

on the job

Video at Eleven

As media bureaus abroad retrench, videographer Jason Maloney '91 steps in to deliver the news. BY BONNIE BARBER

WHEN RUSSIA INVADED GEORGIA last August news producer Jason Maloney was already in the mountainous former Soviet republic. "We interviewed the president of Georgia about 24 hours before the Russians came down the tunnel," says Maloney, co-founder of the nonprofit Bureau for International Reporting (BIR). "We were there to do the looming conflict story, and the conflict broke out right in front of us."

Maloney often breaks stories as one of the few American videojournalists covering international news. He and journalist Kira Kay founded BIR in 2006 to supply American television outlets with foreign stories in the wake of widespread global news bureau closings. Based in New York City, much of the pair's work is done for PBS' *NewsHour* and *NOW* as well as for HDNet's *World Report*. Their longer, newsmagazine-length pieces are also available on YouTube and iTunes.

"We chip away at stories we feel are being overlooked," Maloney says. "We got *60 Minutes* to go to Darfur to do the first real report on that conflict. We crossed the border illegally from Chad and spent two or three days driving around. I was filming rebel groups, a mass grave, things that had never been shot before. Then our driver got completely lost in the desert. Luckily I had a GPS with some waypoints that helped us get out of Darfur, and we never encountered the Sudan army or the Janjaweed. But it was dicey."

A government major and film studies minor—"the closest thing to a journalism degree that Dartmouth offered," he says—Maloney gained extensive production experience from summer internships. But he "drifted away" from the news business to earn a master's in international relations from the London School of Economics. What lured him back was the trial of the century—ABC News desperately needed production staff to cover the O.J. Simpson story. Afterward Maloney joined ABC's *Primetime Live* in 1996 where he racked up production awards for five years before embarking on a freelance career.

Maloney and Kay produce four to five stories a year on an annual operating budget of about \$225,000, some of which is covered by grants from the Ford Foundation and Carnegie Corp. And while demand for their stories is increasing, budgets are shrinking, so there's been no change in their bottom line. "The normal economic model of supply and demand isn't necessarily at play here," Maloney says. "*NewsHour* would love more of our stories, but they're not able to pay any more."

Although he occasionally does voiceover reporting, as he did for a piece on Islam in Russia in the Republic of Tatarstan, Kay handles the bulk of these duties while



Maloney on location in India

Maloney focuses on shooting the stories with his "workhorse," a Sony FX-1 high-definition digital video camera. He still records to tape because memory cards aren't practical for the remote locations in which he and Kay shoot. "We just came back from doing a story on U.N. peacekeeping in Congo with 40 hours of tape from the field. I'd shoot six or seven hours a day, and with memory cards you need to download to a computer every couple of hours. We can't be assured that we'll have the ability or the power to do that," he says.

In addition to his work as a videojournalist, Maloney co-authored *Your America: Democracy's Local Heroes*, published last summer by Palgrave Macmillan. Written with John Siceloff, creator and executive producer of *NOW*, the book features interviews with 12 "heroes" who've impacted their local

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communities. “The book project was a wonderful antidote since I had just come off doing stories about the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia and the Lord’s Resistance Army abducting kids in northern Uganda, some of the darkest stuff I ever heard,” says Maloney, who last spring won a second Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Journalism Award for the Uganda story. “It’s hard to hear all this stuff out in the field. But knowing we can get these kinds of stories out and that they might raise awareness certainly helps compensate for how tough this job can be.” ■



Out There

When traveling to hot spots around the world it helps to be prepared. Intrepid producer Jason Maloney says he never leaves home without the following:

Malaria medication. “Malarone is expensive and Lariam makes you paranoid (never a good thing in a war zone), so I stick to Doxy.”

Mint-condition \$100 bills dated after 2003. “Any fold, nick or ink mark will get the money immediately rejected in many places. Of course at the money changer you get handed a stack of local currency so battered you can hardly make out the denominations.”

Extra videotape. “I still shudder at the story of a colleague who ran out in the field and had to make tough decisions as to what material to record over.”

Global Positioning System (GPS). “And not just the kind that tells you how to find the nearest Starbucks, either. My trusty Garmin GPS III+ actually saved my life in Darfur.”

BONNIE BARBER is a frequent contributor to DAM.