

## This Just in: UCSB grad covers the world for Fox News Channel

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Jenna Lee was sitting at her Fox News Channel anchor desk when the news broke.

Suspicious packages, containing explosive materials, were found on U.S.-bound planes in Dubai and the United Kingdom.

All the UCSB graduate had were a few details, as they suddenly appeared on her computer. She looked into the camera and ad-libbed a story for a national audience. This was live TV — no chance for editing, no second takes.

"It's easy to get emotional, but one of the things I'm proud of is how I covered it. I took a breath, reviewed what was happening for our audience and didn't get into speculation," she told the News-Press by phone from Fox News Channel headquarters in New York City. "We'll have car chases and bank robberies, and you have to ad-lib."

She has covered breaking news, politics and more since co-anchoring "Happening Now" with Jon Scott since July 2010. The newscast, which features live interviews, airs at 8 a.m. weekdays on Channel 25 in Santa Barbara and 52 in North County.

At age 30, Ms. Lee is among the youngest national anchors. Her career has taken her from a UCSB front desk to a national anchor chair in just a few years.

Any regrets?

"It's below 20!" said the San Francisco native about weather in the Big Apple. "It's a bit different from Isla Vista."



Jenna Lee  
FOX NEWS CHANNEL



Jenna Lee, a UCSB graduate, behind-the-scenes at Fox News Channel, says it's important to ask questions without offering commentary.

But never mind the cold. She knew she wanted to go into broadcasting when she started studies at UCSB, where she graduated in March 2002 with a bachelor's of arts in English and global studies. While there, she worked at the front desk at the university's Recreation Center.

"I was a nerd, big time!" Ms. Lee confessed. "I really loved school, big time. I loved going to class and spending a lot of time in the library."

After graduating, she worked as a director of The Club at Claremont, a mind, body and fitness center in Berkeley, from 2002-03. In 2003, she was recruited by Levi Strauss & Co. for a paid position in a program training executives, but left the company because of a massive layoff.

But Ms. Lee, who said she had a natural curiosity about news, didn't abandon her dream of journalism. During 2002-04, in her spare time, she was a freelance reporter at Marina Times, a community newspaper in San Francisco.

In 2004, she began studies at Columbia University in New York City, where she graduated with a master's degree in journalism the following year after an intense 10-month program. "I always wanted to try broadcasting."

Being in the right place made a difference, she said. "If you're going to go for it (a dream), go all the way. I was living in New York, the center of world news (organizations)."

She had thought she would only be there for a year, but fate proved otherwise. She worked as a writer and business segment producer for NY1, a New York City TV station, while doing some freelance writing for [www.forbes.com](http://www.forbes.com).

She left NY1 to work full-time at forbes.com., which put her in front of the camera reporting business news. She was hired by Fox in 2007 when she sent in a video of her work.

"It happened randomly. I sent in my DVD like everybody else," she said, noting hers was one among a thousand. "Mine almost got lost in the bunch — a weird fluke."

"It's a credit to Fox that it takes a risk on new people," Ms. Lee said about her success.

From 2007 to 2010, she worked at Fox Business Channel, where she co-hosted "Fox Business Morning" and "FoxBusiness.com Live Morning Edition" on the network's website. She was also part of the ensemble for FBC's "Money at Breakfast."

"Every story has a bottom line, even a business story that seems highly technical," Ms. Lee said. "When I first started business reporting, I made a lot of mistakes." But she said an editor helped her and she learned the ins and outs and jargon of business news. "I got more familiar with it."

Today on "Happening Now," Ms. Lee interviews U.S. senators and representatives and other politicians and high-profile personalities, but noted she still has a love for business stories and how they relate to consumers' everyday lives. "There's always a money angle.

Even political stories and immigration stories have a money angle."

"There's a huge story we're not covering enough: Fannie Mae (Federal National Mortgage Association) and Freddie Mac (Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corp.)," she said. (Since the News-Press interview, President Barack Obama has called for the end of the two organizations.)

Videos of her "Happening Now" interviews show Ms. Lee taking a different approach than many other anchors on cable networks. For one, she asks questions without expressing opinion. She listens and seems to rarely interrupt sources. But she told the News-Press she'll speak up if sources go off on a tangent.

"I don't know if I'm trying to bring back journalistic values," she said. "But I want to be a good journalist. I do tend to speak less (than other anchors) and ask shorter questions. I work hard to make sure there's no commentary in the questions."

"I'm not a very political person," she said, later adding, "We have to be careful about (not) making ourselves the center of the story."

When not on the air, Ms. Lee is busy doing research before her interviews on live TV. She said she loves talking with major Washington, D.C., figures such as Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano and Sen. Joe Lieberman, the independent Connecticut senator who remains part of the Democratic caucus. "He always says something that adds perspective."

She has recently done interviews concerning everything from the Muslim Brotherhood, an extreme faction in Egypt and elsewhere, to a White House official downplaying the recent decline in national unemployment.

"My mother said, 'There's no new story, only new people.' She's right, especially in politics," Ms. Lee said. "There will always be political infighting. What makes it different are the people."

"I feel any politician you talk to is challenging," she said. "Most of the time, they have talking points. But they're always interesting interviews. You never know what you're going to get."

Ms. Lee said she would have loved to have gone to Egypt to cover the recent revolution there and hopes to do reporting from foreign countries.

She said she and her co-anchor, the more experienced Mr. Scott, have different styles. He's more serious. "I might throw in a joke," she said.

When she isn't covering the news, she runs and participates in a yoga class. And this just in: She's engaged to a Navy SEAL in San Diego.

"I don't watch a lot of television news (at home)," she said, but added, "I check the wires before I go to bed."