



Colleen Marshall at the Channel 4 anchor desk with partner Cabot Rea.

THE *overachiever*

SHE'S A PRIME-TIME TV ANCHOR, A WIFE, A
LAWYER WITH A PRESTIGIOUS FIRM AND THE
MOTHER OF TWO TEENAGERS. INSIDE THE
HECTIC LIFE OF COLLEEN MARSHALL.

Colleen Marshall has auburn hair that frames her face, arched eyebrows and defined cheekbones. She carries herself as you'd expect an anchorwoman to—with excellent posture and a confident stride. She has a firm handshake and a habit of looking you directly in the eye. She's inclined to fidget—subtly-tapping her foot as she sits at her computer, reading through the stories for the evening broadcast, or lightly twisting a highlighter in her hands during conversation. When she makes a point, she jabs a manicured finger in tandem with her words. She has a quick wit and enjoys playful sparring with family and co-workers, trading sarcastic one-liners.

And there's her voice. Its raspy tones are perfect for radio, where she began her career, and she uses it, on air and off, with a firm, assured delivery.

She's a worrier. Marshall sleeps only five hours a night or so, in part because it usually takes her an hour to unravel all the thoughts tightly wound in her head. "I've always been like that," she says. "My husband, Gary? Head hits the pillow and boom, he's out. But not me."

Marshall has spent 20 years as a member of the Channel 4 news team, where she is co-anchor with longtime partner Cabot Rea on the 5, 6 and 11 pm weekday news broadcasts. On top of that demanding schedule, she now also works three seven-hour days as a lawyer—she is an associate

By *Susan K. Wittstock*

in the corporate litigation department of the prestigious Porter Wright Morris & Arthur firm. **Holding a second job** almost may be a breather for her after spending the last four years in Capital University's law school.

She makes most people who squeeze in work, family and community commitments look like slackers. What drives a woman who already has a fine, high-profile career underway to add a second, usually stressful one? Built into that agenda, too, is time spent with two teenage children and a husband of 25 years.

Don't feel bad if you can't figure it out. Neither can her husband, kids, best friend and co-workers. Or maybe even Marshall herself.

says. When Garrett turned 13, Marshall made the decision. "I said, 'My God—if I don't do this now, I won't ever do it.' I didn't want to have three of us in college at once."

She thought about the idea for a while before inviting Gary on a walk. "We took the dog and I said, 'I think I want to go to law school.' He said, 'Why can't you have an affair like everyone else?'" She laughs and adds, "He said, 'If you want to do it, we'll do it.'"

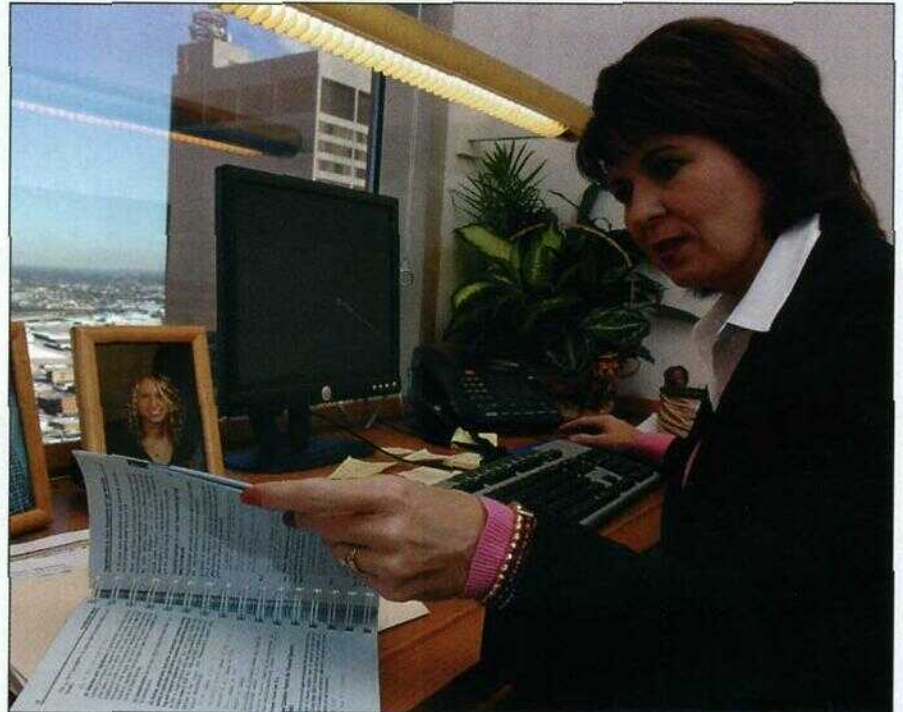
In August 2000, she became a first-year law student at the age of 44.

Marshall sits in her office at Porter Wright downtown, on one of the Huntington Center's upper

do: researching points of law, preparing documents for court.

Except for the electronic interruptions, it is quiet. Very, very quiet. Occasionally, a muffled male voice in the next office can be heard. Marshall's entire career has been spent in newsrooms—large, open rooms crammed with colleagues, where no comment goes unheard or movement undetected. "I've never had my own office," she says.

Now, she has four white walls and a door that leads into an equally quiet hallway, with runners of plush carpet over honey-colored hardwood. The entire floor she works on, one of several occupied by Porter Wright, has the feel of a library reading room.



Some guesses: Working hard comes naturally to a woman from Appalachia with Depression-era parents who emphasized the pursuit of higher education. She's always had a fascination with the law and, as an aging TV anchor, she has to think about the eventual end of her time on-screen.

Ask 16-year-old Shannon why her mother sought a law degree and she shrugs her shoulders. "She's crazy," she says matter-of-factly.

It's an answer that her brother Garrett, 18, and father Gary don't dispute.

Morn's answer is only slightly more illuminating.

"I always had in the back of my mind that I might want to continue my education, and I was drawn to law," she

floors. It is 2:30 pm on a Monday and she's been at work since 8:30 am. To pack more work time into her day, she tends to eat lunch at her computer. In an hour or so, she'll be at her desk in Channel 4's newsroom. Her phone keeps ringing and her e-mail pinging, so she has to excuse herself for quick conversations and to check for pressing messages.

Her office features framed portraits of her children and a small figurine of a leprechaun lawyer, a gift from her brother in honor of their Irish-immigrant grandparents. She has two desks—one in the middle of the office for shuffling paperwork and a solid-looking wood one positioned under a window so she can get a bird's-eye view of downtown. For now, Marshall is doing what all new associates

Marshall clerked here in the summer of 2003. "It was me and 25 24-year-olds," she says. She had interviewed for permanent associate positions with several firms in town and found Porter Wright to be the best match. The firm is the city's oldest—more than 150 years in existence—and employs roughly 200 attorneys locally and another 100 in five other cities.

"Her schedule is unique, but there are many unique arrangements at law firms," says Rich Terapak, hiring partner at Porter Wright. "We have other people working reduced hours because of families or child-care situations."

The fact that she is a celebrity was a factor in her hiring. "Sure," Terapak says. "We look for people who are not only good students and have the intellectual

When asked why
**HER MOTHER SOUGHT
 A LAW DEGREE,
 16-YEAR-OLD SHANNON
 SHRUGS HER
 SHOULDERS. "SHE'S
 CRAZY," SHE SAYS
 MATTER-OF-FACTLY.**

who co-anchor the 5:30 pm newscast. There's an easy banter among the four. A printer is a few steps away, and a steady stream of reporters and producers walk past to retrieve printouts. Television screens, all tuned to different stations, are flashing at Marshall's left.

Here, she has only one small desk to call her own, if you don't count the massive desk behind which she and Rea sit in the studio. She has shared anchoring duties with him for 10 years, making them Columbus's longest running anchor pair.

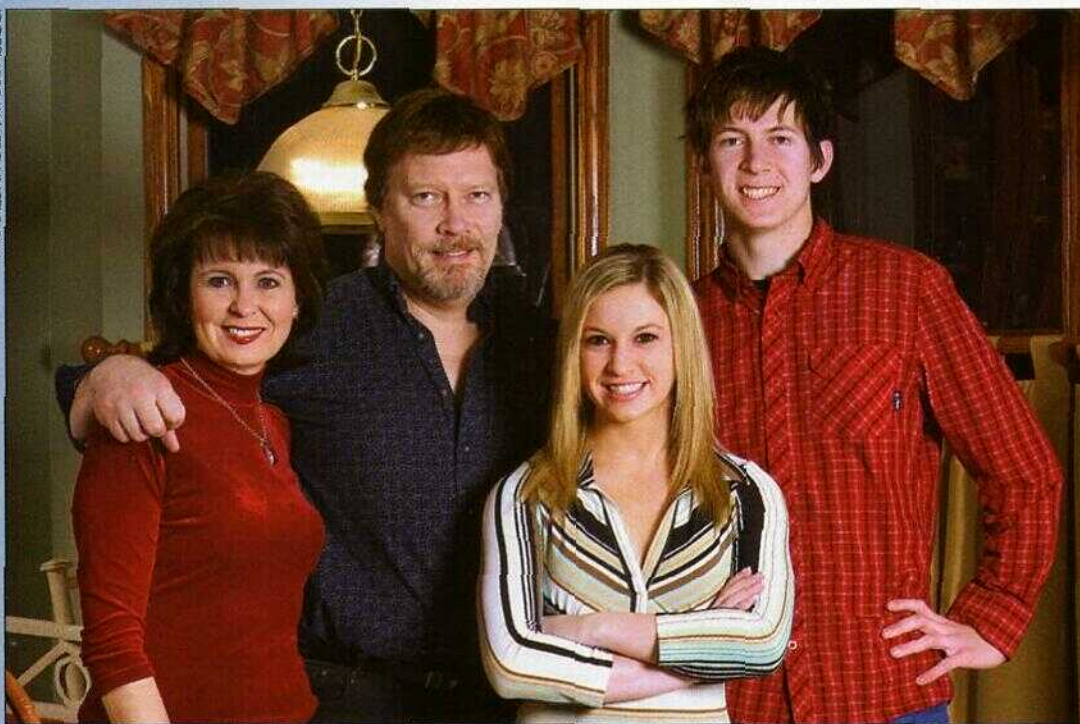
Rea thinks their personalities and skills mesh well. "I respect her for her areas of expertise and she for mine. That makes our relationship easier," he says. "We keep each other laughing. I believe if we have

the week to get her homework completed, she says, so she'd have weekend time with her family. "I would try to go to the library and read two to three classes ahead of time in case something broke and I had to leave."

Rea was pursuing a master's degree in music performance at the same time. "When I was in the thick of my master's, we'd spend time in the audio room, recording the teasers, and then sit and share for five minutes our mutual woes," he says.

Kellie Hanna, the station's traffic reporter, says she and other co-workers marveled at Marshall's ability to manage stress and not tip viewers to the upheaval in her personal life "because she would

MICHAELA FOLEY/RYCUS ASSOC.



Marshall at work in her Porter Wright Morris & Arthur office (opposite page) and at her Hilliard home with husband Gary and teenage children Shannon and Garrett.

requirements to be superior lawyers, but it's also important to have people who get along well with others and who communicate well with clients." Marshall fits right in. "She is very down-to-earth and very easily met," he says, noting she did receive a lot of second looks at holiday parties the firm hosted for clients. "There's no celebrity aura except after that first meeting. Any of that star power fades away quickly and she's just another associate."

At Channel 4 later that afternoon, the mood is controlled chaos. The desks are clumped together into pods, much like an elementary school classroom, Marshall sits near Rea, as well as Mike Jackson and Holly Hollingsworth,

solid chemistry off-camera, it translates on-camera."

Today, they'll be reporting on stories about a local soldier killed in Iraq, the start of deer hunting season and the discovery of a woman's skeletal remains. Marshall spends her first hour or so every day in the station reading and doing rewrites of stories prepared by her producers for the 5 and 6 pm newscasts.

"What I like most about news is that it's completely different every day," she says. "I'm processing new information all the time. I love that feeling of 'I have a deadline today' and then it's done. It's not always pretty, but it's done even if it doesn't go as planned."

While in law school, she had to meet multiple deadlines. She worked through

come in here, after doing all that, and go on-air like 'Everything's perfect.'"

Marshall also commanded respect at Capital. Professor Jeffrey Ferriell says her younger classmates looked up to her. "The demands on her time as a full-time employee, as a parent and as a student far outstripped the time commitments any of the other students might have had. It made them think they could get their work done, too."

In addition to the standard course load, Marshall was one of six students selected to serve on Capital's National Moot Court Team. "It's fair to say it's the most competitive academic activity at the law school," says Ferriell, who was the team's adviser and estimates the yearlong commitment to prepare for mock trials is



the equivalent of a part-time job. Marshall also was tapped for membership in Capital's *Law Review*, an honor reserved for top students.

In September 2003, her delicate balance of work, class, studying and family time was disrupted when her father was diagnosed with colon cancer. She spent a lot of weekends driving the four hours home to Pennsylvania to visit him in the nursing home. "He died right before finals, on April 13," she says. "He didn't get to see me graduate."

In spite of the challenges, Rea wasn't surprised that Marshall took on so much. "I knew she would eventually look to do something to prepare for the future and have options in life. She's a smart person—I just didn't know it would manifest in law school," he says. "I didn't doubt for a minute she'd be successful. I know her nature is to do whatever it takes."

Marshall is evasive when asked how long she intends to continue doing both law and television. "I think I have the best of both worlds. I have two careers and I love both of them," she says. "It is a lot of work, but after law school, you come out thinking, 'I can do anything.'"

Although she won't say she's easing into a new career, she does admit that broadcast journalism is not known for its kindness to aging anchors. "I'm now the



Marshall's entire career

HAS BEEN SPENT IN NEWSROOMS—LARGE, OPEN ROOMS CRAMMED WITH COLLEAGUES, WHERE NO COMMENT GOES UNHEARD OR MOVEMENT UNDETECTED. "I'VE NEVER HAD MY OWN OFFICE," SHE SAYS.



Marshall makes 50 to 60 annual appearances at **community events**; in December **2004**, she joined her Channel 4 **colleagues** at the station's **Firefighters 4 Kids Toy Drive**.



oldest female anchor ever at Channel 4. What does that tell you about this business?" Marshall says and arches her eyebrows even more. "I've been very lucky that I caught on as an anchor. We have a very loyal audience at Channel 4."

She has been able to build a satisfying career at the station, although before she had children she dreamed of moving on to larger markets. Staying put has taken priority over career ambition. "Gary and I felt that the best thing for our children would be to grow up and have friends and stay in one place. So many people in this business travel from city to city and that's really hard on children," she says.

Marshall also is happy to have formed long-term commitments with a number of charities. She became involved nearly a decade ago with the Columbus AIDS Task Force, after doing several stories about the disease. She currently is a vice president on the board of directors. She makes between 50 and 60 appearances a year at charity events, such as co-chairing the Make-A-Wish Foundation annual fundraiser, emceeing the awards ceremony for the Keep Franklin County Beautiful campaign

and helping with the station's annual Firefighters 4 Kids Toy Drive.

After the 6 pm broadcast, Marshall returns to her desk and immediately calls Shannon, who competed in a swim meet that afternoon. She reaches her on a cellphone and learns she took first in one event and second in two others, and that she and Gary are picking up dinner on their way home. After hanging up, Marshall says, "I do a lot of parenting by phone."

In a few minutes, she will drive home to Hilliard for an hour or two, as she does every other night. Rea, who also has two teenagers at home, slips away the other evenings. Gary and the kids usually eat dinner before Marshall arrives, but she's there to help Shannon and Garrett with homework or simply to talk and get caught up on the day's events.

Marsh! grew up as Colleen Connors in Appalachia—in Dunbar, a tiny southwestern Pennsylvania coal-mining town. Her father, Jack, was an electrician at a glass factory and her mother, Betty, was a

homemaker. Marshall is the third of four children.

"My parents were both children of the Depression and they wanted us to have opportunities that they didn't have," she says. "So we all knew we would go to college. That was pounded into us from the time we were little kids."

When Watergate broke in 1972, she was in high school. "I was fascinated. I even convinced my mom one day that I should

stay home to listen to an important hearing," she says, smiling at the memory. "She wrote me an excuse."

That same year, Jack was badly injured in an industrial accident and had to spend almost a year in the hospital recovering. "He was nearly the age I am now. I think he was 47 when the accident happened and he never really was the same," she says. "It left him disabled."

To make ends meet, her mother went to work in a grocery store and Marshall and her siblings all took jobs. When Marshall enrolled as a journalism major at Point Park University in Pittsburgh, she also began a stint as a full-time waitress to pay tuition.

She never called Dunbar home again. "It wasn't so much that I wanted to leave town, but I wanted to work," she says. "I love the area. It's very beautiful, but there's not exactly a lot to do there. There's a very high unemployment rate and a high poverty rate."

Marshall found her future at Point Park. She met Gary, a photography major who minored in journalism, the night before classes began at a freshman orientation party. By November, they were dating.

"We were pretty serious by the end of that first year," she says. "We dated for five years and then got married when I was 22."

A broadcast journalism professor noticed she had a flair for reporting and recommended her for a position at KQV, an all-news radio station in Pittsburgh. "I loved it. I liked how fast it was and the constant deadlines," she says. "They hired me while I was still in school, full time."

She stayed on at KQV as a writer and producer after earning her B.A., then worked as a reporter for a radio station in Weirton, West Virginia. When her news director there left for a position at a TV station in Wheeling, he persuaded Marshall to follow him as an on-air reporter.

Gary had spent the year before they married working on a graduate degree in biomedical photography at the University of Pittsburgh. Photographing abuse victims at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh was difficult. "It was just sad to be there," he says. "I decided I'd rather do news." After graduation, he found work as a cameraman at Channel 9 in Steubenville. Within the year of Marshall's move to Wheeling, Gary was hired as a cameraman at Channel 4 in Columbus. Marshall joined him three months later at the station as a general assignment reporter and the couple often teamed on stories—Colleen in front of the camera, Gary behind it.

"I never thought of myself as being on television. That was never a driving goal for me," she says. "It's just something that I more or less fell into."

On the morning she learned she'd passed the bar exam, Marshall called her best friend and neighbor, Camille Bates, at 7 am. "There were a lot of tears and screaming," says Bates, who immediately ran across the street in her slippers to offer congratulations. "We hugged and cried. She was shaking. This was quite an important thing and it was neat to share it with her."

Marshall had sat for the exam in July and anxiously awaited the results, due in October. "It was the longest three months ever," she says. "I was convinced that I had failed." Bates never saw Marshall waver in her resolve to finish her degree on schedule. "It was real important to her to see this through. She's not a quitter. She really, really wanted this," Bates says.

Marshall says she always worried about the effect on her family. In 1997, after 18 years as a news photographer and videotape editor, Gary quit his job at Channel 4, where he regularly worked odd hours. He started his own business as a construction contractor, parlaying a

When Watergate broke IN 1972, SHE WAS IN HIGH SCHOOL. "I WAS FASCINATED. I EVEN CONVINCED MY MOM ONE DAY THAT I SHOULD STAY HOME TO LISTEN TO AN IMPORTANT HEARING," SHE SAYS, SMILING AT THE MEMORY. "SHE WROTE ME AN EXCUSE."



Except for changes in her hairstyle, Marshall's appearance hasn't changed much since she joined Channel 4 as a reporter 20 years ago (top). "I'm now the oldest female anchor ever at Channel 4," she says. "What does that tell you about this business?"

hobby as a carpenter into a successful business that specializes in remodeling older homes. "It gives me flexible hours," he says. "It gives me time for the kids,"

Three days after the swim meet, Gary stands in the foyer of their home. Shannon, a junior at Hilliard Davidson, and Garrett, a senior, help their mom decorate for Christmas during a two-hour break in her schedule.

Marshall's arms have disappeared into the fake Christmas tree. She's struggling to find the cord that will plug the lights into a nearby outlet, but the tree is not cooperating. "No, Mom, I think it works this way," Shannon says, using a tone instantly recognizable to any teenager's parents. Shannon has figured out that the cord on the tree's middle section connects with a similar cord on the tree's bottom part.

Shannon reaches in to help her mother and together they manage to get the electricity flowing and white lights twinkling. Later, it will take the assistance of Garrett to keep the tree's leaning upper section from tipping the whole thing over. Gary is content to watch, teasing his wife as she arranges Irish-themed ornaments on the tree's branches.

Normally, the Marshall house is the neighborhood hangout, with any number of teens coming and going; Garrett plays guitar in a rock band, and they regularly rehearse, loudly, in the basement. This evening, it's just the family.

They chat as they sort through the decorations, and eventually the conversation turns to Marshall's decision to become a lawyer. Gary professes uncertainty about his wife's decision to go to law school: "We don't know why she did it, but we supported her."

"They did support me," Marshall says, looking up from hanging an ornament.

"We had no choice," Gary quips. "We didn't see her much, and when we did see her it was, 'Shhh! I have to study.'"

They both laugh.

Gary gives the kids \$5 for every A they earn, so he gave his wife \$5 for every A she received, too.

"It didn't cost me that much," he says.

"Very funny," she retorts.

By 8:30 pm, the tree is decorated and Marshall hurries back to the station. She won't return home until after midnight and probably not hit the bed until 1 or 1:30 am. Before letting go of the day, she'll be working her way through the next.

"I'll start thinking about, OK, what else is going on this week? What else do I have to do? And when do I have to be there?" •

Susan K. Wittstock is a freelance writer.