



At *Today*, he gets the 1 a.m. phone calls

By MARK DANIELS
Communique Writer

The newsroom at NBC's network headquarters was quiet on the morning of Feb. 1, 2003. President Bush had no events scheduled for that Saturday and most staff members were home enjoying the weekend off.

Javier Morgado, then co-managing the network's coverage of the Iraq War, sat at the network desk working and absently glancing at NASA's television feed where technicians prepped for Space Shuttle Columbia's reentry into Earth's orbit.

"It was all very routine," he said.

What happened next would send shockwaves throughout the nation and catalyze Morgado's career: NASA's space coordinator had lost contact with Columbia. The crew was not responding.

"I had covered enough shuttle launches in Florida to know something was wrong," Morgado said.

Under his direction, NBC News was the first to report a communication problem with the shuttle and ultimately the explosion of Columbia.

"It was one of those cases where you stay vigilant long enough to pick up on things others may have just let fall by the wayside," he said.

It was not the first time Morgado had contributed to a story that commanded national attention. In September 2001, Morgado worked for NBC station WTVJ in Miami, where he helped the network track down the terrorists in South Florida who were involved in the Sept. 11 attacks. It was after that experience that he received an offer to work for NBC in New York.



JASON SMITH

Javier Morgado, class of 1998, is a supervising producer at 'The Today Show.'

He took the job and coordinated editorial operations for the conventions, debates, primaries and caucuses of the 2004 and 2006 elections. And later, as *The Today Show's* news producer, he helped coordinate coverage of Hurricane Katrina and the Valerie Plame-CIA leak investigation. Today, he is a supervising producer overseeing news, assignments and editorial aspects of the top-rated morning show.

Even as a journalism student at the University of Miami, Morgado took advantage of opportunities others

ignored, reporting for UMTV, serving as online editor of *The Miami Hurricane* for two years and giving prospective students tours of the campus as part of the President's 100. He received a scholarship from the National Association of Hispanic Journalists and, even after graduating in 1998, he remains an active member of NAHJ and is on the board of National Lesbian & Gay Journalists Association.

"It is important to me to help individuals aspiring to do what we do," said Morgado.

The media landscape is changing rapidly, Morgado said. A single reporter might be sent to cover stories that entire news teams would have handled only a few years ago. As media outlets downsize, young journalists must acquire a whole host of new skills to even compete.

Morgado explained how network producers are now trained to shoot, edit, blog and add graphics to their stories.

"You will have to be more versatile than ever. You might have to write a story on Somalia one day and produce a multimedia segment on a fashion show in Paris the next," he said.

Building an impressive skill set as a talented writer and digital expert is only one of the factors necessary to succeed, he added. Attention to detail will separate those who can understand what the public wants and those who fall behind, he said.

Hulu, he said, demonstrates his point perfectly. The website, a joint venture between NBC Universal and News Corp., allows users to view entire shows as well as show segments online and has been able to capitalize on advertising with very low production costs.

Hard work is another essential component in distinguishing oneself in the industry, he said. Morgado often works 12-hour days and is always on call.

"If we hear about a story at 1 in the morning, I am the one they call," he said.

As challenging as it is to break into the business in 2009, Morgado said it was just as hard 10 years ago when he was starting out.

"My career has taken me places I never expected to go, and I got there by working hard and putting in the extra effort," he said.