and downs,” she said.

After a very bleak time, she got her first job anchoring the news for a CBS affiliate in Charlotte, N.C., and spent three years there. Then she got a call from NBC asking if she’d be interested in joining one of their affiliates in D.C. She accepted and began a promising career at that channel.

One day she met Brit Hume, who was managing editor of the FOX bureau in D.C. at the time — and she and her husband, Sheldon Bream (’93), both told Hume that working for FOX was her dream. Telling her not to get her hopes up, Hume explained that he received lots of tapes every day, but her law background caught his attention.

She sent him a sample of her work — and since November 2007 she’s been in the FOX bureau.

“I came here and started what really is for me a dream job,” she said.

## **Spreading the News**



For Bream, no two days are ever the same at FOX News.

“I usually find out the day before or the night before what my assignment will be for the day,” she said.

When a significant case is before the court, she’s there observing the arguments of brilliant legal minds — but when court isn’t in session, she could be assigned to anything, and the hours tend to vary.

“Some days I’m at the White House. Some days I’m on Capitol Hill. It is literally so different every day that I can go days without ever being at this desk because I’m out on assignment somewhere,” she said, motioning toward her work area adorned only with a “Nacho Libre” poster. “It’s always a challenge, and you’re learning a new subject or a new topic every day.”

When the “Liberty Journal” visited Bream, she was working on several short studio reports that were nixed because a White House press conference took precedence — but Bream handled it in stride and used the extra moments to explain her job. “I really am a stickler about writing my

own product. ... I think you get a better understanding of the story, and you can communicate it better when you've done all of that investigation yourself," she said.

Though she gathers the news herself, each minute of broadcast requires the cooperation of dozens of people, from producers to make-up artists and people in New York City. The team at FOX has strengthened her professionally, she said, and she's more at ease in front of the camera than ever before.

"After you've been through years of the prompter going down or the script disappearing or the story changing at the last minute, I think you gain confidence ... that you're going to be able to handle it," she said.

No matter what happens, faith gets her through the day.

"I think there are both bold and subtle ways of living out my faith in the world I work in. This job can be all-consuming, and finding balance is the toughest thing. It's tough when you really want an assignment and it goes to someone else or you flub a live report. My mantra all day long is, 'It's part of His plan.' It's a fight to keep my mind focused on the big picture, on eternity — but that's the only thing that really matters at the end of the day," she said.

## **A Liberty Success Story**

Bream started her freshman year at LU in 1988 at age 17.

"I remember being so excited when my mom dropped me off there. I couldn't wait to experience college life and do my own thing, and I remember two weeks went by and I didn't call home, and my mom was so upset," she recalled.

LU automatically felt like home, Bream said, and she made many lifelong friends and strengthened her walk with Christ. "My time at Liberty gave me intensely deep roots in my faith. It was a solid place to be when I had questions about the faith I'd grown up in, as I was making it personal for myself. I learned what a treasure spiritually-strong friends and mentors are as you navigate the secular world," she said.

Though she considered broadcasting back then, Bream pursued a business degree because she felt that it was a more stable job market. LU didn't have a law school at the time, but her business degree eventually prepared her for the type of law she would practice — employment and labor law.

"So my business degree was a perfect fit for that. I still turn to it so much. I find that it really sticks with you, even after all of these years," said Bream.

Yet, she said, the best part about LU is that she met her husband on campus. She describes him as an amazingly supportive man, helping her accomplish her goals, and also a person who has achieved great feats by surviving a brain tumor and rising in his own career at the Washington Speakers Bureau.

When she returned to Liberty for Alumni Weekend in October 2008, Bream said wonderful memories flooded back to her and Sheldon.

“Every time I go back there’s a new building, a new program, a new major, a new sports team. It’s an amazing thing to see. I really was so emotional about it, seeing how far the school has come and knowing all the big dreams that are still ahead,” she said.

[Read the web exclusive about Bream's experiences on Inauguration Day 2009](#)