

ANCHORWOMAN

by Paul DiLella

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ANCHORWOMAN

A Ten Minute Comedy

by Paul DiLella

SYNOPSIS: Newbie Sally Shell must co-anchor the evening news with veteran Shelly Sommers, but Sally makes the mistake of criticizing Shelly. In retaliation, Shelly challenges Sally to a ratings duel in which the winner will be crowned "Queen of KDST Channel 6 News," and the loser must resign. During the broadcast, as tensions rise, each newscaster hurls insults and silly string, leaving the viewing audience to wonder, "Is this news or a reality show?"

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 females)

SHELLY SOMMERS (f)..... Veteran anchorwoman. 30s.
Vain. (46 lines)

SALLY SHELL (f) Newbie on the news. 20s.
Eager. (45 lines)

SUZY CRUZ (f) Offstage, A tekkie. 20s. Used to
 stars' ego-trips. *(3 lines)*

TIME: Present day.

SETTING: Newsroom of KDST (K-Dust Channel 6 News), Pahrump, Nevada. [Pahrump is pronounced "Pah-rump"]

SET

Newsroom of KDST (K-Dust) Channel 6 TV in Pahrump, Nevada, represented by a table and chairs. In the background there is either a station logo or a background of a generic exterior scene (i.e. city, landscape). Each newscaster has papers. A box of kleenex. Camera and teleprompter are mentioned but not actually seen.

COSTUMES

SHELLY – Professional attire befitting a newscaster.

SALLY – Informal clothing: a loud blouse which she covers with a borrowed sports coat, slacks, and pumps.

SUZY – T-shirt, jeans, skates/ Heelys, headset, whistle.

PROPS

- Small Paper Bag
- Box of Tissues
- 2 Cans of Silly String
- 2 Small Travel Pouches
- News Copy (Several Sheets for each Newscaster)
- Small Make-Up Kit (with Powder Puff)
- 3 Suzy's Messages
- Headset
- Gum
- Skates (Or Heelys)
- A Whistle

PRODUCTION HISTORY

An earlier version of *Anchorwoman* was telecast on KPVM-Channel 41 Pahrump on February 8, 2006 with the following cast:

Shelly Sommers ----- Leticia Mann
Sally Shell ----- Maggie Walsh

A revised version of *Anchorwoman* premiered at Pahrump Valley High School on April 25 and 26, 2008 with the following cast:

Shelly Sommers ----- Sadie Behar
Sally Shell ----- Paige Traficana
Suzy Cruz ----- Kira VanCleave

Dedication

To Maggie Walsh

Who gave me the idea at KPVM TV Channel 41 Pahrump.

AT RISE: *Two newscasters enter and prepare for the evening news: veteran SHELLY SOMMERS and newbie SALLY SHELL. Both have small travel pouches which they stash under the table. Called in to sub at the last minute, SALLY dons a sports coat to cover her too-casual blouse. SHELLY sits, immediately touching up her make-up. SALLY takes a paper bag out of her kit and hyperventilates into it.*

SHELLY: Nervous?

SALLY: A little.

SHELLY: I'll do the intro and the lead. Then it's your turn.

SALLY: Thanks. Too bad Troy had a heart attack.

SHELLY: At least he had the decency to have it off air.

SALLY: Shouldn't we offer our condolences? I could---

SHELLY: ---spare your sympathy. We'll launch into a news special only if he dies. A death always jump-starts the ratings. Tearfully, I'll eulogize our time together as co-anchors, and mention how he'd want me to take his place.

SALLY: Self-serving, aren't we?

SHELLY: —shh, countdown.

Skating in, in front, SUZY CRUZ counts "5-4-3-2-1" with her fingers and then leaves.

SHELLY: Good evening. This is Shelly Sommers and the KDST-Channel 6 Evening News for Pahrump, Nevada. Substituting for Troy Thomas is Sally Shell. *(Squinting at the teleprompter.)* Our top story tonight: a derailment of a Union Pacific train in downtown Las Vegas spills 25,000 pounds of crushed ice, 11,000 containers of orange juice, and 8,000 pounds of sugar. The pileup resulted in a giant orange slushy. The mayor of Las Vegas called the governor to dispatch the Nevada National Guard to keep drivers, pedestrians, and children from scooping up the icy concoction. Traffic was tied up for six hours. An investigation is pending to determine the cause of the derailment. *(Pause.)* There is speculation that the wreck was caused by terrorists who can't tell the difference between a train hauling Top Ramen and one hauling toxic waste. Over to you, Sally.

SALLY: Thank you, Shelly. Our top local story: daredevil skateboarder Danny Diver rolled down a massive ramp at nearly 50 miles per hour to successfully jump the Pahrump Landfill. Incredibly, Diver did the deed without protective gear. Paramedics, firemen, and police were on hand to assist. The only "fly in the ointment," Danny said, was the stench from the open pit. Three spectators were taken to Pahrump Hospital for respiratory complaints. *(Aside.)* Maybe next time, daredevil Danny won't pick such a ripe day at the pit. Back to you, Shelly.

SHELLY: Thank you, Sally. We'll be back with breaking news about a robbery at Bank of America. First, a word from our sponsor, Spring Mountain Auto Air and Mobility Products. *(Pause.)* Very good, Sally. A little fast. Smile more. Memorize the mantra: "The camera loves me."

SALLY: Thank you, Shelly, for the tips. *(Pause.)* Um...isn't that robbery my story?

SHELLY: *(Applying make-up.)* Technically, but it's breaking news. The lead newscaster should report it.

SALLY: But it's my story. I took the call.

SHELLY: Rank has its privileges. Get over it.

SALLY: *(Muttering.)* You got the rank part right.

SHELLY: What was that?

SALLY: Rank. I understand rank...er pulling rank.

SHELLY: *(To the offstage cameraman. Preening.)* Ron, when we're back, camera on me.

SALLY: It's not fair.

SHELLY: *(Puts away make-up.)* Life's not fair. Get over yourself.

Skating in, SUZY appears in front, counting down "5-4-3-2-1" and leaves.

SHELLY: Here we go—Shelly Sommers with the 6:00 o'clock evening news. This just in: a one-legged man seen hopping across the Albertson parking lot spewing money from a knapsack drew the attention of an off-duty policeman. The officer pursued on foot, demanding the suspect halt. Ignoring him, the one-legged man bounced away. Fortunately, the man's lope to freedom ended when he tripped. *(Contact pops out. She tries to find it on her*

face, then on the table.) Witnesses put the one-legged suspect in the Bank of America inside the Albertson's store. Upon investigation, a prosthetic leg was found in the bank lobby. As if eyewitnesses to the crime weren't enough, it was an open-and-shut case when the leg fit the accused. When asked why he tried to rob Bank of America, the unidentified thief said that he thought it would be easy to rob his own bank. *(Quote.)* "The tellers are friendly and give good service." *(End quote.)* Isn't that funny, Sally?

SALLY: Droll, perhaps. Ironic, certainly. But funny, no. Funny is watching you squint at the teleprompter.

SHELLY: *(Gritting teeth.)* Then you should do the next story. *(Passes papers to her.)*

SALLY: Thanks, Shelly, since you owe me. In other news tonight, a spokesperson for Wynn Resorts announced plans to build another mega-resort, in partnership with former rival Wah Wing Wong, the Chinese Warren Buffett. The shaky Wynn-Wong truce ridiculed in a *Review-Journal* headline as "A Wong Equals a Wynn" will result in a new resort extravaganza expected to cost \$5.7 billion dollars. Dubbed "La Mer Wing"---the Sea Wing---this jewel will showcase a 65,000 gallon aquarium stocked with erotic fish—I mean, exotic fish. *(Pause. Big smile.)* Time for commercial. Let's hear from the folks at Saitta-Trudeau Chrysler-Jeep-Dodge.

SHELLY: How dare you criticize me on air. I lost a contact. And what about your screw-up? *(Looks for contact on floor.)*

SALLY: I bet you bribed Ernie to rig the teleprompter. Not very professional.

SHELLY: I was a pro before you were born.

SALLY: Speaking of "pro," don't you have to check in with your probation officer after this broadcast?

SHELLY: My, we're catty today. Never mind, though. It takes more than a petty insult to upset the "Queen of K-Dust Channel 6 News." I always bring in the ratings. Where are you my little one? Come to Mommy. *(Finds contact.)* Ah, there you are, my pretty one. *(Returns to seat.)*

SALLY: Put your crown where your mouth is. Are you willing to risk your anchor position?

SHELLY: (*Puts in contact, squints to adjust to the glare of the lights.*)

Ha! What risk? You're on. Loser resigns on air.

SALLY: Won't be me.

SUZY skates in, hands a message to SHELLY, and skates out again.

SHELLY: (*Reads to herself.*) This is interesting. You know our general manager, "Tiny" Spinoza---

SALLY: ---I've heard of him but never met him---

SHELLY: ---well, you won't be able to meet him. Seems he met a Filipino woman online and is moving to Manila to marry her. So the owner will have to find a replacement.

SALLY: Wow. That is sudden.

SHELLY: One thing about this business. Expect the unexpected.

SUZY reappears with the countdown.

SHELLY: We're back. The Channel 6 Evening News continues with veteran newscaster Shelly Sommers and newbie Sally Shell-

SALLY: —at least I'm a journalism major. (*To viewers.*) Shelly's G.E.D. stands for "Grade in English-D."

SHELLY: Your minor in plagiarism—wasn't that from some online diploma mill?

SALLY: What news item is next on tap, Shel?

SHELLY: Well, Sal, it looks like the weather. Florida can expect its eighth hurricane this season. Yes, Hurricane Zelda is on track to zip up the Florida Keys all the way to Tallahassee. Since the confirmation of Zelda's arrival, government officials have cautioned residents to remain calm, storm-proof their homes, stockpile food and water, and stay indoors. (*Pause.*) In light of this advice, stock in U-Haul, Inc. rose 1400% this week as families fled the rain and wind-damaged state for drier climes. In the West—

SALLY: (*Grabbing paper.*) —my turn. In the West, temperatures continue to soar to record levels.

While SALLY'S speaking, SHELLY fixes her make-up and hair.

SALLY: Death Valley topped the nation's list today with 125 degrees. Phoenix hit 119, Bakersfield a whopping 115. Due to peak load demands, experts predict blackouts and a blip in unplanned births.

SALLY'S unexpected comment about unplanned births causes SHELLY to smear lipstick across her face.

SALLY: So keep those baby names handy. Higher electric bills soon to follow. Shel? (*Staring at SHELLY.*) All fixed now, or do we need a doctor's opinion?

SHELLY: Witch. In the world of golf today, Gunther Gunerson [Insert Current Popular Golfer]—

As SHELLY speaks, SALLY blows her nose loudly.

SHELLY: – Gunther Gunerson [Insert Current Popular Golfer] was disqualified today—(*Stops.*) Sal, do you have to do this now?

SALLY: You're the pro. Don't let me bother you. Continue.

SHELLY: Gunther Gunerson [Insert Current Popular Golfer] was disqualified today during the second round of the PGA Championship [Insert Current Golf Tournament] when he played his errant tee shot off the stomach of the spectator of the unconscious spectator his ball had hit. Gunerson was ejected for playing on a moveable obstruction instead of waiting for a drop. No news whether the injured party will sue.

SALLY tosses dirty Kleenex at SHELLY and grabs the news copy.

SHELLY: Ooooh. Disgusting!

SALLY: Elsewhere in sports, in an upset, Latvia won the Wife-Carrying Championships for the first time. According to legend, wife-stealing was an accepted practice in Sonkajarvi, Finland, and spawned this contest. In response, Germany's television consortium announced it was preparing a pilot for a new reality show called, *Can You Haul this Hausfrau?*

SHELLY: If you were competing, it would be called the Heifer-Carrying Championship, Sal.

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