

[dream job]



Photo by Greer Rivera

WRITING IN THE SAND

BE JEALOUS OF ELLA ANDERSON '87.

The petite blonde lives in the U.S. Virgin Islands, where the ocean is clear blue and the temperature rarely dips below 80°. Most days, she can be found wearing sandy beach gear to the office. Oh, and her workday often includes brainstorming happy hours with her co-workers at *The St. John Sun Times*.

Sure, Anderson is living a dream, but her life hasn't always been a glamorous blend of good writing, white beaches and piña coladas. Her story begins on the uneven bricks of the College's campus.

At age 18, Anderson was incredibly ambitious. She set out to study studio art, but she abandoned the major when she realized she would never be *la crème de la crème* of the art world.

"I was competitive," she explains with a shrug. "I thought, *If I can't win, I don't want to play.*"

So she majored in urban studies and trucked through college in just three years. Following graduation, Anderson held down a myriad of jobs – some fabulous and some less so. But when she began writing freelance pieces for

magazines in Los Angeles, something clicked. She had found her calling.

Anderson quickly became passionate about writing. Her quick wit and observant eye captured life on the page, and she found herself approaching stories with a dogged tenacity.

"In this business, you persevere. You have to make that last call after you've already made ten," she says.

Finally, the ultra-competitive Anderson had stumbled upon something she could do better than anyone else.

A string of freelance gigs led Anderson to a job as an editorial assistant with the now-defunct *Dirt* magazine, where she rubbed elbows with the likes of then-editor Spike Jonze and his then-girlfriend, Sophia Coppola.

"All around me were these creative people, this creative environment," she recalls. Anderson thrived, publishing articles in both *Dirt* and another national publication, the teen-oriented *Sassy*.

Her words were read by thousands of people each month, and editors were praising her gutsy pitches. Then *Dirt* folded and Anderson was out of a job.

Although she continued to write on a freelance basis, Anderson soon found herself producing Web content for Yahoo, and then working as design team manager with Mattel.

"I made a lot of money," she admits. "But I missed being creative."

After a decade of working corporate jobs, she and her husband craved a change. On a whim, they traveled to the islands to scope out *The St. John Sun Times*, which was up for sale on Craigslist.

"It was this little hippie rag," she remembers. "It was kind of nutty, but it was fun to read. So I took a leap of faith and bought it."

With typical gusto, she's spent the past two years beefing up its reputation and circulation and changing it from a bi-monthly newspaper to a monthly news magazine. Now she's hoping to launch similar publications on nearby islands, where the water is just as clear and the sand just as warm.

With Anderson at the helm, *The St. John Sun Times* has a promising future as a franchise. After all, she plays to win. 🍷

– Bridget Herman '08