

Al-Jazeera reporter encourages students to seek truth

By JD Sullivan

Guest Writer

Josh Rushing grew up in small town Texas, became a Marine stationed in Qatar and said that he was “not exactly the most open minded” person. “But I could see a fact for what it was,” he told an audience of about 300 students and employees at a Sept. 23 Lecture and Symposium.

That conviction to the facts led him into a controversy over the media coverage of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. And that is where he found his voice. Resigning from the Marines, he soon found his work as a correspondent for Al-Jazeera International English.

While serving in the Marines, Rushing was commanded to serve as a public affairs officer. His job was “to sell the war” said Rushing. Yet, even though his military training told him that the only answer to “why are we at war” should be “because the President orders us to,” the White House told Rushing that his message would be: “to destroy the WMD and to liberate the people of Iraq.”

Rushing appeared daily on the major Western news networks including NBC, CNN and MSNBC via satellite with the

task of putting the White House spin on the war. Rushing also appeared on Al Jazeera International, which Rushing describes as “the most powerful voice in the Middle East.”

Rushing said, “I was the face of America on Al Jazeera.”

Yet, the Bush administration called Al Jazeera “the mouthpiece of Osama Bin Laden,” “Rumsfeld began to characterize Al Jazeera as being terrorist organization,” Rushing said. Fox News

Channel’s Bill O’Reilly referred to Al Jazeera as a “propaganda network ... bent

on encouraging violence and sympathetic to terrorists.”

Rushing described Al Jazeera as “PBS on steroids,” that reaches 180 million homes in the Middle East, Rushing said, “it is the engine that defines the conversation” in the Middle East.”

In his introduction of Josh Rushing lecture, journalism Assistant Professor Gary Smith commented that “We ask the media to give us different perspectives, but we are not always happy with what we get.”

“Global communications forces us to

make choices about who do we pay attention to, whose voices matter and whose do not. And how do you find your voice?” said Rushing.

Olivet College freshman Maya Prechtel said, “Before, I would trust what I was told to be accurate.” But after attending Rushing’s lecture, Prechtel said, “I was raised to be open minded, but he shocked me about how little I knew about the world and how sheltered I was from it. I am more motivated now to make an effort to go out and search.”

Rushing is the author of “Mission Al Jazeera: Build a Bridge, Seek Truth, Change the World,” and now covers in-depth stories on topics such as the treatment of mentally ill people in prisons for a Web documentary news show FaultLines.

In answering a question from the audience about how students can be sure to get better information, Rushing said, “I am optimistic because each one of you have access to more information than the news director of CBS” years ago. After his 40-minute talk, Rushing encouraged his audience to rely on more than one news source and to “seek truth.”



Josh Rushing

Courtesy photo

Olive Kitteridge

by Elizabeth Strout

Tuesday, Oct. 20 @ 3 p.m.



Betsy Dole Women’s Resource Center
140 Upton Conservatory



Centenarians

The members of Iota Kappa Omicron, also known as Soronian, are celebrating the 100th anniversary of the construction of their home, Sperry Hall. This year they are hosting “Movie Nights” every Monday night at 8 p.m. Sperry Hall is located on the corner of Cottage and Shipherd Streets.

Jacob McCans/ECHO