NIEMAN REPORTS

THE NIEMAN FOUNDATION FOR JOURNALISM AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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Reporting on the INS

Hua Zhen Chen, a 28-year-old housewife from Fujian province, fled her native China and came to the United States in pursuit of freedom. Leaving her husband and two-year-old daughter behind, Chen escaped to the United States after Chinese health officials discovered she was pregnant with a second child, forced her to have an abortion, and threatened her with sterilization. She was convinced that only Americans would understand her plight and quickly grant her asylum and allow for her family to follow. Instead, the INS greeted her with nearly 20 months in Virginia jails.

—Steven Rubin, photographer

Environment Reporting: Exploring the Beat

Journalist's Trade

Journalism Education: What Should It Be?

"… to promote and elevate the standards of journalism"

—Agnes Wahl Nieman, the benefactor of the Nieman Foundation.

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Cover photo by Steven Rubin.

Creating a New Web of Connections

The Nieman Web site will be home to valuable information about journalism.

By Bob Giles

In an effort to bring the worldwide Nieman family together, the Nieman Foundation introduced its Web site in 1999. At that time, Bill Kovach, then Curator, sent a note to Nieman Fellows in which he described what he hoped this Web site would become. "By combining the new information technology with the Nieman network," he wrote, "the foundation is rapidly becoming a leading-edge electronic clearinghouse for journalists and their work, a sure sign that public interest journalism will be well-represented in the 21st century."

In its early years, the Nieman Web site (www.nieman.harvard.edu) served as a reliable place to find information about the program and about Nieman Fellows. The increasing power of the Web now has enabled the Nieman Foundation to expand on that beginning with changes that permit more than 900 Nieman Fellows, as well as other journalists, educators, students and citizens interested in how the press does its work, to access a larger variety of information. Next steps include a new database and content management system to support new and expanded services and make interactive engagement possible.

We are building on the idea that the Nieman Foundation should be an Internet destination for good journalism. Here are some of our Web site's developing elements.

• **The Watchdog Journalism Project.** The mission of the watchdog project since its inception in 1997 has been to reinvigorate the news media in its fundamental role of monitoring the activities of organizations and individuals who wield power at all levels of government, business, labor and nonprofit organizations. Until now the project's work has focused on convening conferences and reporting on them in Nieman Reports. Now we recognize the need to reinforce an essential aspect of watchdog reporting—asking probing questions. Effective questioning techniques are not emphasized in journalism courses, nor are they evident in much of the daily news coverage in print and broadcast. Important elements of stories are left unexplored and policymakers often seem to escape questioning they want to avoid. The new online watchdog project staff will be working with authoritative sources at universities and other places to develop lines of questioning that a probing and penetrating press should be asking. This part of the Nieman Web site will also provide links to "best practices" in watchdog journalism and a forum for discussions about watchdog reporting.

• **The Narrative Digest.** The Nieman Program on Narrative Journalism is developing an online narrative newspaper to provide links to the best work in narrative journalism that we can find. The site will point readers to classics in narrative journalism, reports on the Nieman Narrative Journalism Conference, tips on reporting and writing practices, the role of editing, and the ethics of narrative journalism.

• **Lippmann House Expansion.** We invite Nieman Fellows and friends to track the progress of our expansion of Lippmann House, share a memory, sign up for e-mail alerts, and make a donation to the Walter Lippmann House Fund. The Web site will maintain a project overview, construction schedule, regular photographic updates, and a history of Lippmann House in words and pictures.

• **Nieman Fellowship Applications.** The "How to Apply" section is being expanded to include detailed information about the selection criteria for fellowships, the Nieman experience, and the foundation's history. Prospective U.S. fellows will be able to download the application and fill it out on their computers. Prospective international fellows will find more information about funding and support.

• **Nieman Alumni/ae Database.** The alumni database is a valuable resource that enables the foundation to maintain its important global network of fellows. The Nieman staff uses the database to contact Nieman Fellows about foundation events and news. Because information in the fellows' database often is incomplete or out-of-date, we are asking each fellow to provide us with updated, accurate information so connections among Nieman Fellows can be more easily made. Those who stop by Lippmann House share with us fond memories and how much they want to stay in touch with the program, and we value the expertise, ideas and contributions many fellows have made to the foundation's programs and publications through the years. This revised database will make it easier for us to remain in touch and to alert fellows of changes and events.

And, as you know, the current and many back issues of Nieman Reports can be found on the Web site as well.

All of us who practice journalism know that the Web is playing a transformative role in the way we communicate among ourselves and with those who receive the news we report. At the Nieman Foundation, we want our Web site to be an effective tool that can be used to engage all of us more fully in the work of elevating the standards of journalism and to help us maintain our valued personal and professional connections with members of the Nieman family. As we work to make this happen, stay in touch and offer us ideas on how our Web site can be even more helpful to you. ■

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Reporting on the INS

Journalists who devote considerable time to coverage of immigration and investigation of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) write about why they report on a topic that rarely makes Page One. They also share experiences in how they've reported these stories, especially in the wake of the terrorist attacks. Arguably, this is one of the more difficult beats given the secrecy with which the INS guards much of what it does—a secrecy that some news organizations are now challenging on constitutional grounds.

Rick Tulsky, a projects reporter at the San Jose Mercury News, documented systemic failings in the INS in his award-winning investigative series on the treatment of asylum seekers. He explains how newsroom perceptions and circumstances make such stories a tough sell to editors. **Herschel P. Fink**, a former journalist who is now a news media lawyer, writes about the First Amendment case he recently argued in which the Detroit Free Press, three other Michigan newspapers and Rep. John Conyers challenged the government's policy of secret deportation trials of aliens. (The Sixth Circuit ruled in favor of the plaintiffs, while in a similar press case, the Third Circuit ruled in favor of the government. This means it is likely the U.S. Supreme Court will decide on this issue.) **Hilary Burke**, who covered immigration for the Herald News in West Paterson, New Jersey and is a plaintiff in the Third Circuit case, tells about the difficulties of trying to report on "special interest" detainees held at the nearby Passaic County Jail. And freelance author **Mark Dow** describes the reporting restrictions an INS official put into place when they said a question he asked was "inappropriate."

Los Angeles Times writer **Patrick J. McDonnell** has reported on immigration during much of the past two decades. In making the case for why reporters should want to do this beat, McDonnell argues that "the immigration beat more than makes up in substance what it lacks in newsroom cachet." Miami Herald editorial writer **Susana Barciela** offers many reasons why press coverage of the INS is essential. Among them: "Power without public scrutiny has … bred lack of accountability, incompetence and abuse."

Freelance photographer **Steven Rubin** used a Media Fellowship from the Open Society Institute to photograph INS detainees. Images from his documentary project appear, along with stories and insights collected along the way. "What these images do," Rubin observes, "is begin to put a face on the staggeringly large numbers [of detainees] and help make their situations less deniable, more real."

Chris L. Jenkins, a metro staff writer for The Washington Post, tracked what happens to unaccompanied minors who seek asylum in the United States: "In trying to learn about their lives and tell their stories," Jenkins writes, "we were confronted by hurdle after hurdle, and this prompted us to push harder to keep government accountable." Former New York Times columnist **Anthony Lewis** describes the use of personal storytelling as a strategy to focus attention on policies that the press neither covered well nor explained when they became law. And **Richard Read**, The Oregonian's senior writer for international affairs, takes us on the journey of that paper's Pulitzer Prize-winning watchdog reporting of the INS. He begins in its earliest stages as reporters track local INS incidents, then moves us through stages of extensive investigative reporting and tough-minded editing. ■

Investigating What Happens to Refugees in INS Detention

This is the kind of story that 'many of us entered journalism to do.'

By Rick Tulsky

No one really doubted why Ponnampalam Kailasapillai had made a desperate effort to flee his native Sri Lanka in 1996 in search of a new life in Canada. Like many Tamils, Kailasapillai and his family found themselves caught in the midst of the long and bloody civil war between the ruling government and militant members of the Tamil minority. A farmer in the contested part of the country, Kailasapillai described encountering repeated abuses and detentions both from government troops who mistrusted his allegiance and from rebels who demanded support.

And so, that September, the slight farmer, then 46, set out on the journey to Toronto, on the other side of the universe. There, he hoped to settle in the growing Tamil community where his brother had made a new life and then arrange for his wife and daughters to follow. He made his way to Switzerland and then to Dulles Airport, outside Washington, D.C. But as he sought to transfer planes one more time, alert inspectors of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) discovered that Kailasapillai's passport was not his own and took him into custody.

There, he was sent to a jail in Virginia and forced to navigate the U.S. asylum system if he wished to avoid being sent back to Sri Lanka. He remained locked up as Immigration Judge Joan Churchill denied him asylum in 1996, ruling that although the Tamil had a credible fear for his safety, the violent conditions of Sri Lanka did not amount to the kind of persecution intended under asylum law.

Though he wanted only to make his way to Canada, Kailasapillai remained locked up, in one Virginia jail after another, as the weeks turned into months turned into years. The American University Law Clinic attempted to help him navigate his freedom, but U.S. officials continued to oppose his release, even as his psychologists warned that Kailasapillai's mental condition was deteriorating because of posttraumatic stress disorder caused by his previous detentions in Sri Lanka.

It was not until April 2001 that INS officials would finally release Kailasapillai, when Justice Department officials finally reversed themselves and ruled that he could go free as long as he went on to Canada—as he always intended. In midafternoon on April 3, after clearing the Canadian border at Niagara Falls, Kailasapillai finally was reunited with his brother. He was four and a half years late.

Covering the INS in a Systemic Way

The case of Kailasapillai would seem to be precisely the kind of issue that makes a free press so valuable: a vulnerable, harmless person who wanted only freedom and safety and instead had become a victim of a harsh and arbitrary system. Even better, at issue was a system that went to the very heart of how well America served as the beacon of freedom and justice.

In fact, Kailasapillai was one of thousands of Sri Lankan Tamils who have been locked up in the United States, many for extended periods, as they tried to escape to safety in Canada. And Sri Lankans were only a small percentage of the thousands of people who undertook great risks to flee danger in their homeland, only to be locked up with the threat of being sent back to whatever they may face back home.

For better or worse, I became involved in asylum issues in 1997, after having read articles by New York Times reporter Cecilia Dugger and columns by Anthony Lewis [see Lewis's story on page 25] with some horror stories involving asylum seekers. I called Lewis to seek his views about the need for someone to explore what was happening on a more systemic basis. He was totally encouraging.

In early 1998, I undertook such a project through an Alicia Patterson Foundation Fellowship. Two years later, I had found a system that failed to fully ensure that refugees fleeing desperate situations could count on protection in the United States:

- In 56 cases that were reviewed as part of the project, asylum seekers won their cases only after spending more than one year in custody once they arrived in the United States seeking help.
- One of the most significant factors in whether asylum seekers would win their cases was the luck of which administrative immigration judge was assigned to hear the case. An analysis of more than 175,000 cases heard by 219 different judges showed extreme disparities in how asylum cases were decided: Some administrative judges granted more than half the cases they heard, while others were granting fewer than five percent of the cases.
- One third of asylum seekers were left to present their case without an attorney; many have little or no familiarity with English or with the legal standard for asylum. A Georgetown University study deter-

mined that six times as many people who are represented win asylum as those who are not.
- Because the system is heavily decentralized, the treatment of asylum seekers varied greatly based on where they entered the country—and which INS district was responsible for their custody.

The result was a system with recurring tragic stories, such as that of Kailasapillai. But the situation was far from black and white: Government officials were not out to dismantle the Statue of Liberty. At issue was how the Justice Department was expected to fulfill the dual role of protecting refugees needing liberty and safety and protecting U.S. citizens from people illegally entering the country by falsely claiming asylum.

International refugee law, embraced by the United States as law, recognizes that victims of persecution often have no way to obtain valid passports or visas from governments that are persecuting them. But by the mid-1990's, there was growing fear that the system had gone too far in protecting refugees. There was economic fear, that illegal immigrants were taking jobs. And there was fear of terrorism, as people who had entered the country seeking asylum were linked to the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center and to the shooting of CIA employees outside the agency's Virginia headquarters. INS officials adopted regulations to tighten the process; but Congress, spurred in part by a "60 Minutes" segment highlighting the potential for abuse, ignored agency opposition and went further.

The issue was clear: When thousands of people with nothing beyond the shirts on their backs and a tale of horror show up at the borders each year, how should the country respond to protect its borders without causing further harm to victims of persecution and torture? It is a question without easy answers, and the answer became only more difficult for refugees after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. That should provide obvious fodder for journalistic investigation: questions about government policies and how those policies are carried out, with the likelihood that the most vulnerable of people are being hurt by them.

INS Stories: Tough Sell in Many Newsrooms

Those stories were widespread even before the terrorist attacks of September 11, attacks which triggered only tighter controls that furthered the likelihood that some persecution victims would suffer more harm as they sought the safety and protection of the United States. And yet, journalistic interest in pursuing such stories seems surprisingly tepid. "This is the time we most need the press to investigate and ask proactive questions about whether the policies of this administration are just," said Elisa Massimino, Washington director of the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights. "We're seeing exactly the opposite, at a time when the rights of those most vulnerable are being put at further risk."

There are a number of reasons that such stories are not more sought after—reasons that involve problems specific to the issue and reasons that involve problems more industry-wide.

- There is, of course, the skepticism with which the issue is greeted by many editors and reporters who know how readily people would fabricate stories if it would help them find better lives in America. An awful lot of friends and colleagues expressed concern at the time and effort I was spending to document the stories of people who they presumed—wrongly, in many cases—were untrustworthy; that suspicion certainly has only grown since the threat of terror became more real.
- There is the problem any systemic project faces in an era of tight budgets and pressure for more productivity. Taking on the systemic abuses of asylum seekers takes time and money, two commodities in shorter supply these days; the amount of effort is accentuated by the secrecy that surrounds the system and the time it takes to pry information loose.
- And there are the worries that pervade editors' offices these days, about whether the hardships facing anonymous foreigners without proper papers are an issue that any reader cares about. Refugees are not likely to find favor in focus group discussions about what readers want from their morning paper.

Massimino adds one more reason: "The government assault on noncitizens has become more nuanced and reporters have to work harder. I've had a number of disappointing conversations with reporters who lose interest as soon as they realize what they have to do to really explore the issue." I was lucky. Having undertaken the project through a fellowship, I was left to argue with only myself about time and money. In the end, the San Jose Mercury News embraced the articles and gave them a good home.

But pursuing stories of the systemic failures of the immigration system remains no easy sell. It requires risk-taking by news organizations that understand the topic might be expensive to pursue and will generate a significant amount of distressing e-mail from readers who are angered and frightened by the world. But it is, in the end, what many of us entered journalism to do: to serve as a voice for Ponnampalam Kailasapillai and others like him, the persecution victims who have no other voice as they suffer at the hands of an arbitrary system.

Seen in those terms, the decision doesn't seem so difficult after all. ■

Rick Tulsky, a 1989 Nieman Fellow, is projects reporter at the San Jose Mercury News. Tulsky's project on refugees and the INS won a Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award in 2001. This year Hofstra University gave him its Francis Frost Wood Courage in Journalism Award for undertaking and completing the project despite many obstacles.

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'Freedom of the Press Becomes a River Without Water'

An attorney describes the fight for access to news in a post-September 11 world.

By Herschel P. Fink

I suspect I am among the few who can look back over a lengthy professional career and point unhesitatingly to one specific, defining event that sparked a passion and sent them down a lifelong career path. In my case, it has been a twin career of journalist for almost a decade followed by news media lawyer for decades more. Now, as an attorney representing the Detroit Free Press, I am in the midst of an access case for journalists that many predict will be the next major Supreme Court press decision and the first to challenge the U.S. Justice Department's inconsistent post-September 11 handling of terror-linked cases.

This defining event occurred for me in an unlikely place when I was a student journalist and read a snippet of pure poetry in a 1956 dissenting Pennsylvania Supreme Court opinion contained in my press law textbook. The dissent took issue with the majority opinion, which affirmed the criminal contempt convictions of seven journalists who photographed the defendant in a murder trial outside a courtroom in violation of a local court rule. The majority rejected the defense that there existed a First Amendment right to gather news. Justice Musmanno, however, wrote this ringing affirmation of his belief in the right of a free press to gather and print the news:

> Freedom of the press is not restricted to the operation of linotype machines and printing presses. A rotary press needs raw material like a flour mill needs wheat. A print shop without material to print would be as meaningless as a vineyard without grapes, an orchard without trees, or a lawn without verdure. Freedom of the press means freedom to gather news, write it, publish it, and circulate it. When any one of these integral operations is interdicted, freedom of the press becomes a river without water.

I've never forgotten that "river without water" quote and have used it countless times when I've taught student journalists press law for a decade at a state university in Detroit. It also inspired and guided me to uncover and report news as a reporter and still drives me in the courtroom to win access for clients, including the Detroit Free Press, which has never in the almost 20 years that I have been privileged to represent it been reluctant to battle for access to information that the government wants to keep secret.

The Challenge of 'Special Interest' Rules

The quote received new meaning from a unanimous decision of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit on August 26, 2002 in a case in which the Free Press, three other Michigan newspapers, the ACLU, and Representative John Conyers, Jr. challenged the U. S. Attorney General on his policy of holding secret deportation trials of aliens. Estimates tell us that about 400 detainees bear this "special interest" designation, which the Attorney General gives without public explanation in cases in which the person is suspected of being linked to terrorism. Such individuals are held incommunicado. The government will not publicly acknowledge their arrests, and their trials are held in secret, away from public and press view, inaccessible even to their own families.

The plaintiffs challenged that arbitrary blanket policy in a lawsuit filed in March 2002, in federal court in Detroit. The lawsuit, Detroit Free Press, Inc. v. John Ashcroft, arose specifically from the case of an Ann Arbor, Michigan man, a Muslim and native of Lebanon, who remained in the United States illegally for three years after his student visa expired. His case was brought to the attention of the Free Press when friends and family of the man, Rabih Haddad, complained about his detention and secret trial to the newspaper.

The plaintiffs won a strong ruling from U.S. District Judge Nancy Edmunds in April 2002, holding that deportation trials must be conducted in public and that specific portions could be closed only on particularized findings to accommodate overriding national security concerns, consistent with U.S. Supreme Court rulings that require open criminal trials.

The government appealed Judge Edmunds' ruling, and in its opinion affirming her decision, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit broke new and important First Amendment ground. The August 26 opinion by Court of Appeals Judge Damon Keith itself contained language that should inspire the next generation of journalists and press lawyers. Judge Keith sharply chastised the government and warned that "democracies die behind closed doors," and held that the press is the deputized guardian of the public's liberties. While the Sixth Circuit's ruling was limited to secret deportation trials, quasi-judicial administrative proceedings, the opinion broadly suggested that access to other categories of administrative proceedings, including executive and legislative, were within the ambit of the First Amendment, echoing that 1956 dissent by Justice Musmanno that long ago inspired me.

The case is the first appellate decision questioning the Bush administration's secrecy tactics. A parallel case in the Third Circuit, however, came to the opposite conclusion on October 8, 2002. [See story by Hilary

Burke, whose newspaper is a plaintiff in the New Jersey case, on page 9.] As The New York Times wrote in a front page story on October 9, "the conflict between the two courts—the only ones to rule so far on the issue—makes it reasonably likely that the United States Supreme Court will consider one of the cases." That possibility is strong as I write this.

The government has claimed that Haddad, who is now seeking asylum in the United States, was the head of the Global Relief Foundation, an organization Haddad claims is an Islamic charity but that the U.S. Treasury Department has declared is a terrorist organization that funds worldwide terrorism. My argument in court emphasized that the Free Press sought only to observe and to report, but expressed no position on the merits of Haddad's deportation.

Connecting Journalism With Democracy

Agreeing with the plaintiffs, the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals first acknowledged the federal government's "near-unrestrained ability to control our borders," but the court added that "The only safeguard on this extraordinary governmental power is the public, deputizing the press as the guardians of their liberty .... Today, the Executive Branch seeks to take this safeguard away from the public by placing its actions beyond public scrutiny. Against noncitizens, it seeks the power to secretly deport a class if it unilaterally calls them 'special interest' cases. The Executive Branch seeks to uproot people's lives, outside the public eye, and behind a closed door. Democracies die behind closed doors."

Rejecting the government's argument that its plenary power over immigration gave it the right to operate in secret, the panel, also composed of Circuit Judge Martha Daughtrey and District Judge James Carr of Toledo, Ohio, reminded the government that "The dominant purpose of the First Amendment was to prohibit the widespread practice of governmental suppression of embarrassing information." The court continued that "It would be ironic, indeed, to allow the government's assertion of plenary power to transform the First Amendment from the great instrument of open democracy to a safe harbor from public scrutiny." The court warned that "when government selectively chooses what information it allows the public to see, it can become a powerful tool for deception."

The court concluded that "a true democracy is one that operates on faith—faith that government officials are forthcoming and honest, faith that informed citizens will arrive at logical conclusions .... Today, we reflect our commitment to these democratic values by ensuring that our government is held accountable to the people and that First Amendment rights are not impermissibly compromised. Open proceedings, with a vigorous and scrutinizing press, serve to ensure the durability of our democracy."

The decision in this case also signaled a readiness of the Sixth Circuit to apply the First Amendment to a broad range of other governmental information. It rejected the government's argument that earlier Supreme Court decisions had concluded that the First and 14th Amendments do not guarantee the public a right of access to information generated or controlled by the government," going on to say that "we believe that there is a limited First Amendment right of access to certain aspects of the executive and legislative branches."

Press Coverage After the Sixth Circuit's Decision

As Haddad's deportation trial has proceeded in public following the Sixth Circuit decision and pending further government appeals, facts and questions have emerged that would have remained secret had the press, the ACLU, and Representative Conyers not fought and won the case.

As I argued in court, governmental incompetence thrives in secret. While the exposure of unfairness to and the protection of minorities from arbitrary deportation proceedings are admirable reasons for openness (the Detroit area is home to one of the largest Arab communities outside of the Middle East), the exposure of governmental incompetence is of at least equal weight. Testimony in Haddad's deportation trial revealed that the government was aware for perhaps three years that he had traveled extensively back and forth from Afghanistan and Pakistan to the United States, sending money and equipment to those areas. Yet the government allowed Haddad to operate freely, if illegally, in this country. Only after the events of September 11 did the INS—the same INS that extended a student pilot visa for Mohamed Atta, one of the twin tower airplane bombers, six months after he died crashing his hijacked plane into the World Trade Center—arrest and seek to deport him.

Yet behind a wall of secrecy the public (and Congress) could hardly know of the INS's inadequacies, or call for changes to protect the country. The INS and its immigration judges are a part of the Justice Department and report to Attorney General Ashcroft, who ordered the secrecy.

From my student days, my passion for openness and access to governmental information was shaped by those words in a 1956 court dissent. Now, they resonate in the words of Court of Appeals Judge Keith, "Democracies die behind closed doors." ■

Herschel P. Fink, a partner in Honigman Miller Schwartz and Cohn LLP, Detroit, Michigan, represented the Detroit Free Press before the District Court and U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit in Detroit Free Press, Inc. v. John Ashcroft. The other plaintiffs were The Detroit News, The Ann Arbor News, the Metro Times, the American Civil Liberties Union, and Democratic Congressman John Conyers, Jr. of Detroit.

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The People's Right to Know vs. Government Secrecy

An immigration reporter joins a legal case to gain access to court hearings.

By Hilary Burke

Tokmak Lokman, a 30-year-old Turk, spent nearly nine months in a Paterson, New Jersey jail, even though he had neither committed a crime nor violated immigration laws. Lokman had a pending political asylum claim when he was arrested at the Long Island gas station where he worked. FBI and immigration agents who were investigating another Turkish national did not believe him when he said he didn't know the man. So, he says, he was arrested. In late June, he was finally deported.

Lokman was one of about 1,200 immigrants caught up in the government's terror investigation since September 11, 2001. Although he was jailed just minutes away from the Herald News newsroom in West Paterson, getting to him to tell his story was a challenge.

Many Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) detainees were designated of "special interest" to the FBI because they were being investigated for possible terrorist ties. In the name of national security, the government has kept their names secret and held secret immigration hearings. Because many of these detainees didn't have lawyers, immigrant advocates and attorneys worried that they had not been informed of their legal rights. They were jailed on minor immigration violations, such as visa overstays, that the INS did not even pursue prior to September 11. Immigration judges often denied their requests for release on bond, or set bond at an unusually high amount. At least three dozen immigrants were jailed for 28 days or more without being charged with any crime or immigration violation, according to Amnesty International. Some detainees languished in jail for months after receiving deportation or "voluntary departure" orders because they hadn't received final clearance from the FBI.

Immigration and Naturalization Service detainee Issam Sadak, 22, from Morocco, lived in Manhattan before the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center. He now lives at the Passaic County Jail and had been there for a month after he was detained because his tourist visa had expired. *Photo by Ryan Mercer/Herald News.*

Telling the Stories of 'Special Interest' Detainees

At the Herald News, we knew we had to tell these stories. Members of our local Arab community were being questioned, arrested and detained. We also knew we had to challenge the government's blanket secrecy. With the help of attorneys, advocates and family members, I was able to report the stories of nine special interest detainees, several of whom I interviewed directly. Our projects editor, Janon Fisher, interviewed Lokman and others after his phone number in the newsroom circulated through the INS jail dorms in Paterson. But he received less help than I did from the attorneys and advocates he worked with, some of whom refused to reveal the names of long-time detainees for privacy reasons. Several lawyers denied him permission to publicize their clients' cases, citing general concerns about retribution from the INS. Fisher believes their reticence fed into the government's obfuscation.

When terrorists attacked the World Trade Center, we knew that people in our coverage area would be directly affected. After all, Paterson is just 15 miles west of Manhattan over the George Washington Bridge. But we didn't foresee that the Passaic County Jail in Paterson, which stretches the span of a scraggly urban block, would

become one of the most important holding stations for special interest detainees.

As the paper's immigration reporter, I began covering the story before its local relevance became clear. In early October 2001, I spent two days in Newark's immigration court, which is part of the U.S. Department of Justice. Armed guards lined the hallways. Shackled, special interest detainees were brought up one by one. The court docket, which is posted publicly, did not include their names. In a directive written on September 21, 2001, U.S. Chief Immigration Judge Michael J. Creppy had ordered judges to close all proceedings involving special interest cases to the press and public, including family members and friends. He further ordered court administrators to neither confirm nor deny information about the hearings.

During my two days at the immigration court, I didn't even try to enter a courtroom. However, through conversations with attorneys, family members, and an interpreter, I realized that Arabs were being rounded up as part of the September 11 investigation. Most special interest detainees were Arab, South Asian, or Turkish men, Justice Department figures show.

The first special interest detainee I interviewed was Mohammad al-Raqqad, a 37-year-old Jordanian who was arrested on September 13, 2001. Through his lawyer, I asked him to call me collect from jail. Raqqad was eager to find anyone who could help him get back to his wife and children in Jordan. An immigration judge had granted him a "voluntary departure" order, allowing him to fly home at his own expense. But he hadn't received final clearance from the FBI, so he was stuck in jail. "They finish the investigation with me. Why [do] they hold me in the jail?" Raqqad asked in mid-November, two months prior to his release. We published a profile of Raqqad, explaining his frustration at his seemingly indefinite jail stay and conveying that, despite his experience, he still wanted to move his family to the United States some day.

Raqqad called me again when he and six other INS detainees staged a hunger strike to protest their departure delays. All seven hunger strikers were Muslim. We wrote about their protest, and as Raqqad's detention wore on, I mentioned his plight in other INS-related articles. Twice the INS denied my request to personally interview him. By the time the agency granted me permission, he had been told he would fly home in a few days. When he got to Jordan, Raqqad called to thank me for publicizing his case. He also made his wife, whose English was limited, thank me over the phone.

Nael al-Fawair, a Jordanian national, says he came to America because he believed he would be living in a free democratic society. After spending months in the Hudson County Correctional Center in Kearny, he says he wants to go back to Jordan and never return because his faith in the U.S. government to protect his rights has completely vanished. ***Photo by Ryan Mercer/Herald News.***

The only lengthy face-to-face interview I did with a special interest detainee was with Nael al-Fawair, a 36-year-old Jordanian who had been transferred to INS custody after a traffic stop. Fawair was married to a U.S. citizen, but had been deported before. The INS allowed a photographer and me to meet with Fawair in a designated, nondescript room. An INS spokesman asked us not to take any pictures of the detainees behind bars. Fawair was angry that he had been in jail for nearly three months after agreeing to deportation, which he claimed he was coerced to do. He said that FBI agents did not question him once during his detention.

This Reporter Joins a Lawsuit

In late January, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of New Jersey sued Hudson and Passaic counties in state court for keeping the names of INS detainees secret. The company that owns our newspaper, North Jersey Media Group, filed an amicus brief in the case. About this same time, the ACLU, four Michigan papers and Rep. John Conyers filed suit in federal court in Detroit; in that case, the plaintiffs challenged the government's efforts to keep secret the deportation hearings of Rabih Haddad, a cofounder of an Islamic charity that the government shut down in December 2001. [See story by Herschel Fink about this case on page 7.] An ACLU official asked me if the Herald News would be willing to help mount a similar challenge in New Jersey. Our company was willing. But I needed to document my thwarted attempts to attend special interest hearings.

An immigration attorney advised me of the case of Raza Ahmed, a 42-year-old Pakistani man who was being held in the Paterson jail. When I asked the day before Ahmed's hearing which judge would be hearing it and when, the court administrator said she was not allowed to tell me. The following day, on February 14, another Herald News reporter and I tried to attend Ahmed's hearing. The immigration judge said the hearing was closed in accordance with instructions from top Justice Department officials. One week later, I was barred from observing the immigration hearing of Malek Zeidan, a 41-year-old Syrian national who had overstayed his visa. The immigration judge cited the September 21 Creppy directive.

Within two weeks, the ACLU-N.J. filed suit in U.S. District Court in Newark on behalf of North Jersey Media Group and the New Jersey Law Journal, arguing that blanket closure of special interest hearings violated the public's First Amendment right to open proceedings. The judge ruled this policy unconstitutional in May.

He also ordered the government to stop enforcing the Creppy directive nationwide while the case was appealed. Justice Department lawyers sought to have the order stayed, so that hearings could remain closed while they appealed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit in Philadelphia. The Third Circuit denied the government's request for a stay, but on June 28, the U.S. Supreme Court granted the stay, without explanation.

Later in the summer, in the case stemming from Haddad's closed hearings, three judges from the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati ruled unanimously that categorical closure of such hearings threatened democracy. Soon after, in our case, a two-to-one ruling by the Third Circuit found in the government's favor, concluding that national security concerns override the public's right to open hearings. The ACLU is considering an appeal of this decision to the full Third Circuit or to the U.S. Supreme Court directly.

The importance of subjecting the government's anti-terrorism strategy to public scrutiny was evidenced in the case of Malek Zeidan. Federal agents "discovered" Zeidan when they went looking for his former roommate. He became a special interest detainee and was cleared of suspicion only after he challenged his closed immigration hearings in federal court. With two lawyers and ample press coverage, Zeidan spent a mere six weeks in jail before being released on $10,000 bond. Without the help of aggressive attorneys and probing reporters, Zeidan might very well have spent months locked up—and no one, save his jailers, would have known. ■

Until early October, Hilary Burke covered immigration for the Herald News, a 38,500-circulation daily newspaper based in West Paterson, New Jersey. She has since moved to South America to work as a freelance journalist. To track developments in the North Jersey Media Group, et al. v. Ashcroft, et al., visit www.aclu-nj.org.

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Challenging the Reporting Limits Imposed By the INS

For asking an 'inappropriate' question, a reporter's access is curtailed.

By Mark Dow

During the 1990's, I was working as a freelancer in Miami, covering the Immigration and Naturalization Service's (INS) Krome detention center for the weekly Haïti Progrès. Haitians made up the majority of Krome detainees at the time—as they do again today—but there was also an international mix. Nigerians had become a particular target of detention officers' discrimination and brutality because these prisoners tended to be politicized, assertive and English speaking.

One Nigerian asylum seeker told me that an INS detention officer had walked into the men's dormitory and threatened sexual assault against him and other prisoners. At least one other detainee told the same story. I contacted the public affairs office of the Miami District INS to request a tour of the detention center. According to the INS's own detention standards, media tours are easily arranged, no big deal. In practice, of course, public access is a very different matter.

Public affairs officer Lamar Wooley denied my request. He said that giving tours to individual reporters would be disruptive, but that when a pool of reporters expressed interest we could arrange something. Since Krome was known for its cowboy-style operation (the Miami INS would later be critized by the Office of Inspector General for its efforts to hoodwink congressional investigators), it was not hard to find reporters on the Miami beat interested in touring the facility. Eleven writers and photographers, including representatives of The Miami Herald, New Times, The Washington Post, and Reuters, requested a pool tour. Request denied. Spokesperson Wooley explained District Director Walter Cadman's decision: "Nothing unusual has happened or is happening to war-

rant this type of coverage.... Obviously there has to be a reason to disrupt the routine at the Krome facility."

A flurry of letters going up to the INS commissioner followed. Amnesty International wrote to the district director: "If access to Krome has been denied to reporters and others, we question why this has occurred at a time when concerns about conditions there have been expressed publicly by detainees, by advocates, and in the media." The agency finally relented. And while INS media access policy gives wide latitude to the district director in structuring press pools, the INS's concession simply confirmed that its original decision had been intended to obstruct any independent investigations. Not one of the original 11 requesters was part of the group allowed in, and only one of the original media organizations was included.

The pattern has been repeated around the country. When the ACLU was investigating the Varick Street detention facility in New York, the INS refused access to the housing areas. A corrections expert and former warden who was assisting the group said that he had "never experienced [that] in over 39 years of professional work in facilities including Alcatraz and Marian," the ACLU later reported.

All this may seem like ancient history to those who first became aware of the INS and its detention system after September 11. The agency's culture of lawlessness and disinformation was in place long before John Ashcroft became Attorney General, though it is no secret that under Ashcroft the Justice Department has taken full advantage of our national trauma to codify the excessive powers it has been working toward for many years. At least the INS's secrecy is less of a secret now.

The agency is more shameless now, too. Recently the Newark District INS decided that I was asking the wrong questions of the wrong people. Back in April, I had requested and was granted permission to interview a Pakistani detainee who was a victim of the post-September 11 dragnet. Anser Mehmoud was picked up from his home by the INS in October. Agents told his wife that he would probably be home the next day since the FBI had already questioned and cleared him. He then spent more than four months in solitary confinement at MDC, the federal prison in Brooklyn, though he was never charged with anything other than immigration violations. He was later moved to the Passaic County Jail in Paterson, New Jersey, where I met him, before he was sent back to Karachi.

The day after I interviewed Mehmoud, I got a call from Newark INS Public Affairs officer Kerry Gill. He asked me whether it was true that when I visited the jail, I had asked the on-site INS official how many special interest detainees were being held there. When I said yes (I hadn't gotten any answer, of course), Gill went on at length to tell me that my question was "inappropriate," since the Attorney General had ordered the district director not to disclose these numbers. He added that I knew this, having been on a media tour of the Hudson County jail when the district director herself said so. Although I was more than a little shocked by Gill's reaction, I tried to have a reasonable conversation with him and explain to him that the Attorney General's orders to his subordinates did not apply to journalists. We actually had a conversation about whether journalists are obligated to stop asking questions when government officials say that they won't answer them.

Gill also alleged that I had violated INS detention standards concerning media visitation. When I asked which standard he was referring to, he decided that our conversation was over. From now on, he said, my requests for visits with detainees in the Newark district, by order of the district director, would only be permitted when an INS public affairs official was available to accompany me to the jail (though the official would not be present during the actual interviews). I wrote to District Director Andrea Quarantillo, asking her to remove this restriction. She has refused, directing me, as Gill had, to the INS Web site where I could find INS detention standards on media visits. Like Gill, she failed to cite any specific standard that I had supposedly violated. In refusing to lift the restrictions placed on me, Quarantillo wrote: "I have found no evidence or indication on your part that you plan to observe the agency's procedures for the release of official information."

The arrogance at work here affects all of us. Interference with journalists does not compare to the harm the agency can do to the prisoners it is hiding, but these two forms of repression are connected. The New Jersey INS banned Jesuit Refugee Service Bible classes in its Elizabeth Detention Center after teachers and their detained students discussed a taboo topic: detention. More recently, District Director Quarantillo pulled out of a public meeting set up by immigrant advocacy groups when the organizers refused to comply with the INS condition that journalists be forbidden from participating.

It should be clear that the Department of Justice cannot decide which questions reporters can ask or of whom we can ask them. I believe that we should challenge this lawlessness head on, and a number of fine reporters have been doing so. But others are not willing to lose the limited access they now have by advocating for more. Back in Miami years ago, I contacted The Associated Press reporter whom the INS had asked to direct the pool tour of Krome. He was glad to hear how the tour had come about, saying he knew that the INS must have been up to something to offer a tour when he had not requested one. Then he got nervous and asked me not to use his name. He said he still needed the INS to return his calls. ■

Mark Dow is a poet and freelance writer. He won a Project Censored Award for his reporting on INS detention and is working on "American Gulag: Inside U.S. Immigration Prisons" for the University of California Press (2003). He would be grateful to reporters willing to speak with him (anonymously or otherwise) about their experiences with the INS.

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Why Reporters Should Want to Cover Immigration

It's a big and important story. Editors don't interfere much. And the public cares about the issues.

By Patrick J. McDonnell

"I cover immigration." That has been my mantra for much of the past two decades. It sounds self-explanatory, as if to say, "I cover City Hall," or "I cover the White House." But, in important ways, documenting the immigration story is a singular experience compared to other, more traditional beats. The immigration beat more than makes up in substance what it lacks in newsroom cachet.

For one thing, the immigration story has a freeform quality that can be liberating. It generally lacks the daily grind of press conferences, canned statements, hyped developments, and other pseudo-news that tend to clutter the existences of even the best reporters. Of course, there are breaking stories that absolutely need to be covered—a surge of migrant rafts appears off the Florida Keys; a border patrolman shoots a Texas goat herder; inmates revolt at an immigration lockup. But chasing such episodes comes with the nitty-gritty of any beat.

As a rule, though, few if any editors will even know the name of the area Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) chief, for instance. (All will inevitably be able to identify the mayor, police chief, sheriff, etc., and might even have strong opinions about these ostensible newsmakers.) This pervasive knowledge gap about immigration can be a plus: It allows resourceful reporters the space to follow their instincts, almost always the best route to creative, unpredictable journalism.

The point here is reportorial freedom, coin of the realm of distinct journalism. The best editors—those not hung up on "managing" enterprising and passionate reporters mischaracterized as "high maintenance"—know that the most compelling stories emerge from journalists prowling around out in the world, far from desks and memos and meetings. Some dead ends are inevitable.

The Immigration Beat

The fact is, virtually no one—certainly few editors—has a fully formed vision of what the immigration beat is supposed to entail. Immigration policy and law can be so complex as to stump experienced trial lawyers. And yet this seeming paradox: Millions closely follow the twists of the immigration debate, many turning to the ethnic press for developments that fall below the radar screen of the mainstream media. The immigration beat may seem pretty far down on the newsroom hierarchy, but a lot of people care. Nuanced coverage *is* appreciated.

Why is there so much unfamiliarity among journalists about immigration? Generational and cultural factors have a lot to do with it. The reemergence of large-scale immigration in this country is a relatively recent phenomenon, one the press didn't start attempting to come to terms with seriously until the mid-1980's or early 1990's. By that time, a lot of the people who are today's newsroom veterans had already formed their core journalistic agendas. Many of us were products of the civil rights era and tended to view the nation's racial/ethnic make-up through a white-black lens. Immigration questions seemed peripheral, as well as being hopelessly convoluted, full of inconsistencies, maddening subtleties, and shades of meaning.

This is changing now, especially among younger journalists. It's heartening to see how many new reporters are enthused about mining the field for stories—though some must negotiate

An undocumented family of strawberry pickers from southern Mexico hiding in a makeshift hole in Southern California after a day's work in the fields. ***Photo by Liliana Nieto del Rio.***

around editors who suspect they are too sympathetic to the immigrant plight. Many of these younger reporters came of age in the new America, a place that did indeed grow more ethnically "diverse" (pardon the buzzword) in the past two decades or so. Quite a few (like myself) are the children of immigrants, or immigrants themselves. A personal immigrant experience—the lingering sense of exile, loss and apartness that can persist for generations—is something that marks you for life, for better or worse.

But the immigration beat's fundamental allure isn't a question of reportorial freedom or newsroom positioning. Lots of financial and other beats rely on insider's knowledge; nearly every topic can be approached in a nonconventional manner. Rather, the great beauty is the range of coverage possible under the immigration umbrella—and the sense that one is documenting a great social transformation.

I first arrived as a reporter in California at a time when thousands gathered each evening along the canyons and river levee in Tijuana, marching north at dusk like worshipers on a hurried pilgrimage, negotiating brush, swamps and freeways in all weather conditions. The nightly tableau was truly startling.

Would-be immigrants crossing the U.S.-Mexico border at night with the San Diego, California city lights in the background. *Photo by Liliana Nieto del Rio.*

Yet, at that time, we in the press seemed less interested in the long-term consequences. Surely, this level of sustained mass movement of people had far-reaching implications beyond the borderlands.

The border led me to thematically linked stories like the sweatshop economy, examining the effects of Washington's efforts to "reform" immigration law, writing about the stunning Latino political rise in California, analyzing ethnic change across the country, to name a few topics. Then there are all the "foreign" stories associated with immigration, from civil strife in Central America, the Caribbean, and Asia to the ongoing political upheaval in Mexico. Immigration became a kind of prism through which to view a dynamic social and cultural evolution. And September 11, 2001 exposed a whole new constellation of concerns, all orbiting around a central question: How does a country keep potential terrorist infiltrators out of an open society?

A tired and frightened family keeps watch on U.S. border patrol as they look out for oncoming cars before running across an interstate freeway near San Diego, California. *Photo by Liliana Nieto del Rio.*

Finding the Unpredictable Stories

Of late, the years spent courting sources and grappling with often arcane guidelines have paid off handsomely in the currency of fresh angles and scoops. One caveat about covering immigration: The topic does tend to draw a lot of predictable reporting—focusing, say, on the exploitation of guileless immigrants or, at the other end of the spectrum, unscrupulous newcomers scamming the system. As with any beat, the best stories tend to be found below the surface. The backlash to immigra-

tion that lit up the political klieg lights in California during the mid-1990's snuck up on the press. A lot of us just hadn't taken notice of how enraged many native-born U.S. residents had become about the seismic shift in the state's demography. Some journalists dismissed the reaction as merely racist—a vast oversimplification. This was a case in which bleeding-heart, knee-jerk reactions and untested preconceptions didn't help elucidate the real story. As with so much good journalism, covering immigration should force reporters to process viewpoints and arguments alien to their own.

As I write this, I am sitting in Rome, a city that, if you haven't visited it lately, is a good place to view the immigration story in global context. La dolce vita proceeds apace—and is sweeter than ever for many Italians. But these days cheap immigrant labor helps sustain the good life in the Eternal City. The guys at the car wash are Peruvians, the cleaning staff in the building across the street is Sri Lankan, the nannies pushing strollers tend to be Filipino, the street merchants African, the manual laborers Eastern European, and the hands picking grapes for the national beverage are often young Arabs.

Every Western nation is grappling with some kind of trauma about foreign settlers. Anti-immigrant demagoguery and fears of the spread of Islamic fundamentalism are now news staples in Europe. Mass immigration is one of the defining social issues of our time—and also one of the most misunderstood. The immigration story has legs, especially as economies founder and people look for scapegoats, as we saw in California a few years ago. Immigrants and refugees are not going away. In fact, multitudes are en route at this moment, on foot, aboard ships and aircraft, crammed into vehicles, however they can make the journey. And their impacts are to be measured far beyond the workplace. As someone once said about the Germans, "They wanted workers, but they got people."

The news business needs more curious recruits with some heart, smarts and energy who grasp the phenomenon for the profound one that it is.

"I cover immigration." It's an admission to be proud of as the new millennium marches on. ■

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Covering the INS in South Florida

'Without dogged media pursuit, little will change the INS culture of impunity.'

By Susana Barciela

Thomas Sylvain didn't have much of a chance. Because of his criminal record, the Miami INS District deported him to Haiti in January 1999. No one knew then that he was HIV positive. The fatal mistake was that he shouldn't have been deported at all: Thomas Sylvain was a U.S. citizen born in New York.

Immigrant advocates protested his deportation at the time. Yet his deportation officer and INS superiors doubted Sylvain's claim to citizenship. Yves Colon, the Herald reporter then covering immigration, wrote a number of articles as advocates, family members, even the Haitian Consulate in Miami, continued to complain about how the INS had deported Sylvain. But the INS left it to The Miami Herald to produce the documents that proved Sylvain's citizenship. Colon tracked down Slyvain's father, who gave him Sylvain's original birth certificate and

Emmanuel Moise, left, 14, Ernest Moise, 40, and Daniel Moise, right, 17, have received asylum while the children's mother and sister are being detained by the INS after arriving from Haiti on December 2001. The Moises hope their relatives will be released and not sent back to Haiti. *Photo by Carl Juste/The Miami Herald.*

U.S. passport.

At that point he had been in Haiti two months and already it was too late. By the time the INS admitted its mistake and flew him back to Miami in May, Sylvain had full-blown AIDS. He went into cardiac arrest in the ambulance taking him from the plane to Miami's public hospital. He died not long after.

Now, more than three years since his death, the INS hasn't yet explained why this tragedy happened. INS documents responding to a Freedom of Information Act request by Colon arrived all blacked out, except for occasional prepositions. And the public has no assurance wrongful deportation won't happen again.

But then, that's not unusual for immigration matters in south Florida. Though the public has a right to know why the INS sets a certain policy, how abuses happen, who was responsible, and what has been done to prevent more misconduct, that information often must be dragged out of the agency by the press, immigration advocates, the courts, even hunger strikers. Post-September 11, we're experiencing and witnessing similar battles for access and transparency writ large.

Of course, none of this secrecy has helped shape an effective instrument of the nation's complex and contradictory immigration policies. Power without public scrutiny has instead bred lack of accountability, incompetence and abuse. The INS suffers from an inbred culture that shields malicious employees and incompetent managers—so much so that internal investigations drag for years and results aren't publicly made known.

The INS's Krome facility, a long-troubled detention center on the edge of the Everglades, is illustrative. In 1992, a number of INS staffers complained that Joe Kennedy, then Krome's chief detention officer, had used a stun gun against a male deportee in the groin area. Witnesses said that the act set off a melee in which three officers ended up injured. A subordinate also said that Kennedy had tested the weapon on him. Yet stun guns aren't issued or authorized for use by INS detention officers.

A fence at a detention center. *Photo courtesy of The Miami Herald.*

But none of this was investigated until five years later and then only because the episode became public. Herald reporter Andres Viglucci had heard about the stun gun before from INS officers who knew him from his numerous stories about misconduct at Krome. Eventually, INS sources contacted him, willing to go on the record after the shenanigans quietly came out during an INS employee's unrelated grievance complaint.

Viglucci's meticulously reported story quoted one of the witnesses as saying, "Who was I going to report it to? My entire chain of command was involved." At that time, the witness had verbally complained about the stun gun to Kennedy's bosses, he said. The witness was reassigned soon afterward, and when his contract for temporary work ended, it wasn't renewed. The detainee hit with the stun gun, and the detainees who saw it, weren't around to complain, either. They had been deported after the incident. Only after the incidents were exposed in the press did the INS begin an investigation, removing Kennedy from his post for the duration.

That's not to say that all INS employees are corrupt or incompetent. In covering immigration issues since 1997, I've met a number of INS professionals who balance the law, common sense, and compassion. Many have called me and other reporters who cover immigration to give us tips or simply vent. They have a tough job enforcing unpopular Congressional mandates. It's too bad that their good work is undermined by INS staffers and managers who abuse their power and tolerate intolerable abuse.

South Florida knows those INS dysfunctions better than most places. Census 2000 figures show that Miami-Dade County has the highest concentration of foreign-born residents of the nation's major metropolitan areas: 51 percent out of 2.2 million people. And as those

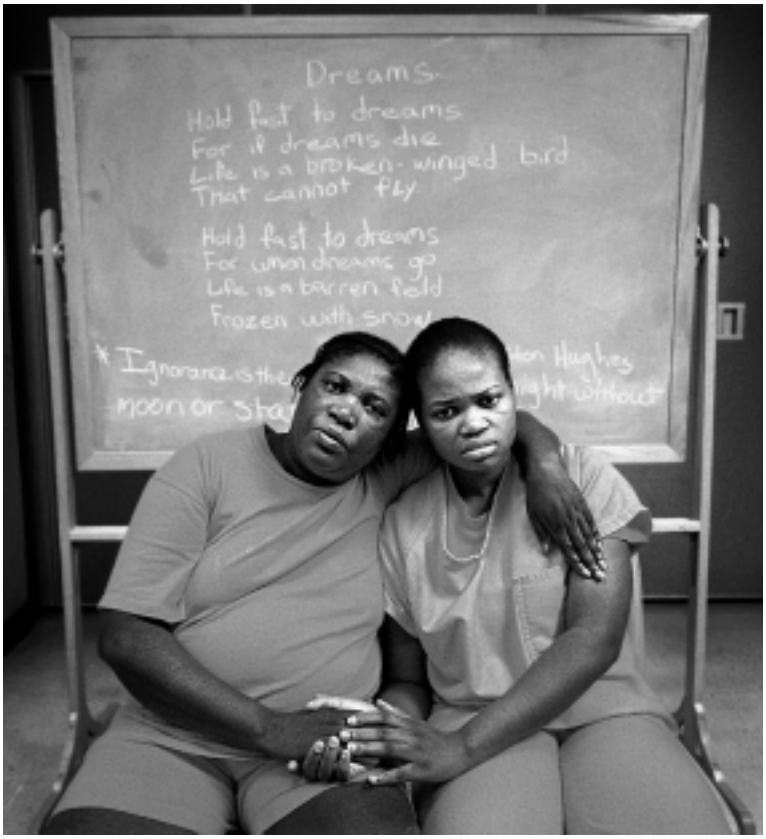
foreign-born populations have grown, so have the proportions of people who are naturalized citizens in Miami and Fort Lauderdale metro areas—most notably to some 23 percent of the population in Miami-Dade alone.

With so many immigrants, the INS comes under intense questioning by the public. Immigration advocates and others with complaints about the INS are not shy about contacting the press, either. There are more stories than reporters could hope to cover. We write what seems endless articles and editorials. Any improvement, however, is difficult to gauge because old problems, like problematic INS employees, don't go away.

Remember Kromegate in 1995? That's when Miami INS staffers prepared a cover-up for a congressional tour. Days before its arrival, Krome was so overcrowded that 55 women were sleeping on cots in the clinic lobby. After the INS transferred or released more than 100 detainees, lawmakers saw significantly improved conditions that distorted reality. The scam was discovered when 45 offended INS employees blew the whistle in a letter faxed to Congress and later released to the press.

By 1996, federal investigators had concluded that local INS officials deliberately set out to hoodwink the congressional delegation. The evidence included an e-mail from Constance Weiss, then Krome chief, which said that detainees had been "stashed out of sight for cosmetic purposes."

Of the five INS executives recommended for the stiffest discipline afterward, four remain with the agency today in high-level jobs. Most, including Weiss, were cleared by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board. Weiss downplayed the e-mail as a "flippant" remark and maintained that she "didn't do anything wrong." After having her demotion rescinded, she returned to the Miami District as one of the headquarters executives overseeing Krome.



Jesiclaire Clairmont, left, 45, and daughter Lina Prophete, 21, are being detained while her son was given asylum (her sons are pictured on page 15). On the blackboard is the Langston Hughes poem "Dreams." ***Photo by Carl Juste/The Miami Herald.***

The truism told to me by a former Krome officer is fitting: "Screw up, move up." Indeed, Krome keeps coming under federal investigation. The last one began in 2000, after about a dozen women detainees, many reluctantly and fearing retribution, came forward to accuse some 15 officers of sexual abuse. They told of being fondled, seduced with promises of release—even raped.

Two years later, several of the women who testified before a grand jury have been deported. To "protect" them from abuse, all women detainees were transferred to a maximum-security county jail where conditions are far harsher than for the male detainees left at Krome. Initially, the INS even barred the press from interviewing women there face to face. A Herald attorney had to send a letter threatening to take the INS to court before a Herald reporter and I were allowed to get in to interview three detainees who wanted to talk with us. Thanks to Florida's first-rate public access laws, it would have been illegal to keep us out of the county facility.

Yet the federal probe has netted only two INS guards who both pled to misdemeanor consensual sex charges, and the investigation into sexual misconduct now appears stalled. Most disturbing is how eerily the women detainees' allegations paralleled those that sparked a federal investigation 10 years earlier—one that ended without prosecutions or public findings. The message: Detainees who talk get punished, while abusive officers can coerce an inmate into having sex and face a slap on the wrist. Who's going to find out, anyway?

No wonder questions about policy, its implementation, and misconduct keep cropping up. With post-September 11 security taking top priority, what little scrutiny was aimed at the INS's treatment of ordinary, nonterrorist immigrants is even weaker now. Today the burning local concern is a policy that the INS denied for three months, before the truth came out in court: Haitians who routinely used to be released to pursue credible asylum claims are now being detained until they are granted legal status or deported. Local advocates had to sue to find out why. The INS testified that it is detaining the asylum seekers to deter other Haitians from taking to the sea to get to Florida. But why would anyone want to keep a deterrent policy a secret?

More than 200 such Haitians have been locked up since December last year when the Coast Guard rescued an overloaded boat in danger of capsizing. Some of them already have been

deported. Immigrant advocates are in full swing decrying the inhumane policy. In damage-control mode, the Miami INS is restricting access. It even tried to bar me from visits to the detained Haitian women asylum seekers organized by a state senator and later when INS Commissioner James Zigler toured.

Why was I barred? John Shewairy, the Miami INS district chief of staff, told me that media are not allowed on "show tours." With remarkable lack of respect for elected officials and for the right of the public to know what its government is doing, he added, "Let the senator have his show somewhere else."

I went on both tours, along with other journalists. We were lucky that the INS detainees were in a county jail and that a number of elected officials were attending both tours. On each occasion I had to call county officials familiar with the state's public access law, who then ordered jail staffers to let all journalists in. Prepared for the usual treatment, I carried a copy of the Herald's letter to the INS that cites specific statutes.

But none of that has lessened the INS's desire to deflect scrutiny. Nothing but a top-to-bottom shake-up will stop the cycles of inept and corrupt behavior. Structure, staff and culture all need radical reform. Without dogged media pursuit, little will change the INS culture of impunity. ■

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Documenting How INS Detainees Are Treated

After his Nieman year in 1999, freelance photographer Steven Rubin, who lives near Washington, D.C., became aware of the plight of asylum seekers and other immigrants detained by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. He felt strongly that visual documentation was lacking and wanted to use his camera to bring their stories to public attention. Rubin received a Media Fellowship from the Open Society Institute to photograph immigrants held at INS detention centers and county jails across the country beginning in early 2001. In this issue, he shares part of his visual project and tells us about the work involved.

By Steven Rubin

The images I took highlight the lives of those held in detention. They also document the impact this detention has on family members. These photographs focus our attention on compelling stories of injustice and convey some of the disturbing, even un-American truths about immigrant detention both pre- and post-September 11, 2001.

On my journey, I photographed asylum seekers who fled persecution abroad only to be greeted by lengthy detention, unaccompanied minors imprisoned with adults, indefinite detainees or "lifers" who cannot be deported and yet are not released, and long-time legal permanent residents facing deportation to their country of origin, a place many have not known since childhood.

The photographs published in Nieman Reports capture moments in the lives of but a few of an estimated 200,000 to 250,000 immigrants detained by the INS each year. What these images do is begin to put a face on the staggeringly large numbers and help make their situations less deniable, more real. Ultimately, they challenge Attorney General John Ashcroft's insistence that concerns about the degradation of civil liberties serve only to support terrorists and are but empty protests over "phantoms of lost liberty."

Outside cameras are rarely if ever allowed inside where most INS detainees are held. My entrance required lengthy, repeated and often futile negotiations with the INS or county jails. Occasionally, I'd be dealing with both bureaucratic layers simultaneously. When permitted, access was typically restricted to a small room normally used for attorney-client meetings within a detention facility. Typically, the room would have white walls, a desk, two chairs, and offer no hint that we were sitting in a detention center or jail.

Working under such restrictions presented many challenges, not the least of which was the difficulty posed in "documenting" detainees in this decontextualized environment. On occasion, my short leash would be stretched a little, allowing a slightly expanded view of detainee life beyond the interview room. But the leash was never fully removed. While the difficulties and frustrations I faced in gaining access to INS facilities with a camera were many, the testimonies I encountered once inside reminded me that no matter how difficult it was for me to get inside, it was always more difficult for detainees to get out. As a photojournalist I feel a deep commitment to harness photography's power in drawing public attention to their stories.

The following anecdote reflects the grim reality I witnessed. Toward the end of a long day spent interviewing and photographing male detainees at the San Pedro facility in Southern California, I spoke to a young detainee from Cambodia. He had arrived in this country as a refugee at the age of five with his entire family. Now in his mid-20's, he had grown up in America,

gone to school here, and got into trouble with the law in a gang-related offense. He was a legal permanent resident who never applied for citizenship and as a result now faced deportation to a land he can barely remember. Turning to me, he quietly asked if I knew what INS stood for.

"Yes," I responded, thinking I was being helpful, "the INS means the Immigration and Naturalization Service."

He then shook his head in disagreement and softly but confidently replied no.

"What do you mean by no?" I asked.

"No. That's not what it means," he said.

Thinking that he misunderstood me, I restated the spelled-out version of this well-known acronym, this time more slowly and with exaggerated enunciation the way people tend to talk to non-snative English speakers.

He shook his head again more emphatically.

"So what then does the INS mean?" I asked him.

"I'm not sure," he said, looking me straight in the eye.

"You're not sure?"

"That's right, I'm not sure" he replied with an odd smile.

"You're not sure?" I mimicked.

In response his head started to nod in agreement as he repeated, "I'm not sure. I'm not sure."

I was puzzled, more than a little annoyed, and fearful that my annoyance was starting to show. At this point, he helped me understand his grim humor by role-playing questions he repeatedly asks INS authorities and their responses. "How much longer will I be detained?" "I'm not sure." "When will I get to see my lawyer?" "I'm not sure." "I've filed four requests to be seen by the doctor, when will I get an appointment?" "I'm not sure." "When will I see the deportation officer? Go before the immigration judge? Be released? When will they fix the phones? Will they deport me back to Cambodia, a country I haven't known since I was five?" Each time the same answer from the same authoritative-sounding source reveals nothing. "I'm not sure."

In a few short moments, this man offered me a profound insight about what it's like to be caught in the INS abyss. This isn't a semantic game. For those held in detention, INS stands for "I'm Not Sure." This is what it's like to be detained indefinitely by the INS, confined to an uncertain future in a poorly managed system with few rights and fewer still that are enforced. Being detained by the INS means living in a limbo where little is known, answers are few, and nothing is certain except the tedium of daily life. Try navigating through this convoluted system. Try making sense of immigration law without a lawyer (something an estimated 90 percent of detainees must do). Try doing this while facing deportation, and the picture sharpens into a clearer focus of what it's like.

As this young man's message sinks in, his questions make me think of mine that emerge as I travel to these places. When will the INS be truly reformed? When will it stop detaining asylum seekers? When will it no longer lock up children? When will its treatment of immigrants be more consistent with American values and its practices more in accordance with international law? When will the huge processing backlog be eliminated? When will its dysfunctional and bureaucratic ineptness be a thing of the past? When will security concerns no longer dictate immigration policy?

To each of these questions must come the response, I'm not sure. But what I am quite certain about is that it won't happen anytime soon. ■

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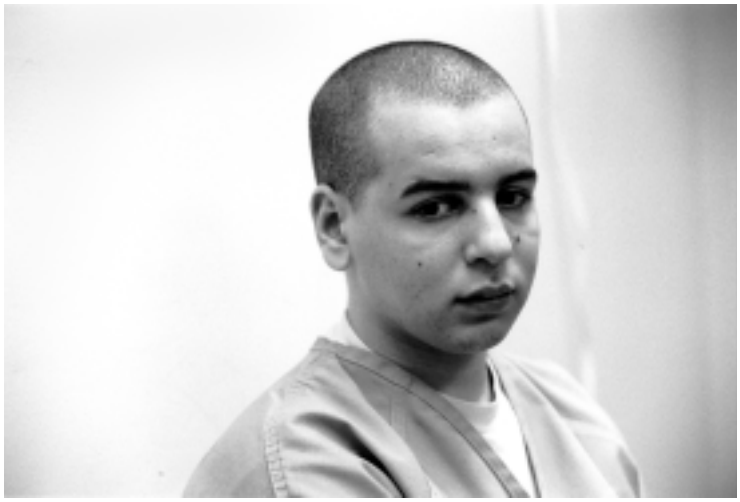

Mohamed Boukrage was 10 years old when a car bomb in Algeria killed his parents and sister. According to his testimony, Mohamed eventually made his way to France, then Italy, where he spent four years doing odd jobs and living in abandoned buildings. When he got word that the Italian police were deporting undocumented immigrants, he hid on a cargo ship that arrived luckily, or so he thought, in the United States.

Mohamed arrived in New York in October 2000 and sought asylum. Immigration authorities did not believe him when he told them he was 16, and they subjected him to a dental examination and wrist x-ray to determine his age. On the basis of these controversial tests, the INS declared Mohamed was at least 18 years old and brought him to an adult prison, the Elizabeth Detention Center, just south of New York City.

"They said they were taking me to a hotel and then they brought me right here," Mohamed said, speaking through an interpreter. "They handcuffed me and treated me like a criminal. I feel I'm being punished for no reason."

His asylum application was denied in 2001 and then denied again on appeal in 2002. Other attempts to free him from detention by his pro bono lawyer were denied by the courts. Unable to deport him back to Algeria since he has no papers, the INS deported him to Italy in July 2002, after 21 months in detention. —S.R.

Photo by Steven Rubin.

Facing imminent deportation back to his native Guatemala for a criminal conviction, Ronald Zetino is visited by his young son and family. The Mira Loma jail is rare in that it allows visiting families to sit this close to their detained loved ones without being further separated by security glass. —S.R.

Vigil against INS detention policies outside Elizabeth Detention Center in Elizabeth, New Jersey. —S.R.

Photos by Steven Rubin.

Phoutone Chanthabouala has been detained by the Immigration and Naturalization Service since April 1998. Phoutone came to the United States in 1981 with his family when he was nine years old. All refugees from Laos, his entire family arrived in San Francisco; later they moved to Illinois and ultimately settled in Arkansas. In Arkansas, Phoutone got into trouble with the law and served approximately three years' jail time until he was paroled in 1997. On a visit to his parole officer in 1998 the INS took him into custody and has held him ever since.

The INS picked him up with the intent of deporting him back to Laos, a country he has not known since he was a child. Laos lacks sufficient diplomatic relations with the United States and as a result does not accept the return of INS detainees. The INS cannot then deport him and will not release him, and so he sits in detention indefinitely, waiting for years on end.

He was photographed at the Oakdale Detention Center in Oakdale, Louisiana, but is normally detained in the Iberia Parish Jail in in rural Louisiana. —S.R.

After nearly 18 months in detention, Hua Zhen Chen learns from her lawyers that her next asylum hearing before the immigration judge will not occur for another four months. Having ignored three previous requests for parole and denied another, the INS appeared resolved to keep her locked up in Virginia jails at least through the court date. But due in part to the tireless efforts of the Washington, D.C.-based Capital Area Imigrants' Rights Coalition and the work of her student lawyers from American University Law School, Chen was finally released on bail two months later. —S.R.

Photos by Steven Rubin.

Detained immigrants at an INS facility in San Pedro, California face deportation to home countries they left as young children. Those pictured are from the countries of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, all places that lack sufficient diplomatic relations with the United States and as a result do not accept the return of INS detainees. The INS cannot deport them and won't release them. So they remain in detention indefinitely. Hence their name, indefinite detainees or "lifers." —S.R.

Farhana, a young Pakistani Muslim woman, came to the United States in September 2000 fearing for her life. Because her family believed that she had shamed them, they beat her, confined her, and threatened her with "honor killing." Determined to flee Pakistan but with no hope of obtaining proper identification and travel documents on her own, Farhana turned to unscrupulous smugglers who provided her with false documents and an airline ticket to the United States and advised her to file a false application for asylum upon her arrival. When she attempted to enter the country using the false documents, the INS detained her.

Following the smugglers' instructions, Farhana made a false application for asylum in the immigration court. But before the judge ruled on her case, she recanted the false claim and made a new application for asylum in the court based on her true circumstances. In September 2001, following a prolonged and complicated asylum hearing, the immigration judge denied Farhana's asylum application, finding that she was disqualified from asylum due to her earlier false application. Nonetheless, the judge was convinced that Farhana would be persecuted if she were returned to Pakistan and granted her application for withholding of removal.

At this point, the INS continued to detain Farhana at the Wicomico County Detention Center in Maryland. The events of September 11 further complicated her custody situation: Shortly after the attacks the FBI questioned her several times at length, and the INS chose to appeal the judge's ruling. Finally this spring, after more than 18 months in detention, the Board of Immigration Appeals upheld the INS's appeal of the judge's grant of withholding of removal, dismissed an appeal of the judge's denial of asylum, and ordered Farhana deported to Pakistan. She was deported in June 2002. A Pakistani interpreter who assisted her lawyer on the case recently expressed that he does not expect Farhana to live more than six months after returning there. —S.R.

Photos by Steven Rubin.

Juan Belalcazar, a 23-year-old asylum seeker from Colombia, stands beside the razor wire lined fence at Krome Service Processing Center, an INS detention facility in Miami, Florida where he has been held for seven months. According to an account, Belalcazar fled the political violence in his country after witnessing an assassination and then being threatened. He escaped to Panama by boat, traveled to Guatemala on foot, trucks and buses, and then traveled as a stowaway in a ship to Louisiana. Upon his arrival he was deported by the INS back to Colombia. Upon his return to Colombia he immediately traveled again to Panama and then on to Guatemala, whereupon he traveled yet again as a stowaway, this time arriving in Miami. He applied for asylum in Miami and was immediately taken into detention at the Krome facility. Belalcazar's application for asylum was denied and is now on appeal. The INS refuses to release him while his case is on appeal, even though he has committed no crime. Speaking in his native spanish, Belalcazar said, "They say this is the land of liberty, but ..." shaking his head, "I don't find any liberty." —S.R.

Muslim detainees during Friday prayer at Elizabeth Detention Center in Elizabeth, New Jersey. —S.R.

Pakistani and Mexican detainees, who are facing deportation, wait inside a holding cell before being escorted upstairs to their immigration hearings. Woken up in the middle of the night, they were transported several hours by van to make the morning docket in Baltimore. Neither man had any legal representation. The jackets and striped uniforms are standard issue at their place of detention, Wicomico County Jail on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, and are used to distinguish INS detainees from other prisoners held there. Their only contact with the outside world, a pay telephone, can be used to make collect or calling card calls at frequently exorbitant rates. —S.R.

Photos by Steven Rubin.

Reporting on Children Held in INS Detention

'It was this human contact that gave us the ability to get to the heart of his story.'

By Chris L. Jenkins

At first, it appeared to be a straightforward but intriguing news item: Four teenagers from Tanzania had vanished from an international gathering of Boy Scouts in Virginia, setting off an intense search by federal and local officials. The adolescents were soon discovered 80 miles to the north in Washington, D.C. and, along with other reporters, I wondered whether their wanderlust was an adolescent prank or a serious attempt to flee the impoverished yet stable African nation. The story had the potential of breaking some of the news doldrums of the summer of 2001.

It became less of a quirky story, however, as soon as the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) quickly moved the teens to a secure detention center in Alexandria, Virginia, even though they had valid tourist visas. There, they were prevented from speaking with their parents or lawyers for several days. Even though foster homes were available, the INS insisted on keeping them detained and whisked the scouts to another secure facility in Pennsylvania, a three-hour drive from their attorneys, who had hoped to get them placed with a Richmond foster family.

Reporting on Unaccompanied Minors

The actions by the INS inspired a deeper look at what happens to unaccompanied minors who seek asylum in this country. As journalists dug farther into INS procedures, we found striking inconsistencies in the government's handling of the case: If these four scouts had valid tourist visas, was it legal for the INS to detain them? And if the teens had a legitimate fear of going home, as their lawyers claimed, why was the INS trying to deport them so quickly and without a hearing to determine if they had a valid case?

The case of the four Tanzanian Boy Scouts was just one of several well-publicized examples of how INS procedures, which would later come under scrutiny from Congress in light of the September 11 attacks, were not only riddled with inconsistencies but in some cases violated federal regulations.

Another African teenager, mentally retarded, unable to speak English, and abandoned by his mother in France, arrived alone at Dulles Airport from Europe. Stopped with a fake passport, Malik Jarno, under questioning, admitted that he was a minor fleeing political persecution in Guinea. But despite a birth certificate that showed that he was 17 years old, INS officials still did not believe him and placed him in an adult immigration facility where he claimed he was subjected to beatings from not only adult inmates but also guards.

...reporters gave voice to neglected people who, in some cases, were afraid to speak about how they were being treated.

When, with the help of an interpreter, I spoke with him by phone—after days of wrangling with the INS for permission—he couldn't understand why no one would listen to his story. He had no access to a lawyer, an advocate, or even someone who could speak his language, for nearly nine months. Eventually the INS conceded that he was a minor and transferred him to a youth facility in Pennsylvania. But this happened only after intensive media coverage of his case. And while he still had to convince a judge about his asylum claim and remained fearful about his future, he was relieved that he was finally heard: "I can't believe that someone really wants to listen to me," he told me.

About 5,000 unaccompanied children are detained by the immigration agency each year. A third are secured in juvenile jails with American teens who have committed felonies, a practice that is against the law in most circumstances. Several years ago a national study found that 80 percent of these unaccompanied minors were not given attorneys, which is also a violation of federal standards. In some cases, children were returned to their countries without their claims being heard by an immigration judge.

Such circumstances presented an opportunity for me and other journalists to give voice to an invisible group of youths, who sometimes would be in fatal jeopardy if they returned to their own countries. Yet in trying to learn about their lives and tell their stories, we were confronted with hurdle after hurdle, and this prompted us to push harder to keep government accountable. With each successive story, I sought more access and looked for more evidence about the propriety of the federal government's policies and procedures. INS information on conditions of specific children was often lacking and incomplete. The agency also made it difficult to interview the Boy Scouts, claiming that reporters needed written permission from each teenager's parents before they could

be interviewed. (Permission is required, but can be granted either by parents or the director of a detention center. In this case, it never was.)

Children Are Wary of Journalists

Children in detention are also often not trustful of reporters, so establishing trust was a delicate undertaking. Often the minors had fled dangerous circumstances and oppression only to be traumatized further in this country. The jails that many were kept in were not the safe haven that they had imagined, so they became suspicious of everyone, including reporters.

In other cases they were afraid of retribution. Juan Carlos, a 17-year-old Salvadoran who fled his country last year, was one of those. When I first interviewed him after he was released from a juvenile jail in Arizona, he was still hesitant to divulge even his last name, where he was from, and some of the specific details of his life. He was scared that after speaking with a reporter he would be discovered by forces that had driven him from his country. Any talk of having his picture taken was immediately dismissed. Like many of the children I interviewed, he was placed in a detention center filled with American criminals and was held without access to an attorney for months.

Carlos was hesitant to discuss those details until we'd had many conversations, which happened after he was released and awaiting his asylum hearings. That I was able to have this series of conversations allowed him eventually to open up and talk honestly about his experience. We first started with a phone interview, and then we had two successive face to face meetings in which he grew progressively more comfortable with me. It was this human contact that gave us the ability to get to the heart of his story.

Despite the difficulty in gaining access to the youths—and in some cases in getting them to open up—the resulting stories complimented congressional lawmakers' efforts at addressing the issue of INS treatment of minors. During special senate hearings and private interviews with congressional members, children not only told of hardships in their home countries but also about their INS isolation here in the United States. By February 2002, enough momentum had been gained on Capitol Hill that reforms were made in INS policies and procedures regarding undocumented minors.

Reader feedback about such stories lets journalists know that their relentless digging through what seemed at first—in the case of the Tanzanian Boy Scouts—to be a straightforward news story constituted a public service. By doing what journalists are trained to do—asking good questions of public officials, finding examples of where a public institution is broken, and remaining skeptical until all the evidence is gathered—reporters gave voice to neglected people who, in some cases, were afraid to speak about how they were being treated. ■

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The Press Paid Little Attention When the Immigration Act Was Passed

By personalizing cases of injustice, a columnist connects readers to its consequences.

By Anthony Lewis

Mary Anne Gehris was brought to this country from Germany when she was a year old. She grew up in the South and sounds it. But she never did anything about becoming an American citizen until she was 33, in 1999. She filled out the forms, and in October she got an envelope from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) in the mail.

She expected that it was a notice telling her when and where she would be sworn in. Instead, the letter told her that she was targeted for deportation.

Why? In 1988, she pulled a woman's hair in a quarrel over a man. Georgia prosecutors charged her with battery, a misdemeanor. On the advice of a public defender, she pleaded guilty. She received a one-year sentence, suspended for a year's probation.

Such sa guilty plea was not a ground for deportation at the time. But eight years later, in the Immigration Act of 1996, Congress defined such trivial misdemeanors, with a one-year sentence, as "aggravated felonies" requiring deportation of the offender. And the statute was applied retroactively.

I wrote a column for The New York Times about the case of Mary Anne Gehris. It embarrassed the INS, whose top officials really understood that such outrageous deportation cases should not be brought. But in the end the Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles saved Gehris. It pardoned her for her hair-pulling crime, commenting that it wished Washington would find ways to "bring some measure of justice" to such cases and use "the nation's resources more appropriately."

Why Write About Immigration?

During a five-year period I wrote several dozen columns about the 1996 Asylum and Immigration Act and its consequences. Nieman Reports asked me to try to explain why, as a columnist, I did this—and to say whether, in my judgment, what I reported and wrote had any effect.

While the legislation was going through Congress in 1996, I wrote about its harsh provisions. I was critical of the Congressional draftsmen and of President Bill Clinton and Attorney General Janet Reno, who hardly objected to the cruelest clauses.

The effect of those early columns was nil, so far as I could tell. Politicking against immigrants was the fashion, and that was the spirit that prevailed in what Congress passed and the President signed. The press took almost no interest in the legislation, scarcely covering it and certainly not explaining the drastic changes it was going to make.

The lesson, I think, is that describing immigration legislation in the abstract—without providing human examples of its consequences—does not excite either readers or editors. That was so in this case, even though the law was so harsh on its face.

My first encounter with an individual result of the 1996 act came when I was telephoned in 1997 by John Psaropoulos, a British subject who worked for CNN in Atlanta. He had taken a two-week vacation in Greece. When he flew back to Atlanta, he was told to go to an INS office because his work visa had expired, and the necessary papers for its renewal were filed late.

When he went to that office, two men put him in handcuffs. He was held in a detention center overnight, then put on a plane to Greece and told he was barred from re-entering the United States for five years. The "expedited removal" and five-year ban were under provisions of the 1996 act.

The punitive treatment for what was at worst a filing lapse was made worse by bureaucratic tyrants who over months promised to let Psaropoulos back in and then changed their minds. He was in the more acute anguish because he and his American fiancée were about to get married—if they could. I wrote a column.

The column brought a phone call about another victim, Martina Diederich. She was in a German tour group when she met Baxter Thompson of Alexandria, Louisiana. They fell in love and married. Martina was back in Louisiana when she ran afoul of INS officials who said she had the wrong kind of visa. She was held in the Orleans Parish Prison for eight days, then taken to a plane in handcuffs and sent back to Germany. (The 1996 act called for such mandatory detention.) I wrote a column.

The lesson, I think, is that describing immigration legislation in the abstract—without providing human examples of its consequences—does not excite either readers or editors.

Gradually, the public unveiling of cases like those began to evoke outrage in local communities around the country. Newspapers began to publish stories about them: The Oregonian in Portland, notably so. [See story by The Oregonian's Richard Read on page 27.] The INS became increasingly sensitive to being portrayed as the bully it often was.

Doris Meissner, INS commissioner in the Clinton administration, moved to try to bring some humanity—and common sense—into the agency's practice. She promulgated guidelines for the exercise of "prosecutorial discretion," in an attempt not to bring trivial, abusive deportation cases. Even Congressional sponsors of the 1996 act urged Meissner to take that step. The House then passed a bill to let aliens targeted for deportation seek discretionary mercy, but that effort died in the Senate.

Why did I write about the 1996 Immigration Act and its consequences? Because I believe in American justice, and I thought the 1996 law and its applications violated that ideal. It was that simple.

The Impact Reporting Has on Individuals and the INS

Did the columns make a difference? I think they helped to create understanding of how harsh immigration procedures could be. During the time I was writing these columns, the INS did try to moderate the most senseless actions.

Many individuals about whom I wrote were not helped: They remain expelled and excluded. But some were. John Psaropoulos returned to the United States and was married. Mary Anne Gehris took the oath of citizenship on February 9, 2001. Martina Diederich Thompson came back to Baxter in Louisiana. And every Christmas her mother-in-law, Cynthia Thompson, sends me a box of their homegrown pecans. ■

Anthony Lewis, a 1957 Nieman Fellow, was a columnist for The New York Times from 1969 to 2001.

WATCHDOG

The Oregonian Investigates Mistreatment of Foreigners

Reporters uncover 'a world of racism, sexism and questionable conduct.'

By Richard Read

The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service sealed its distinction as a clueless bureaucracy last March when its contractor mailed visa confirmations for two dead September 11 hijackers. President Bush called the action an inexcusable blunder. Outrage over the incident contributed to an overwhelming House vote to abolish the INS and split its functions between two bureaus.

But the agency's slipshod, abusive nature wasn't so glaring two years before, when reporter Julie Sullivan and I examined mistreatment of foreigners by INS officers in Portland, Oregon. Were these isolated incidents, we wondered, or did vindictive enforcement and bureaucratic bungling typify the agency's work?

Working with two other reporters, we answered that question in a six-part series that exposed INS abuses of power. The Oregonian is a regional newspaper, but we parlayed the local story into a national investigation. Amanda Bennett, our editor, set demanding standards of evidence for our reporting. But the frustrations we had as reporters in dealing with the INS paled in comparison to the agonies inflicted by the agency on foreigners who lacked constitutional protection.

U.S. Representative Janice Schakowsky, a Democrat from Illinois, told us that people complained more about the agency than anything else. "The INS is like an onion," she said. "The more you peel it away, the more you cry."

Finding INS Mistreatment

My first tip about INS mistreatment came in April 2000 from a local exporter who said immigration inspectors were citing visa technicalities to reject foreigners—often Asian businessmen and technicians—arriving at Portland International Airport. It turned out that inspectors routinely made a rejected foreigner take the next flight back to Japan or South Korea. But if the return flight had already departed by the time the paperwork was completed, the INS sent horrified foreigners in handcuffs to the local county jail.

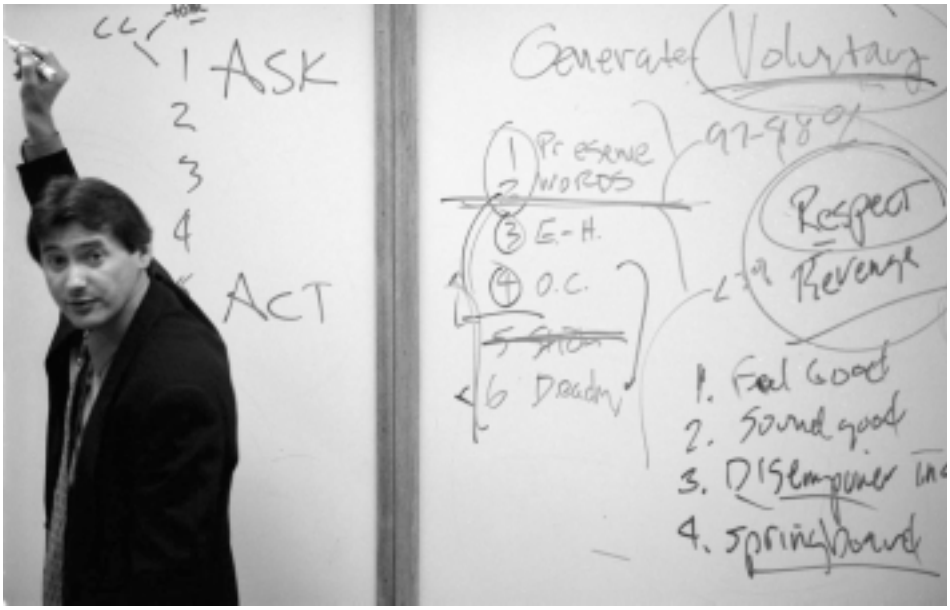
Earlier, Julie Sullivan had exposed the plight of a Chinese girl held by the INS in a county jail for weeks after gaining political asylum. Jailers referred to the 15 year old, held with five other Chinese teenagers, as "the girl who cries."

Fear of the INS ran so deep among victims of its harsh enforcement that we often had trouble finding people who would talk on the record. Acting on a reader's tip, I asked a moonlighting South Korean journalist to track down a Korean man who had been rejected at the airport. Kong Hee-joon, 26, had flown to Portland to train computer technicians. He found himself handcuffed, jailed for two nights, unable to contact his company or a lawyer, and then sent home. "Just because one document was missing," Kong said, "they treated me as a serious criminal."

The stories got worse. INS inspectors intercepted a Chinese businesswoman at the airport, strip-searched her, and jailed her for two nights before deciding her passport was legitimate. INS officers arrested the German wife of an American citizen after her visa expired: She was jailed, strip-searched, and deported to Germany without her breastfeeding daughter.

For every abusive INS officer we found we met others who labored conscientiously in an intractable system. Overworked agency employees, constrained by a harsh Immigration Act passed by Congress in 1996, were swamped by the sheer crush of people trying to get into the United States.

In a previous era, The Oregonian would have been content to focus its resources on news coverage of these



Lee Fjelstad, vice president of Verbal Judo, trains Portland INS inspectors. ***Photo by Motoya Nakamura/The Oregonian.***

daily developments, as the newspaper did leading up to the departure of Oregon's INS director. But in her quest to improve our regional newspaper, Sandy Rowe, the paper's editor, set no geographic limits on our reporting of this story. By the time the state's top INS official announced in September 2000 that he would quit, Amanda Bennett, then managing editor in charge of projects, had launched us on a full probe of INS practices. We asked two investigative reporters, Kim Christensen and Brent Walth, to join us in reporting this story from a national perspective.

With four reporters now on board, we met with Bennett and Managing Editor Jack Hart to plan how we'd go about telling this story. Potential topics seemed vast and amorphous. Journalists we admired, notably then-New York Times columnist Anthony Lewis [see his story on page 25] had long reported and written eloquently on the INS. And we didn't want to do the predictable "on the border" story about the agency.

We shared what we'd learned so far and agreed on the question that would ground our investigation: How does the INS treat people? [See Nieman Reports, Summer 2002, Watchdog Journalism Project for more details about how the reporters and editors arrived at this point.]

Chinese businesswoman Guo Liming describes being jailed for two nights and strip-searched by immigration officials in Portland, Oregon, who thought her passport was doctored. Guo and Hsieh Tsuhi, right, her fiancé and business partner, resumed their trip. *Photo by Motoya Nakamura/The Oregonian.*

Organizing the Investigation

After extensive reporting that built on our daily coverage, we broke our subjects into categories, such as bungling, corruption, secret prisons, and internal agency culture. We stated—for our own use—the strongest conclusion that we thought we could prove in each area. For example:

- The INS runs a secret, abusive prison system.
- The INS has fostered corruption in its ranks.
- The INS wrecks families.
- The INS has created an internal culture that has tolerated racism and abuse.

Then, during a later meeting, the four of us projected these statements onto a conference room screen. We treated each finding as a work in progress. Even though we anticipated that additional reporting would bear them out, we were resolved to search as well for contradictory evidence. In biased or inexperienced hands, driving toward conclusions in this fashion would be irresponsible. But we set rigorous standards of proof and basic rules of the road:

- We would publish only on-the-record material from primary sources, not from interest groups.
- We would find at least three examples for every point.
- We would focus on U.S. regions away from the borders where abuse would seem more likely.
- We would gather political opinion from both Republicans and Democrats, also by interviewing former INS officials from as many administrations as possible.
- We would compile clear statistical evidence.
- We would challenge each example and fact.
- We would probe the agency's conduct, not the immigration issue as a whole.
- If, by the publication date in December, we fell short of any conclusion, we would back down to a statement that reflected our findings.

Our reporting team came to this project with diverse experience, ranging from stints in The Oregonian's Washington, D.C. and Tokyo bureaus to writing books and breaking national investigative stories. Each of us gravitated toward the one or two topics we chose and led the writing on those subjects. Brent Walth kept us organized. Julie Sullivan fought the temptation to continue breaking daily stories. Kim Christensen wove the findings into a powerful lead story. Working on a tight deadline, we shared all that we found, learned from one another, and never had time to squabble.

As we reported the story, we assigned each category a jointly accessible file in the newsroom computer system. Each of us poured notes, documents, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, and leads into these files. Periodically, we met to assess what we had, and what we needed, in each area.

I focused on the internal culture of the INS, and my reporting uncovered a world of racism, sexism and questionable conduct. Portland officers jokingly tossed condoms into mailboxes of colleagues who were preparing to escort deportees abroad. This practice stopped only when their supervisor warned them that hiring prostitutes during work trips was unprofessional. A Cuban-American man described Anglo managers, who froze him out of an entry-level Vermont border-inspec-

tor job, as standing by while a coworker called him "Havana Club" and "poster boy" for affirmative action.

Bringing the INS Reporting to the Public

I turned in a story that I thought was compelling. It might have been, but Bennett pressed me to go further and determine whether the INS culture was any worse than that of other federal agencies. I interviewed Congressional overseers, former top Justice Department officials and inspectors general, law professors and judges. I compared numbers of internal investigations in the INS to those in other agencies. Earlier I had sent FOIA requests to every INS district in the nation to determine how line officers were evaluated.

Finally, with this additional reporting setting the context, the story passed muster.

We did all we could to get top INS agency officials to respond to our findings. But INS Commissioner Doris Meissner, who resigned three weeks before we went to press, never spoke to us. Only by showering interview requests on then-Attorney General Janet Reno, who oversaw the INS, were we granted last-minute marathon interviews with top agency managers. Many of their answers were vague and off-point. So Bennett played the role of INS defender as she tried to tear apart each story and conclusion.

Our stories generated extensive reaction from readers, members of Congress, interest groups, and immigration lawyers, but never a word from the agency itself. We expected to receive a rebuttal from the INS and were prepared to publish whatever the agency had to say.

Given our findings, none of us was surprised by the INS blunders and misplaced priorities that surfaced after the September 11 attacks. It turns out that while inspectors threw the book at families and businesspeople, the doors stood open for potential terrorists.

The Oregonian has continued to write about the agency. We've broken stories on the dysfunctional student-visa system. We covered the Portland police department's initial refusal to question foreigners from countries linked to terrorism. We've watched the Bush administration and Congress grapple with restructuring the INS, an entity that has endured dozens of studies, commissions and reorganizations in almost 70 years of operation. We see milk crates stuffed with immigration files stack up in corridors of swamped INS service centers. We watch inspectors try to run security checks using an antiquated computer system. We watch burned-out INS officers quitting for higher-paid jobs as sky marshals.

Claudia Young, center, is met by her husband and child. She was separated from her family after being deported by the INS and then allowed to return. *Photo by Ross William Hamilton/The Oregonian.*

We've seen some improvements. James Ziglar, President Bush's INS commissioner, tried to reform the agency's structure and culture. The Cuban-American inspector who was fired in Vermont recently won his job back—in Miami. But our conclusion to date is that the agency is more inept and less efficient than ever. Ziglar's reforms have been buried under a stream of urgent orders to boost security. Congress has poured nearly one billion more dollars into the agency, which struggles to stay ahead of mass defections of border-patrol agents. There are few signs that Americans are any safer today on account of INS efforts.

Now Congress and the Bush administration are preparing to dismantle the agency, putting its 35,000 employees into the new Homeland Security Department. The main Capitol Hill controversy over this reorganization has been neither boosting security nor improving processing of green cards and other benefits the agency administers, services that might well be neglected in the Homeland shuffle. Instead lawmakers have disputed whether INS employees should retain union representation.

The union issue is a sideshow in many respects, except that it does have significance for the work we do as journalists. We found that INS workers, who generally feared losing their jobs if they spoke with reporters, were able to do so if they held union-officer positions, however low in rank. In contrast, sky marshals, for example, are far less accessible to reporters, not only due to security prohibitions but also because of their lack of union cover.

As the INS prepares to vanish with two dozen federal agencies into the new Homeland department, its functions will likely become even more opaque. That's unfortunate as we enter an era in which immigration enforcement should be subject to more, not less, public scrutiny. ■

Richard Read, a 1997 Nieman Fellow and The Oregonian's senior writer for international affairs, won the 1999 Pulitzer Prize for explanatory reporting. The INS series, "Liberty's Heavy Hand," which won the 2001 Pulitzer for public service, is posted at www.pulitzer.org/year/2001/public-service/works.

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Environment Reporting

Four decades ago reporting on the environment was what **Paul Rogers**, natural resources and environment writer at the San Jose Mercury News, calls "a fringe pursuit." He writes that "the craft is now firmly entrenched as a key beat in American journalism." Even so, there are plenty of journalistic challenges described in stories written by reporters, editors and producers who cover this beat for newspapers, magazines, radio and television.

Philip Shabecoff, who covered the environment for 14 years for The New York Times, addresses the ambivalence "media managers" have about such stories and "their claim on the news hole," as well as their concerns about how reporters focus their coverage. **James Bruggers**, who reports on environment topics for The (Louisville) Courier-Journal, lets us know how the complexities involved in coverage today make it a tougher beat. **Jim Detjen**, who directs the Knight Center for Environmental Journalism at Michigan State University, argues for a new kind of environment reporting, blending the best aspects of traditional journalism with an effort to educate the pubic about the importance of sustainable development to arrive at "sustainable journalism." And **Bud Ward**, founding editor of Environment Writer, a newsletter for environment reporters, recalls another journalist asking why the environment beat is "so far down the journalistic pecking order" and provides some answers.

Through words and images, Boston Globe photojournalist **Stan Grossfeld** relives parts of his worldwide journey to document "The Exhausted Earth." **Charles Alexander**, a former Time editor who directed environment coverage for many years, contends that by failing to report in anything but a "scattered, sporadic and mostly buried" way on the "big story"—daily actions and inaction leading to environmental ruin—the "devastation of the environment will be partly our fault." As the National Journal's staff correspondent for environment and energy, **Margaret Kriz** keeps a watchful focus on environment policymaking in Washington, while recognizing the difficulties that beat reporters face in having to become knowledgeable about science, health impacts, government policy, economics, business practices, and civil rights issues. **Joseph A. Davis**, writer and editor of the biweekly "Tip Sheet" for environment journalists, offers an example of government impeding access to a report that reminds us why watchdog reporting is critical on this beat.

David Ropeik, a former TV environment reporter who is now at the Harvard Center for Risk Analysis, explains why it is important for journalists to understand how and why people perceive risks as a way of improving coverage of actual risks of environmental threats. Newsday's environment reporter **Dan Fagin**, who is president of the Society of Environmental Journalists, explains how issues about reporting on identifiable risk led him to have misgivings about many of the stories about air quality in neighborhoods near Ground Zero. As Fagin writes, "… for journalists who are serious about reporting risk in context, the air-quality issue was difficult, even maddening."

Michael Milstein, who covers natural resources and public lands for The Oregonian, examines the saturated news coverage of the Klamath River basin and dying salmon to help us see how complexities of environmental issues can get subsumed in tracking charges and countercharges of the effected parties. **Natalie Fobes**, a photojournalist whose work has

focused on salmon, wildlife and cultures of the Pacific Rim, describes her approach as exploring "the increasingly complex relationship between people and the environment." And **Tom Henry**, who reports on the environment for The Toledo Blade, shows how he uses storytelling techniques to connect scientific data about the environment to consequences in people's lives. For Henry, the key ingredients of such stories are power, passion and accountability.

Providence Journal environment writer **Peter Lord,** who directs the Metcalf Institute for Marine and Environmental Reporting at the University of Rhode Island, reminds us that what is happening in newsrooms—budget cutbacks and staff reductions—affects this beat. He urges editors to support professional development for environment reporters. **Timothy Wheeler,** editor of The (Baltimore) Sun's environment coverage, describes lessons learned when a large team of reporters (including the paper's environment reporter) and photographers responded to a downtown tunnel fire in which potentially dangerous toxins were being released. One lesson: the need to protect reporters' safety.

Natalie Pawelski, CNN's environment correspondent, describes the storytelling approach she used in "Earth Matters," a CNN show she hosted. She explains its cancellation and why TV rarely covers the environment anymore. **Peter Thomson,** former producer of "Living on Earth," demonstrates why radio works well in environment reporting by sharing the sounds and words from several award-winning stories. **Christy George,** a documentary producer at Oregon Public Broadcasting, describes the merged business and environment beat that she reported at "Marketplace," a business radio show. "[T]here exists a fundamental clash between the goals of business and the way nature works," she writes. "This beat gave me room to explore it all." **Jacques Rivard,** a national TV correspondent for Société Radio-Canada, describes his hard fight to keep covering environment stories and the strategies he now uses to get attention paid to critical environmental issues such as global warming.

Gary Braasch, who documents environmental impacts of global warming through his ongoing photographic project, "World View of Global Warming," shows images from the Arctic and Antarctica and of the impact climate change is having on glaciers. **Marcelo Leite,** science editor at the newspaper Folha de São Paulo in Brazil, is frustrated by the results of a decade of environmental conferences, and he argues that "artificially balanced" reporting often promotes "anti-environmental positions." **Sun Yu**, who was reporter and editor of the Chinese and English editions of China Environment News for 12 years, tells us that despite government control of news and strained finances, during the past decade coverage of the environment has expanded its scope and flourished. And **Nanise Fifita,** editor for Radio & Television Tonga News, writes about the slow but steady acceptance of environment journalism among people in that Pacific Islands nation.

NASA climatologist **Claire Parkinson's** guidance to journalists on the uses and value of satellite images in environment reporting ends our exploration of this topic. She gives an example of the shrinking of the Aral Sea, which is caused largely by irrigation, and says that those who want to report on this story "can vividly portray this shrinkage by presenting side-by-side identically geolocated images from the 1970's and the 1990's." ■

Complexity in Environment Reporting Is Critical to Public Decision-Making

'. . .the craft is now firmly entrenched as a key beat in American journalism.'

By Paul Rogers

Global warming. Endangered species. The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Arsenic in drinking water. In his first 18 months on the beat as environment reporter for The New York Times, Douglas Jehl found himself square in the middle of some of the hottest stories in the United States. Texas oilman George W. Bush arrived at the White House with a disdain for government regulation and broad support from the energy, timber, grazing, auto and chemical industries, and conservation groups were battling him head-on. By early 2001, network TV news coverage of environmental issues reached a volume not seen since the days of the Exxon Valdez oil spill a decade earlier. From Manhattan to Miami, Seattle to Southern California, newspaper editors wanted the environment on Page One.

Then, everything changed. Within days after the September 11 terrorist attacks Jehl, the Times' former Cairo bureau chief, was sent to the Middle East. For his editors, the move was "an easy call," Jehl says, given the historic nature of the events. For six months, he filed stories from Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, even from the U.S.S. Enterprise as it sailed the Arabian Sea. "Because of what's happened in the last year, I've been distracted," Jehl says, having moved back to environmental coverage. He reported an in-depth series in August about water conflicts. "But I think all beats in journalism became a casualty of the imperative of covering terrorism."

Facing a Mountain of Challenges

Thirty-five years after environmental news coverage began as a fringe pursuit, the craft is now firmly entrenched as a key beat in American journalism. Editors and reporters enjoy a greater understanding of the complex issues and the nuances of environmental stories, are better trained in science, and have the use of computer databases. Readers demand sophisticated articles on topics from urban sprawl to organic food. And environmental stories are receiving more prestige than at any other time—winning 10 Pulitzer Prizes in the 1990's, for example—compared with just nine in the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's combined.

While the terrorist attack threw the environment beat off its high-profile stride, eco-journalism is struggling with a mountain of other challenges. A lingering recession and budget cuts from corporate owners demanding high profit margins have reduced news space, travel and staffing. The Bush administration has clamped down on previously open records, while its environmental officials, led by Interior Secretary Gale Norton, are choosing to fly under the media radar by making administrative changes to arcane rules on everything from logging to endangered species without calling press conferences. Meanwhile, environmental activists armed with high-tech communications gear bombard beat writers with thousands of e-mails, faxes, reports and studies every week—a considerable number of them of dubious news value—giving environmental journalists arguably the most time-consuming beat in the newsroom. And the long-running, touchy question, "Are environmental writers biased?" hasn't gone away.

"There is not the glamour around this beat or the energy that it had a decade ago," says Bud Ward, editor of Environment Writer, a newsletter for journalists, published by the University of Rhode Island. [See Ward's story on page 40.] "But it will come back. I hate to say it, but it will probably take another big disaster like an oil spill or a nuclear accident."

Statistics bear out Ward's hunch. During the first eight months of 2001, environmental stories (including coverage of pollution, toxic waste, air and water quality, global warming, endangered species, energy and land use) totaled 596 minutes on evening network news programs, according to the Tyndall Report, an analysis of network-news broadcasts. Top stories were the Bush administration's energy policies, California blackouts, global warming, and air pollution. But in the last four months of 2001—after the terrorist attacks—the networks broadcast only 21 minutes of environmental news. The pace didn't pick up much in 2002. There were 187 minutes of environmental news in the first nine months, putting the viewers on pace to see less than half the environmental coverage in 2002 that they saw a year earlier.

"The environment doesn't make news when green initiatives are going forward, it makes news when they are being rolled back," says Andrew Tyndall, editor of the Tyndall Report, citing low network totals during much of the Clinton administration. "That's because conflict makes news," he adds, and environmentalists tend not to attack presidents with whom they agree. (There are no comparable counts of printed newspaper stories, only anecdotal evidence.)

For Beth Parke, executive director of the Society of Environmental Journalists, a 1,200-member organization based in Jenkintown, Pennsylvania, the

beat might ebb and flow with the news, but it has reached a point of no return. "In the early 1990's, people thought it was the fad beat and that it would go away," says Parke. "In fact, not only did it survive, it grew tentacles. It became established. We have people firmly identified as business writers who are writing about alternative energy, or automotive sections writing about hybrid cars."

Part of the appeal is that environmentalism emerged as one of the most successful social movements of the second half of the 20th century. A Gallup Poll taken in April 2000 found that 83 percent of Americans said they "strongly" or "somewhat" agree with the goals of the environmental movement. By comparison, 86 percent said they agree with the goals of the civil rights movement, and 85 percent agree with the goals of the women's rights movement. Others, including animal rights, gun control, abortion rights, gay rights, and consumer rights, trailed. "Environmentalism is firmly entrenched," says Parke. "People want to know about it if there is toxic pollution in their stream or why farm animals are dying of an undiagnosed virus. If there is a tire fire, they want to know what is in those fumes. It is not just 'Why was traffic held up for four hours?'"

Environmental Reporters: Who Are They?

After years of guessing about the state of the craft, new research is beginning to unveil some clear trends. JoAnn Valenti, a professor emerita of communications at Brigham Young University, has surveyed all the environmental journalists in New England and the Mountain West states since 2001. Among her findings:

- Fifty-two percent of newspapers in the Mountain West and 51 percent of New England papers have at least one full-time environment writer. About one in 10 local TV stations in each region employs a full-time environmental correspondent.
- Environmental reporters often are veteran journalists. In New England, they have a median 15 years in journalism. Their median age is 45, compared with 36 for all U.S. journalists. Similarly, in the Mountain West there is a median 13 years in journalism and a median age of 39.
- Environment writers struggle to balance objectivity and advocacy. In both regions, about 40 percent said they "sometimes should be advocates for the environment." But substantial numbers think their colleagues are biased, with 46 percent of New England environment writers saying that their peers tend to be "too green," and 28 percent of Mountain West environment writers saying the same thing. Only two percent in each group said environment writers are "too brown," or slanted in favor of business and industry.
- Most are regularly pulled off their beats to cover other topics. In New England, only 18 percent of environment writers said they spend 67 to 100 percent of their time on environmental stories. And in the Mountain West, just 31 percent said they spend 67 to 100 percent of their time on environmental stories.

Valenti, who expects to complete surveys of the entire country by 2004, contends that reporters on the "green beat" tend to be happier than other reporters. So far, she says she hasn't seen the number of beat writers cut back seriously because of economic concerns. "I am astonished at how satisfied these reporters are with their beat, with what they do, in spite of all the pressure that is out there, the low salaries, the corporate pressures, the shrinking autonomy," she says. "These are people who believe that their editors and readers value what they do. They know in their gut these are important stories that need to be told. The challenge is so compelling. And things change because of their writing. They really can help set the agenda."

Reaction to Differing Kinds of Coverage

Regional papers, such as The Oregonian, which has a team of five environment writers, are showing an unprecedented commitment to telling the complexities of environmental stories, from the decline of salmon runs to the science of forest fires, says Carl Pope, national executive director of the Sierra Club. "The New York Times and The Washington Post have just decided that we're back in the kind of cold war era where the only sexy stories are global in nature and the remainder of the news hole is for horserace kind of politics," says Pope. "They do a great job covering September 11 and Iraq, but they are on autopilot on everything else."

Despite thoughtful, expansive coverage in regional newspapers, environmental groups feel that Bush "has gotten a free pass on the environment," Pope says, because of international events. "When a story drops off the front page, the public thinks the problem must be fixed." Conservatives see another problem. They argue that environmental reporters are too gullible. "We need more skeptics," says Fred Smith, president of the Competitive Enterprise Institute, a Washington, D.C. think tank. "I have seen press release after press release from environmental groups just reprinted without questions. It is important for reporters to ask contrarian questions. It makes the journalism more honest."

Smith says he would like to see journalists learn more about the science of risk and also to publish more environmental success stories. Compared to 30 years ago, for example, the nation's air and water is dramatically cleaner, toxic releases from industry are down, and recycling is up. But too often the public doesn't realize the sky is not falling, he says.

In its August 2002 cover story, "How to Save the Earth," an optimistic Time magazine noted that world population growth is slowing, and the hole in the ozone layer is being naturally healed, even as climate and biodiversity remain in peril. The magazine reported that technologies such as wind energy, hybrid cars, and green buildings could be saviors. "So much environmental reporting emphasizes only the problems. We wanted to focus on the solu-

tions," said Time's former environmental editor Charles Alexander in that issue [see his article on page 45].

Some contrarian journalism is on the rise. The Sacramento Bee's Tom Knudson, winner of a 1992 Pulitzer for "The Sierra in Peril," last year wrote a blistering series entitled "Environment Inc.," which looked critically at the fundraising and scientific underpinnings of the environmental movement. Other writers are exploring how technology and corporations might improve environmental problems.

As the beat matures, reporters and editors, sensitive that they not be considered stenographers for environmental groups, have changed their titles from "environmental writer" to "environment writer" or "natural resources writer." They've peeled bumper stickers off their cars and in many cases tried to cover the environment beat as they would police, courts or politics—with skeptical questions for all sides. "If people walk away saying 'Are they green or are they brown?' that is a good day for us," says Len Reed, science and environment editor at The Oregonian. "We can't have a reporter walk into the office of a CEO of a timber company or the CEO of a nonprofit advocacy group and be automatically perceived as representing a persuasion. Half of environmental journalism is having the story, half is having credibility."

Frank Allen, former environment editor at The Wall Street Journal, says that communities, particularly in the changing West, cannot make thoughtful decisions about their futures without a long-term commitment from the media to explain difficult issues. A commitment from editors is key, he says. So is more training and encouragement for reporters. But Wall Street-driven bottom lines are not helping the craft. "Dozens of newspapers deserve praise and encouragement. But we have 1,500 daily newspapers in this country," says Allen, now executive director of the Institutes for Journalism & Natural Resources [IJNR], based in Missoula, Montana. "From my perspective, not nearly enough of them work at this as often or as hard as they should. They have let their capacities atrophy. They have bought out or let go some of their most experienced and knowledgeable people who have reservoirs of historical perspective and historical knowledge on this beat. Mostly it was to save money."

Despite the challenges, cutbacks and pressures, many practitioners of environmental journalism remain inspired and plan to stick it out for the long haul. "It takes a lot of knowledge to cover these stories," says Jane Kay, environment writer at the San Francisco Chronicle and a 23-year veteran of the beat. "Once you learn it, you want to use it. Once you learn about solvents and arsenic and spotted owls and Navy sonar you want to return to those stories. And these are fascinating stories," she says. "You can be at a redwood sawmill one week and in the Channel Islands the next week and watching the release of a condor the next week, and getting paid for it. Who wouldn't love this beat?" ■

Paul Rogers is the natural resources and environment writer at the San Jose Mercury News. Rogers, who has worked at the newspaper since 1989, also works as a Hewlett Teaching Fellow in environmental journalism at the University of California-Berkeley, and as a lecturer in the science communication program at the University of California-Santa Cruz. He was part of the Mercury News team that won the 1990 Pulitzer Prize for coverage of the Loma Prieta earthquake and in 2002 was awarded the Sierra Club's top national award for environmental journalism, the David R. Brower Award.

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The Environment Beat's Rocky Terrain

Editors often don't see these stories as 'traditional news,' and reporters tread on sensitive ground inside the newsroom.

By Philip Shabecoff

The environment was very much a hot topic when I was reassigned to the Washington bureau of The New York Times in 1970, after spending most of the 1960's abroad as a correspondent in Europe and Asia. Earth Day had been celebrated—if "celebrated" is the right word to describe the deep unease of the millions of demonstrators over the deterioration of their habitat—only a few months before. Insults to the environment such as a chemical-laden river bursting into flame, killer smogs, contaminated drinking water, beaches fouled by raw sewage, rusting drums of toxic liquids leaking into the countryside, and litter, litter everywhere, were regularly in the news. President Nixon had just created the Environmental Protection Agency by executive order and Congress, in an astonishing burst of legislative energy, was beginning to churn out a series of landmark laws to

safeguard the air, water, land and human health.

I'd long had a strong if uninformed interest in open space and pollution issues. When I arrived in Washington I asked to be assigned to cover the environment. The bureau chief said, "No." Gladwin Hill was already writing about the environment from the Times' Los Angeles bureau, he pointed out. Besides, he said, the subject was not important enough to warrant the full-time attention of a Washington reporter. Never mind that Washington was now the epicenter of the national and, indeed, global effort to protect the environment.

In the early 1970's, the environment was still not an established beat. Publishers and senior editors were not familiar with the subject and were uncomfortable with it. Only a few news organizations had assigned reporters to give much of their time to these issues. John Oakes, who later became editor of the Times' editorial page, had started writing a column on environmental issues for the Times in the 1950's—in the Sunday travel section, of all places! Only a handful of journalists were writing regularly on this topic, among them Robert Cahn of The Christian Science Monitor, Tom Harris of The Sacramento Bee, Casey Bukro of the Chicago Tribune, Paul MacClennan of The Buffalo News, and Ed Flattau, a syndicated columnist. Luther Carter addressed the issues in the journal Science and, in 1961, Gershon Fishbein had founded the Environmental Health Newsletter.

I was assigned instead to cover labor and the national economy and then the White House during the last few months of Richard Nixon's presidency and throughout Gerald Ford's administration. When I finished that fascinating assignment, the bureau chief, a new one, asked me what I would like to do next. "Cover the environment," I told him. Okay, he said, but that wouldn't require all my time. Why don't I also write about other domestic issues including labor, consumer affairs, and health policy at the same time? It was not until Ronald Reagan became President and turned the environment into a major political story by seeking to roll back environmental laws and regulations and turn public lands and resources over to commercial interests that I was finally given permission to devote myself exclusively to this coverage.

Learning the Environment Beat

I spent 14 years reporting on the environment for the Times, a period I found to be the richest and most rewarding of my 32 years with the paper. Being a foreign correspondent and covering the White House, especially during the endgame of the Watergate fiasco, had been exciting and a lot of fun. But nothing was as intellectually engaging as learning, reporting and writing about the broad panoply of subjects and issues that comprise the environmental beat.

There was a lot to learn. If covered properly, the environment encompasses an astonishing range of subjects. I had to give myself crash courses in environmental science and environmental law and get to know the workings of the government departments and agencies that administered the laws. I had to become acquainted with the nongovernmental environmental groups and how they functioned and with the lobbying groups that spoke for business and industry in the often bitter and prolonged battles over environmental policy. Only after I plunged into the job did I begin to understand how much policy was intertwined with politics and economics and with ideology and broad social issues such as race and poverty. I knew virtually nothing about the history of environmentalism, and there was little in the literature to teach me—which was one of the reasons I undertook to write "A Fierce Green Fire," a book on the history of American environmentalism.

During the 1970's and 1980's, the environment gradually became recognized as a legitimate subject for media coverage, both at the Times and in the industry generally. By the end of the 1990's, the Society of Environmental Journalists (SEJ), a group created at the beginning of that decade to promote higher standards for and visibility of environmental reporting, had more than 1,000 members. For a time, at least, most major news organizations, including the television networks, had at least one full-time environmental reporter. Occasionally, as during the heat wave of 1988 when global warming emerged as a (forgive me) hot button issue, or during the Earth Summit on environment and development in Rio, environmental stories could dominate several news cycles.

Experiencing the Beat

Media managers were and, I think, still are ambivalent about environmental stories and their claim on the news hole. Unlike the assiduity with which every twist and turn of news about politics, economics, business, sports and the arts is given space or air in the media, environmental stories have to make a special claim of significance to be given consideration for inclusion in the report of many news outlets, then including the Times. Even when they do run, such stories are often treated negligently. When in 1979 I wrote my first story describing scientific findings about the imminence of global warming, the piece was held for several weeks and, when it finally did appear, it was on page 48 in the Saturday paper, about as deeply as a Times' story can be buried.

The prevailing response to environmental stories among some of my editors was "What, another story about the end of the world, Shabecoff? We carried a story about the end of the world a month ago."

In time I found, to my sorrow, that the misplaced suspicion some editors have of environmental stories hung over their views about environmental reporters as well. Toward the end of the 1980's, I began to hear complaints about my coverage from editors, most of it from the national news editor, whose experience before her promotion to that job had chiefly been in business journalism. I was told I had grown too close to my sources in the environmental movement and that my

reporting focused too much on threats to the environment. The Washington bureau chief advised me that "New York" felt I was writing too much about how economic activity was harming the environment and not enough about how the cost of environmental regulation was harming the economy. Funny, when I covered the national economy, nobody ever criticized me for not writing about how economic activity was harming the environment. On my previous reporting assignments, I'd been entrusted with some of the paper's most important and sensitive beats; now my same approach to reporting was questioned.

Leaving the Beat

I was soon taken off the environmental beat and assigned to cover the IRS. I quit the Times shortly thereafter (officially I retired) to found and publish Greenwire, an online daily digest of environmental news. At the time, I thought what I'd experienced as an environmental reporter had been unique. But at the first national SEJ conference, several reporters assured me it wasn't; what happened to me had also happened to them.

Why is environmental reporting so troublesome to management? I still don't fully know. Part of the answer might be that the subject is not "traditional news" and media owners and managers are uninformed about and uncomfortable with it. Bill Kovach, who had been a great Times Washington bureau chief, told me that my problem with New York was that my coverage was "ahead of the curve." I suspect, too, that unhappiness among advertisers to whom environmentalism is anathema is communicated to media marketing executives. Right-wing ideologues, organizations and lobbyists are also highly vocal in criticizing environmental reporting—they certainly were with mine.

Meanwhile, my immediate successor as environmental reporter on the Times duly began writing stories about how some environmental threats were exaggerated and about the alleged toll environmental regulation was taking on the economy. He did not last long, however, and top management of the paper's newsroom soon changed. The Times, in my opinion, is once again doing a good job of covering the environment—one of the few major news organizations still doing so. ■

Philip Shabecoff covered the environment from 1977 to 1991 for The New York Times. He then founded Greenwire, an online daily digest of environmental news. He is the author of three books on environmental history and policy. A new edition of his first book, "A Fierce Green Fire," a history of American environmentalism, will be published by Island Press in 2003.

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The Beat Is a Tougher One Today

Reporting on the environment requires more and better training of those who do it.

By James Bruggers

Imagine a news beat in which you report on religion one day and the next you cover business and economics. Later that week, you write a science piece, then you do a story about public policy and arcane government regulations and politics. This is what the environment beat is like today. On some days, journalists who report on environment issues wrestle with all of these topics in one story. And when they're writing about global climate change, they need to understand international relations as well.

I'm not sure the environment beat was ever an easy one to cover. But it's certainly not simple to handle now during a time when issues aren't cast in predictable contrasts. Gone are the days when I wrote mostly about fanciful ideas like whether the state of Montana should bring buffalo back big time to its open ranges—something Ted Turner ended up doing on his own. That debate wasn't very complicated to understand or convey. Gone, too, are the days when anyone could tell a lake was polluted by skimming oil and other chemicals from its surface. Now the threats are often invisible and exist in tiny quantities.

Journalists who cover the environment are sometimes known in their newsrooms as "the parts per million" folks. And if the truth be known, they are more likely to deal with even smaller traces of chemicals—in parts per billion or trillion or even quadrillion—as they report on potential environmental effects on health.

Changes in Environment Reporting

Stories about such subtle but significant threats come at a time when political and economic interests are spinning the environment beat like never before. Reporters need to work harder than ever to find the mainstream science and economics experts who can center a story and give it proper context. Sometimes science lands in the cross hairs of organizations with competing interests pushing one agenda or another, with journalists caught in the crossfire.

There is too much for any individual reporter to know. Yet good environmental coverage isn't merely reporting what one scientist says and then find-

ing a scientist who disagrees and reporting what that person says. When they interview sources, environmental journalists need to be able to determine how the information they are being told should be weighted in the context of the story. In an article on climate change that I read last winter in a paper published in a major U.S. city, the reporter cited only one scientific source for his report: a weatherman who spoke against its existence as an environmental concern. This story was not written by that paper's environmental writer, who would have known how to find and present scientific sources and information about climate change in a more accurate and nuanced way.

These are just some ways that the environment beat has changed during the 20 years I've been reporting on it. I've changed, too, so sometimes it's hard to know which change can be attributed to which circumstance. For example, I'm far more concerned now with how environmental problems affect people than I was when I came out of college with a dual major in forestry and journalism. And I find the environment beat more expansive, more complicated, more contentious, and more difficult to manage than it has ever been. I don't think I'm alone.

The good news is that talented journalists often ride environmental stories to the front page and win some of the most prestigious awards. The bad news is that it appears that the number of specialists covering the beat—at newspapers, anyway—is decreasing. Newspapers that several years ago had four people covering the environment full time now seem to have three, or two. Those that had two now have one. Based on what I hear from colleagues around the United States, some newspapers have eliminated the beat or folded it into a reporter's other assignments. And there's virtually no environmental news on television, except for what might appear on the Discovery Channel or CNN when there isn't talk of war, terrorist attacks, or a sniper investigation. Meanwhile, magazines, books and the Web have opened opportunities for environmental reporting by freelancers.

These are my impressions after spending two decades in the field and five years as a board member of the Society of Environmental Journalists—the last two as president. I can't provide statistics because I don't know that anyone has surveyed the field recently.

Many of these changes are likely due to the brutal economic downturn in the newspaper industry that has affected other beats as well. But perhaps, too, some editors have become bored with the topic, though I don't really believe that is what's happening. Maybe this downturn in newsroom interest has happened because some reporters aren't able to take their journalism to the next level by figuring out how to turn what are among the most complicated news stories into compelling reads—and we must never forget that our job is to tell compelling stories.

Environment Reporting Requires More Training Today

At the same time, however, environmental topics are still widely covered. As President Bush has proposed and carried out environmental policy changes, his policy moves have attracted much media attention. But often these stories are covered not by a journalist who specializes in environmental reporting but by a White House or state house reporter or a general assignment or health reporter. Such assignments can make sense since environmental issues touch so many aspects of our lives that there is no way to confine this beat to one person.

When I look at this as our readers might—as people who want to understand the shades of gray and uncertainties that abound in environmental issues on global, national and local levels—I am concerned: Reporters without specialty training might ignore complicated environmental stories altogether or, if they attempt them, the results might be less than satisfactory for readers. That said, I do find that journalists assigned to the beat today do a much better job than we used to do of exploring these gray, nuanced areas of science. Reporters also are more skeptical of information environmental groups try to feed them than they were a decade or two ago.

That so many reporting assignments now overlap with environmental news coverage presents newsrooms with a new challenge: Editors need to make sure all reporters who cover environmental topics—even part time—have adequate training to cover environmental topics accurately, with proper context, scientific grounding, and nuance. I argue vociferously that every news organization needs at least one person who is trained to be able to specialize in the beat. This journalist, who will be unafraid to take on and navigate the most complicated of environmental stories, can also serve as a valuable resource for the entire staff.

It troubles me that newsrooms are cutting back on spending for professional development and training. Continuing education is essential on the environment beat, if only to find one's way through the beat's minefield of acronyms such as SMRCA, RCRA, CERCLA, and NEPA. Most recently I've been dealing with NSR, or New Source Review, which is a federal program that requires major industrial polluters to upgrade emission controls when they expand. The Bush administration insists that its proposed changes to the NSR that would relax requirements on industry will result in cleaner air. Environmentalists and former Environmental Protection Agency officials dispute this. For a journalist to fairly and accurately present the charges—so that readers might arrive at the "truth"—requires a fairly sophisticated study of the contentions. As coverage of this story evolves, reporters do the best they can to explain these changes so readers have information they can use to decide what they think about them.

One of the biggest changes I've seen has nothing to do with the environment beat per se. It has to do with downsizing of editorial staff. With newsrooms shrinking, there's more pressure on individual reporters to produce more copy. Larger news organizations still place a premium on

enterprise reporting, going well beyond the press releases and the events and digging deeply. But it's harder than ever for smaller newspapers to support this kind of time-intensive reporting. And with smaller staffs come editors' demands for long-term story planning, and this means having to promise to deliver multiple stories at a time, for two, three, four weeks in advance. Breaking news then throws a cog in the wheel of the machine.

The Role Played By the Society of Environmental Journalists (SEJ)

That this beat is growing increasingly complex was not lost on SEJ's founders. The association they formed in 1990 has grown into the first stop for journalists who step into the environment beat. I wasn't among the small group of award-winning journalists, including reporters, editors and producers working for The Philadelphia Inquirer, USA Today, Turner Broadcasting, Minnesota Public Radio, and National Geographic, who launched SEJ. But I have benefited greatly from its existence. Now with more than 1,200 members, SEJ—with its annual conference, seminars, listservs and Web-based resources—has made it much easier for me to keep pace with advances in science, with happenings in Washington, D.C. and globally, and to combat a feeling of isolation that can come with working on a highly specialized beat.

At the start of the 1990's, when I was writing about recycling and endangered plants and animals in California, I could not envision that my beat would eventually take in biotechnology and then ultimately bioterrorism and biowarfare. Everything from bioengineered corn to anthrax to West Nile virus is now part of the environment beat. In addition to pollution coming from power plants, cars, tractors, trucks and factories, I now write about genetic pollution, asking scientists about findings on whether altered genes from a farmer's field will contaminate the crops of his neighbor.

Sometimes I long for those days when I just wrote about buffalo in Montana. ■

James Bruggers covers environmental topics for The (Louisville) Courier-Journal. He has previously worked at newspapers in Montana, Alaska, Washington and California, and in 1998-99 was a Michigan Journalism Fellow at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. He has served on the SEJ board since 1997 and in October completed two one-year terms as president. He has an M.S. in environmental studies from the University of Montana and holds an undergraduate double major in forestry and journalism from the same university.

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A New Kind of Environment Reporting Is Needed

Blending objectivity with advocacy to arrive at sustainable journalism.

By Jim Detjen

Bring a group of environmental journalists together for a long enough time and it is likely a debate about objectivity and advocacy will erupt.

"Journalists should be objective," argues one group. "Journalists are stewards of the truth for their readers and viewers. They should report all sides and be as scrupulous as possible in writing a balanced piece, expressing all points of view."

"Objectivity is impossible," argues another group. "Environmental journalists should be advocates for changes to improve the quality of the planet. They should educate people about the serious problems that exist and use the power of the news media to bring about changes to improve the quality of the Earth—air, water, wildlife and natural resources."

Which side of this debate journalists are on is based often upon the media they work for and the country they work in. If they are employed by a mainstream newspaper, news magazine or broadcast station, they are likely to be in the camp of objectivity. If they work in developed parts of the globe, such as the United States, Western Europe or Japan, they probably also support this view. But if they work for an environmental magazine, the alternative press or are a freelancer, they might side with the advocacy school. If they live in developing regions of the globe, such as Africa, South America, and parts of Asia, they might also favor this view.

Sustainable Journalism

Is it possible to support both schools of thought? Carl Frankel, the author of "In Earth's Company: Business, Environment and the Challenge of Sustainability," argues that it is. "Contrary to the conventional wisdom, I do not experience these two identities as incompatible," he says. "Yes, there is a tension between the two, but I find myself able to resolve the tension." Frankel has called for a new kind of environmental journalism, which he terms "sustainable journalism." He says that sustainable journalism embraces the following three tenets:

- It incorporates the best aspects of traditional journalism—diligent research, precise language, and fair reporting.
- It strives to educate people in a balanced way about the nature and importance of sustainable development or the effort to achieve both economic development and a sound environment.
- It supports dialogue between people in an effort to find solutions.

"Journalists, in the tradition of the fourth estate, view themselves as in the audience, not the movie," Frankel says. "But we need to move beyond that now. We all need to be part of the solution, journalists included, and that calls for us to examine the extent to which our current professional practices correspond with how we want the world to be."

I agree with a lot of what Frankel says. It also echoes the direction urged by proponents of public or civic journalism. If journalists follow conventional news standards, it's easy to justify giving enormous coverage to scandals, celebrities and sensational crimes. These are deemed newsworthy because they involve conflict and controversy with prominent individuals. But this overemphasis, along with the American media's traditional heavy focus on local events, has squeezed out of news columns many vitally important global environmental problems.

This issue was examined at the Society of Environmental Journalists' national conference this fall during a session entitled "Blind spots: Unearthing the taboos of environmental reporting." Panelists agreed that environmental reporters often do a good job of reporting about environmental symptoms, such as air and water pollution. But relatively few journalists analyze the underlying forces that might be causing these problems, such as population growth and consumerism.

Environment Stories That Journalists Don't Report

"Consumerism is a story journalists have difficulty in reporting about," says Ellen Ruppel Shell, codirector of the Knight Center for Science and Medical Journalism at Boston University. "It's vitally important but it turns editors off." Americans consume 40 percent of the world's gasoline and more paper, steel, aluminum, energy, water and meat than any other society on the planet. Recent scientific estimates indicate that if each of the planet's six billion inhabitants consumed at the level of the average American—four additional planets would be needed.

Similarly, many journalists are reluctant to write about population issues. One reason for this might be because many Americans equate population control with the intensely polarized issues of abortion in the United States or the one-child policy in China. Another might be because most American news media write mostly about local issues and that population is seen as an international topic. Former U.S. Senator Gaylord Nelson, the founder of Earth Day in 1970, has observed that it is also extremely difficult to write about some aspects of the population debate, such as immigration. "If you raise these issues, you are described as a racist," he said.

Many important global environmental problems, such as growing water shortages, are made worse because of the increase in world population. For example, international water experts estimate that by 2025 about one-third of the world's population will be living in regions that have water shortages. Because there is a finite amount of fresh water available on the planet as the world's population climbs, the stresses caused by water shortages are expected to increase. Similarly, most of the world's ocean fisheries are already being fished to capacity or are in a state of decline. And, based upon current population and deforestation trends, the number of people living in countries with critically low levels of forest cover are expected to double to three billion by 2025.

With all of these worrisome projections, one might think that journalists would be increasing their reporting about ways to stave off such environmental disasters. Unfortunately, this is not the case. A survey by Michigan State University found that reporting about sustainable development is miniscule. This issue ranked 16th out of 24 issues surveyed in the amount of coverage American environmental journalists were devoting to it.

Practicing a New Kind of Environmental Journalism

What kind of journalism is needed to meet the global environmental challenges of the 21st century? This question has been debated at journalism conferences held in recent years at forums in the United States, France, Italy, Australia, South Africa, and elsewhere.

A new kind of reporting, known as sustainable journalism, is needed. Some of the components include:

- Increased access to environmental information by citizens and members of the news media through the expansion of open records laws and freedom of information acts.
- Expanded coverage of international environmental issues, such as global climate change. This coverage should provide evidence to readers, viewers and listeners of links among environmental, economic and social issues.
- New global institutions to make multinational corporations, which own many of the world's newspapers, magazines and broadcast stations, more accountable about their own environmental track records.
- Increased coverage of promising solutions to complex environmental problems.

Many experiments are underway to create new organizations and institutions to deal with these international environmental problems. For example, the Center for a New American Dream (www.newdream.org) is a nonprofit organization that is attempting to show Americans that our nation's obsession with consumption is creating enormous stress in people's lives and damaging the environment. Another example is the Earth Charter Initiative

(www.earthcharter.org), a global effort to educate people about the need for a just, democratic, peaceful and sustainable society. This effort, which is an outgrowth of the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992, has received surprisingly little media coverage in the United States.

The news media need to give much greater coverage to these and many other grass roots initiatives blossoming around the globe. They need to develop and practice a new kind of reportage—sustainable journalism—if they are to help society grapple with many daunting environmental challenges in the years ahead. ■

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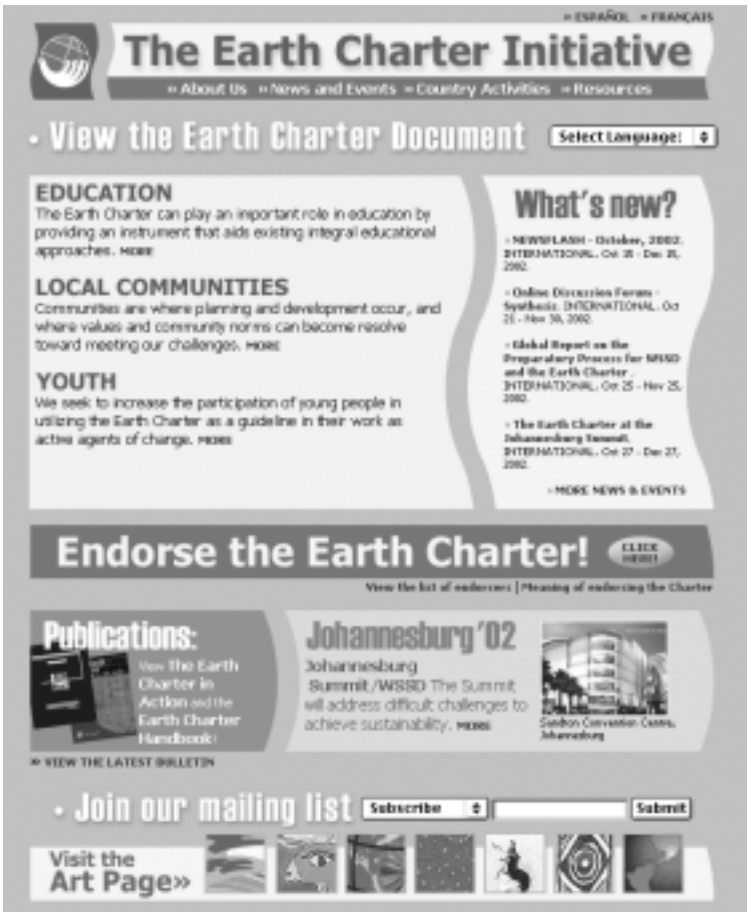

Homepage of The Earth Charter Initiative.

Environment Journalists Don't Get Much Respect

'. . . the environment beat is so far down the journalistic pecking order that if it were alive it would be an amoeba.'

By Bud Ward

"Greens with press passes."

Robert Engelman was the first person I heard utter these words. He used them as a way of conveying how he thought he and his environment reporting peers were regarded. A founding member of the Society of Environmental Journalists (SEJ), he was at that time an environmental and health correspondent for the Scripps Howard News Service in Washington, D.C.

Those four words sum up the view—and for many environmental journalists the nagging frustration—that reporters covering the environmental beat often are seen not as environmental reporters but as environmental*ist* reporters. Is it something they said that earned them such a derisive nickname? Or something they did? Or perhaps something they didn't say or didn't do?

Though causes remain undetermined, this perception has become an occupational hazard. And it's a perception the most dedicated U.S. journalists—swearing allegiance to the practice of independent journalism, not to environmental values per se—find particularly annoying. Especially frustrating to many is that this view often persists in the newsroom itself, not just outside of it. Being labeled a "green reporter" by a newsroom colleague is

for many an insult. Plain and simple.

"There's a perception of bias in the newsroom that seems to be unique to the environmental beat," one environmental reporter recently complained at the annual meeting of the SEJ in Baltimore, Maryland. No such perception had tainted her previous work on health or other beats, she insisted.

Should There Be Environmental*ist* Journal*ists*?

Let's get one thing straight: There are environmental journalists. And there are environmentalist journals. But using the most traditional, conservative, ink-in-the-veins definition, except for those few columnists and editorial writers who write from a "green" perspective, can there also be "environmental*ist* journal*ists*?" This pairing of words strikes me as an oxymoron. Environmental journalism? The noun trumps the adjective in the hearts and minds of reporters who are most committed to their craft. Environmentalist writers, yes. Environmentalist journalists? Not by the strict definition of journalism. The effort to inform and to separate fact from fiction in the forever-elusive pursuit of "truth" or accuracy comes first.

Reporters who cover the environmental, natural resources, pollution beat at mainstream news organizations would find satisfaction in producing a thoroughly reported, soundly sourced article documenting that how chemicals such as DDT or PCB's in the environment do *more* good than harm. They'd climb mountains, burn midnight oils, for a bulletproof piece that contamination of the Hudson, Ohio, or American rivers is good for freshwater fish or, for that matter, good for the local economies. With global warming, any journalist would welcome the opportunity to report a well documented piece in which scientists find that there is absolutely no basis for concern that climate change is happening, that humans are contributing to it, or that it's a problem worth taking seriously.

Stories that parrot the growing scientific consensus can't compete when it comes to prime-time, Page One real estate. But produce a well-reported, documented piece containing contrary evidence—and bring on the science journalism awards. Of course, things are not really quite so clear and unequivocal. Like other beats, the environmental one is cyclical. Its well-being—in terms of how its news is reported and played—depends on numerous other factors and events. For example, there is a correlation between times when environmentalists and environmentalism are bullish and when the environmental beat itself is robust.

Want to know when the next boom cycle for environmental coverage will begin? Determine the time and place of the next environmental disaster—the next Exxon Valdez, Love Canal, Chernobyl, Three Mile Island, Bhopal, India or the next Alar-on-apples scare. (Surely we haven't seen the "last" major industrial environmental or health disaster this early in the industrial revolution—just the most recent one.)

Then look for environmental column inches and airtime to swell. Are the victims cute and cuddly critters, perhaps even humans, better yet, babies? Are they neighbors or, at least, Americans? Or do they live in some distant country few Americans can find on a map?

The answers drive the environmental coverage, its duration, and its sweep. And to a large extent, human nature plays a vital role as well. Don't be surprised if cuddly critters outrank distant infants in driving coverage. But if they're slimy and yucky, even if their value to emerging medical treatments is unquestioned, expect a much smaller spike in coverage.

Environmental Coverage Was Dubbed DBI—'Dull But Important'

Environmental coverage has experienced several mountains and perhaps more valleys since 1970 when President Richard Nixon anointed "the environmental decade" with enactment of the landmark National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) that mandated environmental impact statements.

In the post-Vietnam War, post-Watergate time, marked by the first international "Earth Day," the American public's rising interest in domestic issues—and in particular the emerging environmental movement—gave rise to the start of the environmental beat in many newsrooms. Having one of Nixon's leading adversaries for the presidency be Maine Democratic Senator Edmund S. Muskie—who was labeled "Mr. Environment"—didn't hurt, either, in fueling newsrooms' interest.

The decade of the 1970's witnessed enactment of a slew of sweeping federal pollution-control regulatory programs, with Democrats and Republicans both jockeying for the emerging green vote. When The New York Times White House correspondent Philip Shabecoff left the White House beat in 1977 and sought the environmental beat, the legitimacy of the beat in many newsrooms gained increased credibility. [See Shabecoff's story on page 34.] Over time more and more news organizations added the "ecology beat" to their repertoire.

During the early and mid-1980's, the Reagan administration's controversial assaults on the nation's environmental regulatory programs—and in particular its highly visible persona in Interior Secretary James Watt and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Anne M. (Gorsuch) Burford—helped again to focus political reporters on the environmental beat. Their interest didn't last. ABC White House correspondent Sam Donaldson, on leaving the White House in the spring of 1989, told The Washington Post's Eleanor Randolph that he wasn't just disappearing into thin air. "I'm not walking away, kid," she quoted him as saying. "No one's carrying me out or shifting me to the ecology beat."

Randolph, at the time the Post's media writer, credited "Subtle Sam" with making an important point "about the way Washington's journalism establishment views the assignment to cover such piddling little items such as our food, water, air and planet." In Washington and, to some extent New York, she wrote, "the environment beat is so far down the journalistic pecking

order that if it were alive it would be an amoeba." "DBI"—"Dull But Important"—is the acronym Randolph said many editors and newsroom staff who aren't on the environmental beat apply to it. Many believe the DBI reputation persists today.

Still, the beat is cyclical, a characteristic it shares with most other newsroom beats. Just months after Donaldson's broadside, the Exxon Valdez spilled oil in Alaska's Prince William Sound, "60 Minutes" highlighted the Alar-on-apples food scare and the 20th anniversary of Earth Day rolled around. Again, environmental issues were front and center with the American public and, therefore, with America's editors.

Again, the attention wouldn't last. With "greens" having "friends" in the White House—President Clinton and Vice President Gore—and with environmentalists and the media having no visible national "villain" along the lines of Watt/Gorsuch, the beat waned throughout much of the 1990's, a descent many feel continues today.

Perhaps burned by too many chemical-of-the-month scare stories and by a feeling—understandable though ultimately flawed—that much of the media was duped on the Alar scare, many editors seemed willing, if not eager, to back away from an always controversial, always complex beat. After all, environmental coverage often angered bottom-line publishers. Competing pressures at many news organizations—from "dumbing down" the news to creating smaller news holes, to devoting fewer resources to enterprise reporting—have made this type of reporting tougher to do.

Today's Environment Beat

These newsroom decisions are being made, too, in a changed environmental context. Today's complex environmental challenges are far more difficult to explain, or even to see, than they were in the days of the burning Cuyahoga River or the "headlights at noon" in some of America's most polluted metropolitan areas in the late 1960's and early 1970's. Today's environmental issues—desertification, environmental immigrants, water supply, and climate change—require far more time and, arguably, more column inches and air time than many news organizations are inclined to provide.

To report news about global warming in 10 inches of copy presents daunting challenges to even the most knowledgeable and skilled environmental reporter and editing team. But the ways in which reporters and editors, correspondents and producers confront these challenges—the ones inside *and* outside the newsroom—will have a large effect in determining how Americans and their government anticipate and respond to continuing environmental pressures. ■

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Connecting the Human Condition to Environmental Destruction

'. . . I kept my camera's eye fixed on the haunting faces of children.'

By Stan Grossfeld

A decade ago, as a photojournalist with The Boston Globe, I embarked on a worldwide journey to document environmental destruction. What I learned along the way is why environmental issues can be so difficult to cover and why it is essential to connect the human experience to what we see happening around us.

News coverage of environmental issues can be difficult, in part, because those who are affected—whether the effect is economic or environmental—routinely exaggerate their claims. Non-governmental organization advocates pull "facts" in one direction; big business tugs them in another, and sometimes neither leaves the cushy offices in the northwest section of Washington, D.C. Truth resides in a place somewhere in between. But this truth can be impossible for anyone to gauge. The power of photography is to go beyond statistics and offer humanity.

I listened to what scientists observed was happening, but I kept my camera's eye fixed on the haunting faces of children. At times, I allowed my eye to wander and bear witness to the conditions of adults, as well. Their expressions and circumstances bespoke the consequences of the environmental tragedies in ways that any retelling of the experts' verbal arguments never could. ■

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China pollution:
The air in China is among the world's worst, having six times the World Health Organization standard for suspended pollutants. There's a saying in China: "From the sparrows in the sky to the intestines of pigs, everything is black." Near mines in Taiyuan, roads are black with spillage of overloaded trucks. Children with sooty faces dodge traffic and scoop bucketfuls of coal to heat their homes. When it rains, rivers form that look as black as ink. —S.G.

South Texas water:
The United States creates a bounty of agricultural wealth. But the migrant workers who harvest this food are routinely subjected to dangerous pesticides and abusive bosses who don't even provide basic sanitary facilities in the fields. In the colonias of South Texas, there is no running water. Migrants must boil water for drinking. —S.G.

Photos by Stan Grossfeld.

Brazilian rain forest:
When I visited the Brazilian rain forest after the Earth Summit, I felt no rain and saw no forest. What I witnessed was the epicenter of hell. To children there, who were sentenced to a life of making charcoal, the word "sting" held far more meaning than the man, Sting, who was fighting to save the rain forest, did. Families live in company-made makeshift huts set back from the burning edge and appear like ghosts as the wind shifts. —S.G.

Mississippi rash:
Virgie Peavy's body became covered with rashes after she ate collard greens picked from her backyard in Columbia, Mississippi. Her yard adjoins the former site of Reichhold Chemical Inc., which produced a substance used in wood preservation. In 1977 an explosion occurred at the Reichhold Chemicals Inc. facility, and area residents said they were allowed to return to their homes while the fire still burned. A decade later, this was declared a Superfund site and 3,900 barrels of hazardous waste were unearthed. "The doctor wanted tests. I didn't have the money," said Peavy, when I met her in 1991. "Then I got a settlement. I didn't never read it. I was too greedy. But now I'm sick. I got problems with nerves. It got worse."
It is not unusual for toxic waste sites to be found in communities of color or in places where poor and low-income families live. For big business, these communities provide the path of least resistance. Today, the Peavy family lives in the same house in Columbia, but Virgie Peavy is gone. "She got cancer all over her body," said Roosevelt Peavy, her son. "That settlement she got was small. She never got rid of the rashes, and then she passed away." —S.G.

Photos by Stan Grossfeld.

Missing the 'Big Story' in Environment Coverage

'. . . if we don't do a better job of telling the story, devastation of the environment will be partly our fault.'

By Charles Alexander

In a previous issue of Nieman Reports, Paul Steiger, managing editor of The Wall Street Journal, objected to what he called "a spate of breast-beating among news media critics on how the press 'missed' the Enron scandal." He pointed out that the Journal, after overlooking Enron's follies for a while, eventually broke the story big-time.

Reading Steiger's words sent my mind on a flight of fancy that conjured up a vision of our planet 100 years into the future. Earth is in a real mess. It's unbearably hot. What were once coastal cities are swamped by rising seas. Fear of mass starvation haunts the globe. Tropical diseases are spreading uncontrollably, and the last tiger on earth has just died at the St. Louis Zoo.

The Nieman Foundation for journalism (still around in the 22nd century) has convened a conference at the new Harvard campus in Worchester, Massachusetts (Cambridge, alas, is underwater) where scholars, broadcasters and editors gather to discuss what role the press played in humanity's poor stewardship of the environment. Media representatives present evidence that beginning in the late 20th century and continuing through the next, television, radio and print news organizations, not to mention the Internet, carried numerous stories about global warming, loss of biodiversity, forest destruction, overfishing and the like. "We ran the stories," the media apologists contend, "but the public and the politicians didn't pay attention." At the end, participants conclude that "what happened wasn't our fault."

But maybe it was. There is a strong case to be made that journalists *are* missing the environmental story, and if we don't do a better job of telling the story, devastation of the environment will be partly our fault.

The Big Story

Just what is *the* story that's not being told well enough today? It's about the things human beings do to the planet each and every day *and* what they are not willing to do to confront the consequences of their actions. Humanity is, without doubt, altering the composition of the atmosphere and almost certainly changing the climate. Humans

are wiping out other species at a rate not seen since the demise of dinosaurs. We continue to chop down irreplaceable old-growth forests. We use up natural resources faster than nature can renew them. Population growth is so rapid and our appetites so insatiable that even vast oceans show signs of exhaustion.

Certainly the collective experience and consequences of these activities qualify as a "big story." While every major network and virtually every newspaper and newsmagazine has covered each of these problems, stories examining the interaction and cumulative effect of these problems are not being brought to public attention in any big or consistent way. News reports about the environment are scattered, sporadic and mostly buried. They are also completely overshadowed by media obsessions with the "big" stories of our time—stories that are so big they need only one name—O.J., Monica and Chandra.

Of course, what happened on and because of September 11 is a genuinely big story. It is understandable that since then media have been tightly focused on the war on terrorism, homeland security, and possible war with Iraq. But environmental policy, with its short-term and long-term consequences, remains important and relevant to the lives of every American, as well as to every resident of the planet. For example, it is time for the press to find better ways to bring to public attention the fact that a more rational U.S. energy policy—one that would reduce fossil-fuel use—would not only help in the fight against climate change, but would also make the United States less dependent on Middle Eastern oil and less vulnerable to terrorism.

As I wrote in Time in 2001, "except for nuclear war or a collision with an asteroid, no force has more potential to damage our planet's web of life than global warming." The war on terrorism might be a bigger story right now, but it probably won't be in the long run. Unless terrorists detonate dozens of nuclear bombs, climate change will someday be a much bigger story, one that could adversely impact billions of people.

By definition, news focuses on what happened yesterday and today. But, as journalists, do we fulfill our obligation if we lose sight of the potential impact today's actions have on tomorrow? With this crisis, there isn't the option of waiting until the problems become

acute and therefore obvious in the everyday experience of the public. By that time, science can already tell us, the damage will be irreversible.

Giving Environment News Prominence

Let me pick on The New York Times for a minute because I'm a subscriber and spend more time with that newspaper than with any other media product. It intelligently covers every major environmental story and runs many strong pro-environment editorials. My files are full of environmental articles clipped from the Times. But the coverage has little prominence in the paper. There is no environment section, and the stories are scattered all over. They rarely sport big headlines. The paper recently ran an excellent story on the illegal destruction of forests in Indonesia, but how many people stopped to read it, buried as it was in the middle of the international section? Recent exceptions to the low profile were a superb series on water shortages called "Running Dry," which included several front-page articles and the Science Times' comprehensive walk-up to the U.N. environmental summit in Johannesburg, South Africa. The Times should do more of this.

The Times and other media giants have many dedicated environmental reporters, but these writers don't have the institutional power to give stories the prominence they deserve. Environment will be covered in a big way only when news organizations' top decision-makers present coverage of these issues and policies in ways that force readers to pay attention, whether they want to or not.

This happened at Time in late1988. I was the magazine's business editor and pretty much in the dark about environmental problems, even though I had been a high-school science teacher. Henry Muller, the managing editor, called me into his office and told me I was becoming science and environment editor. Here was the kicker: For the first issue of 1989, instead of Time's usual Man or Woman of the Year, there would be a Planet of the Year issue containing a raft of stories about all the environmental problems endangering the earth.

After that package of stories appeared—and garnered a great deal of attention—Muller didn't let up. During the next few years, we did many environmental cover stories—the burning Amazon, ozone depletion, besieged tigers, spotted owls vs. loggers, ivory smuggling, the Rio Earth Summit. I got a lot of credit for this coverage, but it was really Muller egging me on, often supplying the ideas himself.

After Muller became editorial director of Time Inc. in 1993 and left Time magazine, his successors showed much less interest in the environment. Cover stories started to dry up, even if the issues weren't going away. That was partly my fault because I asked to become an international editor to broaden my horizons. Soon I was spending more time on Iraq than on the environment.

Things picked up again when Jim Kelly became managing editor in 2001. He and his wife had adopted a child, and he told me that being a father had given him a new perspective on the importance of environmental issues. Kelly soon devoted a 15-page cover package to global warming, a courageous move since he knew the story wouldn't sell particularly well on the newsstands. But even now, environmental coverage in Time is not as frequent and prominent as it should be. During the past five years, the magazine has done three special environment reports (48 to 64 pages each), including one in August, published just before the Johannesburg summit. But this issue was done, in part, because the business side found advertisers that wanted to be associated with an environmental message. When that special support goes, environmental coverage will fight for limited space with the new crop of one-name newsmakers—Osama, Saddam—and business leaders whose greed is grist for headlines.

Moving Coverage Beyond Partisan Sniping

Unfortunately, in this country, the environment has become a partisan, ideological issue pitting environmentalists against a Republican administration. It was not always that way. The first great conservationist President, Theodore Roosevelt, was a Republican. And under President Richard Nixon, Congress rose above partisanship and passed our most important environmental laws, including the Clean Air Act and the Endangered Species Act.

Now, environmentalists are considered liberals and attacking them is part of the conservative mantra. Conservative pundits dismiss concerns like global warming in a knee-jerk fashion without exhibiting any knowledge of the issues. Listening to what these pundits say about climate change makes no more sense than asking them whether gene therapy will cure cancer. They are ideologues, not experts. Nevertheless, their opinions have an impact on the kind of coverage this topic receives. Since the environment has become a partisan issue, some editors and news directors feel constrained to cover it in a "fair and balanced" manner, even if the weight of scientific evidence tilts heavily toward the environmentalists' side.

One of journalism's darkest hours recently was the undeserved attention given to Bjorn Lomborg, a Danish statistics professor whose book, "The Skeptical Environmentalist," dismisses most environmental concerns as overblown. Even The New York Times sowed confusion in its readers' minds by giving Lomborg a largely uncritical review. But if you read Lomborg's 352-page book thoroughly, as I did, you'll see that his main point is that the human race is still growing and prospering. Yes, that's exactly right—growing and prospering at the expense of other species and the environment. But using up resources and despoiling our environment will eventually backfire on humanity. Lomborg doesn't even begin to prove that we can stay on this unsustainable path of unbridled consumerism for another century.

There are legitimate debates for journalists to explore about how we can best tackle environmental problems. But no longer should there be any question that the problems are real.

Scientists agree that climate change is a serious threat. The only uncertainty is how bad global warming will be. Scientists agree that we are doing major damage to ecosystems throughout the world. What they don't agree on is how bad the consequences of these actions could ultimately be for the human race. But do we really want to be blind now and find out later? Those on one side of the argument about remedies pose liberal government-oriented regulatory schemes, while those on the other side set forth more conservative market-oriented solutions.

It's time for the mainstream media to ignore the perennial charges of liberal bias and tell the truth about the environmental crisis, giving it the splash and urgency it deserves. The networks and radio should present heavily promoted "environment weeks," during which at least half of each nightly newscast is devoted to environmental updates. The New York Times and other major papers should have periodic special environment sections and often run a series of environmental stories on the front page above the fold. For this job to be done right, it can't be done piecemeal. Links among stories must be made abundantly clear to readers, viewers and listeners to emphasize the interrelationships and totality of the threat.

To top media decision-makers in countries throughout the world, the message ought to be clear: You are missing the biggest, most important story of the century. And the danger is that our grandchildren will suffer for our failure. ■

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The Environment Beat in the Nation's Capital

Reporters sort through promises of politicians and claims of advocates.

By Margaret Kriz

During the late 1960's, an environmental activist known as "The Fox" made headlines in my hometown of Chicago when he took action against corporations that he charged were polluting local waterways. During his rein of civil disobedience or ecoterrorism, depending on your point of view, The Fox plugged the sewage system of Armour-Dial Co., now Dial Corporation, which he said was discharging polluted waste into Illinois' Fox River. And he dumped sludge and dead fish in the lobby of U.S. Steel's Chicago offices, accusing the company of fouling Lake Michigan's waters.

By 1976, when I became a general assignment reporter in the Chicago suburbs, the environmental movement was maturing, and The Fox went into retirement. By then, Congress had passed the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and a list of other bedrock environmental legislation that lawmakers promised would solve many of the nation's major environmental problems. As the government responded to the nation's newfound environmental concerns, environmental reporters increasingly focused on the government's fledgling efforts to regulate polluters. During that second wave of coverage, I got my feet wet in environmental reporting by writing about the decidedly unsexy issues of sewage treatment plant construction and city recycling projects.

The Evolving Environment Beat

Thirty years after the environmental movement began, the environmental reporting beat has gone through several transformations. Sure editors are still interested in media investigations proving that corporations are dumping toxic chemicals into rivers. But thanks to state and national laws, many of the most acute environmental problems raised by figures like The Fox have been alleviated. America has made impressive strides in curbing the pollution that once turned Lake Erie into a vast, dead pool and caused Cleveland's Cuyahoga River to catch fire in 1969.

As they've made progress against the highest profile environmental problems, however, scientists have unmasked more complex environmental headaches that are far harder to solve—and to write about. Some of today's worst water quality problems, for example, are caused by polluted runoff from farms and cities and require extensive education and financial assistance to solve.

To understand such complexities, environment beat reporters need to become experts on—or at least willing students of—science, government policy, economics, business practices, health impacts, and civil rights issues. Writers must analyze the tradeoffs between a community's economic and environmental needs, examine regional planning issues that impact suburban sprawl, and delve into the racial and cultural problems that result when polluting facilities locate in low-income neighborhoods.

Environmental reporters also end up being arbiters of competing science, a difficult dilemma at a time when the Bush administration's scientific statements and policies are at odds with most of the other industrialized nations on such things as global warming and genetically modified foods. Since September 11, I've also had to become an instant expert on the national security problems facing nuclear power plants and chemical manufacturing facilities.

Covering Environment Issues in Washington, D.C.

During the 22 years I've written about environmental issues in Washington, D.C., environmental policy has changed with the times. Congress is no longer writing big new environmental laws. In 1990, Congress dramatically strengthened the Clean Air Act and, in 1995, lawmakers rewrote the pesticides control law. Since then, I've specialized in examining how government officials apply, fine-tune, and reinterpret the nation's existing environmental laws.

Untangling the bureaucratic red tape is far less exciting than covering the landslide of legislation of the 1970's. Little wonder then that The Washington Post and some other major newspapers only sporadically dive into such meat and potatoes environmental policy issues. Occasionally, regulators in Washington take dramatic actions that draw significant media coverage. During the late 1990's, former Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) administrator Carol Browner cracked down on companies that had expanded operations at their old, coal-fired power plants, but had not installed modern pollution control equipment. When the Bush administration took over, the EPA made news proposing to sidestep Browner's tough policies. In fact, the Bush administration's environmental policies appear to be based on the White House's National Energy Strategy, which places a higher priority on energy development than environmental controls and land preservation. Bush's EPA has been just one of many government bodies at the table when new environmental policies have been developed. In many cases, EPA regulators have been overruled by pro-business factions in the White House.

Environmental reporters struggle to call attention to the federal government's changing emphasis on environmental policy. But it's tough to compete for space at a time when the government, the public, and our editors are far more focused on terrorism, the economy, and Iraq. In addition, environmental problems are less visible than they were in the 1960's and 1970's when toxic sludge and belching smokestacks provided dramatic visuals for print and broadcast stories. As today's environmental problems become more "invisible," some reporters find it hard to get their stories published or broadcast. For example, how do you photograph endocrine disruptors, those man-made chemicals that interfere with physical development in humans and animals?

For their part, the public appear to trust that government officials are protecting America's air, water and wild lands. They view a clean environment as a universal right, much like freedom of speech and the right to vote. Public opinion polls show that voters rarely think about environmental issues when they go to the voting booth, unless they perceive that their environmental well-being is under attack. This public mindset puts Washington environmental reporters in the critical position of sorting through the promises of politicians, who assure that they are doing everything they can to protect the air and water, and the claims of environmental advocates, who contend the environment is in crisis.

During the national elections, even the most conservative candidates tell voters that they have strong environmental records. That's been easier as the term "environmentalist" has been watered down over the years. During the 2002 congressional elections, for example, Republican Colorado Senator Wayne Allard told voters he was the most environmentally sensitive senator in that state's history because he had backed several Colorado land preservation projects. He didn't mention, however, that he had voted against national air and water pollution control measures. Often such claims are not thoroughly analyzed because many media outlets have their political reporters, not their environmental writers, cover the charges and countercharges of elections.

Writing about the environment from Washington carries some unique dilemmas. Inside-the-beltway reporters run the risk of losing their perspective on environmental problems and the impact of federal mandates on the American heartland. One of the worst pitfalls is relying solely on the he-said-she-said quotes of Washington industry and environmental lobbyists. The best way to keep a more realistic perspective is to get a firsthand understanding of the issues by traveling to mining sites, nuclear power plants, superfund sites, and regions hit by forest fires. Because of declining newsroom budgets for such travel, I've stayed connected to real world environmental issues in part through field trips offered during the Society of Environmental Journalists conferences and by the Institutes for Journalism and Natural Resources, which provides week-long, on-site seminars for working journalists.

Washington reporters also grapple with continual efforts by the White House and other government officials to manipulate environmental coverage. The Bush administration, for example, has taken to releasing many of its most anti-environmental policies late Friday night in an effort to bury coverage in weekend newspapers, which attract less attention. Washington Post media critic Howard Kurtz quoted White House spokesman Ari Fleischer as also acknowledging that he likes to leak presidential proposals the night before an official unveiling so that the stories do not "become shoehorned into a 'Bush vs. the environmentalists' formula." Essentially Fleischer's aim is to get the President's positions in the newspapers before the environmental community has time to react. And reporters who are eager for a scoop go along with the less-than-balanced coverage that results.

Writing about the environment from Washington has put me in a good position to see trends and predict changes on the horizon for government policies on pollution control and federal land-use policy. During the next two years, it's likely the Bush administration will ramp up its efforts to change the nation's environment and land-use policies. Currently Bush regulators have been actively reinterpreting the laws. Next on the agenda is to rewrite such critical statutes as the Clean Air Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and the Endangered Species Act. The challenge for all environmental reporters will be to give the Bush administration credit when it comes up with new approaches for protecting the nation's environment, while also shining the spotlight on proposals that would cause harm.

Much has changed on the environmental beat since the nation's air and water pollution laws were enacted in the 1970's. Perhaps the most important shift has occurred as Americans have embraced environmental policy as a quality of life issue. As a result, they are relying far more on accurate, informed environmental reporting. Environmental coverage is not as black and white as it was in the days of The Fox. To keep up with the times, reporters are expanding their perspective and knowledge in their quest to paint lively and coherent portraits of today's environmental issues. ■

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WATCHDOG

A Government Agency Impedes Access to Information

What right do the public and journalists have to see data about children's health and the environment?

By Joseph A. Davis

In mid-summer 2002 the Environmental Protection Agency finished a major report on the environmental health of children in the United States. But as 2002 nears its end, nobody can read it—not the press, not the public. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the arm of the White House that oversees regulatory and information activities at most federal agencies, has kept the report locked up in indefinite review, with no release date in sight.

The incident underscores a key problem facing U.S. environmental journalists—access to government information, even scientific information, is increasingly restricted. A major player in bringing this about is OMB, which offers industries a back-channel way to influence regulatory agencies. This method is unhindered by laws such as the Administrative Procedures Act that are meant to ensure the process of open government. It also highlights another tough problem environmental journalists confront—how to tell a story our audience cares intensely about (whether the environment is making children sick and what government is doing about it), when some answers might be buried in a tangle of government procedures and jargon.

The Story That Doesn't Get Told

Most audiences are bored with stories about what goes wrong in government—about things that didn't happen, reports that didn't get published. A possible direction for this story might be the exploration of ways in which the Bush administration is working to shelve a Clinton administration push on children's environmental health. Selling such a story to editors can be tough enough when it has to compete with celebrity crime trials for space, but in the press of daily deadlines and the absence of a report, often no story will be told.

The general contents of the report, "America's Children and the Environment: Measures of Children and the Environment," are actually not much of a mystery. This is merely an update of a report of the same title published in December 2000, during the last days of the Clinton administration. The report tracks trends in a variety of indicators related to children's health and the environment—in some cases, simply adding another year's data to the 10-year trend chart. It includes information such as how many children live in counties where health-based air pollution and drinking water standards are exceeded. It also records the percentage of homes in which children are exposed to tobacco smoke, the average concentrations of toxic lead in the blood of children, and the incidence of diseases such as asthma and cancer among children. None of this informa-

tion is especially dangerous or factually controversial, and most of it is available elsewhere and has been published before.

Environmental activists such as Steve Gurney of the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) contend that OMB has been sitting on the report because it is politically inconvenient. OMB says it has not been sitting on the report; its explanation is that the report is merely bogged down in interagency review.

Early drafts of the current report have been shared with government reviewers. Sources involved in drafting and review say that OMB asked the Environmental Protection Agency to remove figures on how many U.S. children live in counties with listed Superfund hazardous waste sites. The earlier report published in 2001 did include the Superfund figures. (By the way, that *forbidden* number is about three million, according to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry [ATSDR].) OMB has also opposed continued funding of the Superfund cleanup program because of the tax it could impose on the petrochemical industry.

One possible reason for this change in OMB policy relates to John D. Graham, who now heads OMB's Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs. Formerly, he was at Harvard's Center for Risk Analysis, and the "risk-based" approach to regulation, which Graham brought to OMB under President Bush, might validly question whether living in a Superfund county presents any actual danger to a child. [See article by David Ropeik on risk analysis in environmental reporting on page 51.] In a county as large as Los Angeles, for example, children might not even live geographically close to the polluted site. Nor are children who live close to Superfund sites necessarily exposed to toxins, and the level of exposure might not actually present a demonstrable risk. But previous Congresses and administrations thought the question worthy enough of asking that they created by law an agency, the ATSDR, whose main mission was to collect, evaluate and publish this kind of information.

The Public's Right to Know

This is a debate that environmental journalists have been caught in for decades. Industries with a monetary stake in chemical facilities argue that chemicals should be considered innocent until proven guilty of environmental harm. Parents with children who might play in contaminated dirt argue that chemicals should be considered dangerous until proven safe, and they want the information they need to make an informed judgment. All too often, the science is inconclusive.

This situation raises further questions. Is imperfect and contradictory information better to have than no information at all? Some argue that the cure for bad information is more information. Does the public have a right to whatever information government has collected, even when what's been learned might be inconclusive? And do the press have the right to assess and publish information gathered by government agencies, even if no certain conclusions about its content exists?

During the last several decades, in both Democratic and Republican administrations, but increasingly since the deregulatory thrust of the Reagan administration, OMB has assumed and been given authority to make such decisions on access to governmental information about the environment for scientists, regulators and the American people. This authority arises out of a large, complex and obscure body of law (and executive orders that have the force of law) such as the Paperwork Reduction Act, the Government Performance and Results Act, the Data Quality Act, Executive Order 12866, and others too numerous to discuss here. This new legal ground has eroded some of what were the foundations of open government—the Freedom of Information Act, the Government in the Sunshine Act, the Federal Advisory Committees Act, and the Administrative Procedures Act among them.

Those who follow this issue say that OMB's review of the 2002 children's health report is unusual. They contend that its actions in this case represent a new extension of OMB's power, since this report has almost no overt regulatory or budget implications, which is OMB's traditional purview. Agency scientists say their work, and scientific and technical reports based on it, has traditionally been subject to review only or mainly by their scientific peers.

If and when this report is released, there will be important aspects to this story that will be difficult for journalists to obtain and share with readers, listeners and viewers. What journalists will not find in the report will be the unvarnished views of the scientists, statisticians and epidemiologists who drafted the report. Nor will they be able to tell which parts of the original report were deleted or changed either by OMB or by other agency reviewers. (Not every government document review is shared transparently with the public; however, technical and scientific reports are usually prepared much more openly than policy documents.) What will also not be apparent is what contacts with industry lobbyists or administration political operatives might have influenced changes in the report. But to report this story fully to the public, these are precisely the directions of inquiry journalists must pursue if they are going to truly inform people about the possible environmental dangers their children face. It's tough to gather this kind of information, but unless reporters work to do just that, the public will not be well informed. ■

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Journalists Can Be Seduced By Aspects of Risk

By understanding how and why people perceive risks, reporters and editors can cover risk-related issues with more caution and balance.

By David Ropeik

Most stories on environmental issues involve risk. What's the hazard of a particular toxin? How many people might die because of a chemical spill? Will emissions from that proposed new factory increase cancer in the neighborhood around it?

Reporters who cover such stories know public fear of these risks often exceeds what neutral experts contend is the actual danger. Of course, the fears are usually prominently featured in coverage: Intimations of danger and quotes packed with passion enliven any story. Less prominent, or missing altogether, is a recognition of the gap between fear and fact. Rarer still is an explanation of why such a gap exists.

For 20 years, I reported on environment issues as a daily TV journalist. My reporting would have been a lot better if I knew then what I know now about a well-established body of science that explains why people are so afraid of some relatively low risks and so unafraid of some relatively big ones.

Risk perception research, pioneered by Paul Slovic of the University of Oregon, Baruch Fischoff of Carnegie Mellon University, and others, has found that people tend to misperceive similar risks, for similar reasons. And the researchers have identified those reasons. It turns out that risks have certain characteristics that, regardless of age, race, gender, location, culture, or other demographic differences, drive our fears up or down. [See accompanying box on page 52 for a list of these risk perception factors.]

For reporters, understanding these risk perception factors can empower more intelligent coverage of risk-related stories. They can interview people who are upset and frightened more insightfully. They can gather facts with greater perspective. They can write their stories with more balance. (And a story that explains why people overreact or underreact to a risk, such as West Nile virus, can be an interesting story, too.) Understanding these factors can also help journalists avoid the seduction of playing up stories about minimal risks—stories that evoke a lot of fear—and ignoring stories about major risks that don't.

The same risk perception factors that trigger fear in those who consume the news trigger interest in the people who report it. For reporters, these "fear factors" are characteristics of a story that has a better chance of making the front page or the top of a news broadcast. For editors and producers hungry to increase the number of readers or viewers, these factors identify stories that might grab more attention.

Imagine a story about a human-made risk that's imposed on people, affects kids, involves a dreadful way to die and a government agency or officials that nobody trusts. To most journalists, those are the elements of a great news story, even if the actual risk involved is insignificant. The danger is that journalists can be so seduced by these subconscious risk perception fear factors that they play them up while failing to qualify how big or small, certain or not, the actual risk is.

Environmental journalism is rife with examples. I definitely plead guilty. I did this more times than I'd like to recall. The Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) is a classic example. Each year the Environmental Protection Agency reports the amounts of hazardous substances being emitted by major sources. I covered the TRI story many times, reporting with great drama (and plenty of sound bites from scared neighbors) that significant quantities of hazard X, Y or Z were coming from a smoke stack or sewage pipe. But I never gave equal attention in my reporting to the fact that because something is emitted doesn't automatically make it hazardous. Indeed, the exposure data suggested that by the time people were exposed to these hazards, the levels almost always met safety standards.

Consider the risk perception factors behind the common fear of chemicals:

- They are human-made.
- The risk involves a dreadful outcome—such as cancer.
- The risk is imposed on people.
- It comes from a source—industry—that people don't trust.

Those are all risk perception factors that make people more fearful. And, as a reporter, they made me more likely to play up those dramatic aspects of the story. They also made my work less balanced than it should have been.

Risk perception not only explains why people's perceptions of risk often don't match the facts, but also why the emotional aspects of risk stories are so appealing to journalists, too often at the expense of caution and balance. ■

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Understanding Factors of Risk Perception

What follows is a basic list of risk perception factors. (They are culled from 20 years of research and are reviewed for this article by Paul Slovic.) Often, several of these factors can be involved simultaneously. For example, fear of West Nile virus is high in some areas because awareness is high, it's new, and there remains some uncertainty. However, fear of particulate air pollution remains low (compared with what scientists say is the actual risk) because it's chronic and awareness is still low. Factors can compete. Vaccines are human-made, threaten children, and state laws impose the risk on parents and kids, all of which raise fear. But for some people, the risk outweighs the benefit enough to counterbalance these other factors. Some people fear a risk more than other people do. While all of us fear similar things, for similar reasons, individual circumstances overlay those factors. We all fear cancer, for example, but men have a greater fear of prostate cancer and women of breast cancer. Parents fear child abductions more than nonparents do. Risk perception factors are dynamic over time. Awareness goes up or down. With time, new risks become familiar. Uncertainty, as with electrical and magnetic fields, ultimately gets resolved as scientific information develops. —D.R.

1. Trust vs. lack of trust: The more we trust the people informing us about a risk, the less afraid we are. The more we trust the process used in deciding whether we will be exposed to a hazard, the less afraid we are. When we trust the agency or company exposing us to the risk, we are less afraid. When we trust government agencies that are supposed to be protecting us, we are less afraid. The less we trust the people informing us, the people protecting us, or the process determining our exposure to a risk, the more afraid we are.

2. Imposed vs. voluntary: We are much more afraid of a risk that is imposed on us (the driver in the car next to us using his cell phone) than when we voluntarily expose ourselves to the same risk (we are using a cell phone while we drive).

3. Natural vs. human-made: If the risk is natural, such as radiation from the sun, we are less afraid. If it's human-made, such as radiation from nuclear power or some industrial process, we are more afraid. This factor helps explain excessive public fear of pesticides and industrial chemicals.

4. Catastrophic vs. chronic: We tend to be more afraid of things that can kill a lot of us, suddenly and violently and all in one place, such as a plane crash, than things like heart disease, which causes hundreds of thousands more deaths, but one at a time, over time, and not all in the same place.

5. The dread factor: The worse the outcome from a risk, such as being eaten alive by a shark, the more afraid of it we are. This helps explain our excessive fear of carcinogens or potential carcinogens. Cancer ranks high on the dread scale.

6. Hard to understand: The harder a potential risk is to understand —such as nuclear power or industrial chemicals—the more afraid we are likely to be. And when the risk is invisible, the fear gets even worse.

7. Uncertainty: This is less a matter of the science being hard to understand and more a matter of not having enough answers. This factor explains widespread fear of new technologies and why, as the answers come in (artificial sweeteners, silicone in breast implants, electrical and magnetic fields), fear goes down.

8. Familiar vs. new: When we first encounter a risk (West Nile virus as it spreads to new communities), we are more afraid than after we have lived with the risk for a while. When mad cow disease first showed up in just a handful of cows in Germany in 2000, a poll found that 85 percent of the public thought this new risk was a serious threat to public health. That poll also asked people in Great Britain, where the disease had killed more than 100 people and hundreds of thousands of animals. But because people in the U.K. had lived with it for 14 years, only 40 percent of them said mad cow disease was a serious threat to public health.

9. Awareness: When the news is full of stories about a given risk, like ozone depletion, our fear of that risk is greater. For example, on July 3, 2002, amid a flurry of "Will the terrorists strike on July 4th?" stories, the FBI said requests for handgun purchases were one-third higher than expected. But awareness doesn't just come from the news media. When, as individuals, we've recently experienced something bad, such as the death of a friend or relative to cancer, or witnessed a crime or an accident, awareness of that risk is greater, and so is our fear.

10. A known victim: A risk that is made real by a specific victim, such as the recent child abductions making news, becomes more frightening, even though the actual risk may be no greater than it was before it was personified by this victim.

11. Future generations: When kids are at risk, our fear is greater. Asbestos in a workplace doesn't frighten us as much as asbestos in schools.

12. Does it affect me?: We don't perceive risk to "them," to society, as fearfully as we do risks to ourselves. This explains the desire for zero risk. A person doesn't care if the risk of cancer from pesticides on food is one in a million, if he or she could be that one.

13. Risk vs. benefit: The more we perceive a benefit from a potentially hazardous agent or process or activity, such as drugs or vaccines or skiing or bungee jumping, the less fearful we are of the risk.

14. Control vs. no control: If a person feels as though he or she can control the outcome of a hazard, that individual is less likely to be afraid. Driving is one obvious example, as is riding a bike and not wearing a helmet. Control can either be physical (driving the car, operating the bicycle) or a feeling of controlling a process, as when a person participates, setting risk management policy through involvement in public hearings or voting. ■

After September 11, Headlines About Air Quality Were Everywhere

A reporter explains his misgivings about this complicated story.

By Dan Fagin

"Everything looks different from way up close." That's what one of my former editors used to tell me. I remember thinking about that on September 11, 2001, as I watched stunned office workers, coated in white dust from head to shoes, trudge up West Broadway. One by one, or sometimes in small groups, they emerged blinking and wide-eyed out of the fog of smoke and ash that marked the place where, an hour or two earlier, the towers of the World Trade Center had stood.

From afar, through the mediating distance of television signals and newspaper pages, the September 11 attacks must have looked like a horror movie. Way up close, it felt more like a sucker punch to the stomach: numbing, sickening and deeply confusing.

The Environmental Fallout

I am the environmental reporter for my newspaper, Newsday, but that day I had rushed downtown to fulfill a less specialized journalistic function: I was interviewing survivors and rescuers and was relaying their quotes to the city desk, along with whatever hard news I could glean. Even on that first day, it was obvious there would be environmental implications to the story. The dust was everywhere—stinging our eyes, irritating our throats, and making us spit every minute or two. When the wind shifted our way, it was hard to breathe.

In the weeks to come, the number of purely "environmental" stories about the attacks would gradually increase from a trickle to a steady flow. I contributed several. One of my stories focused on debunking early reports that had claimed there was no asbestos in the towers. Another confirmed that in the days after the attack, local air quality generally complied with federal standards everywhere except right at Ground Zero. Several other stories I wrote pointed out that many rescue and construction workers weren't taking even basic precautions to protect themselves from fumes at the still-smoldering site.

Those rescue workers were the people who had the longest and most intense exposures to the chemicals emanating from the debris pile. I thought they were the right place to focus coverage—especially because many of the workers, in the feverish turmoil of those early days, were refusing to wear protective equipment even when it was available. I believe environmental health coverage should revolve around risk, and in this story those unprotected workers were the ones at greatest risk.

New York, however, is not the kind of place where risk analysis drives news coverage. Instead, the imperatives of the news business, and the fear, frustration and seething anger of hundreds of thousands of city residents, quickly began to set the coverage agenda. Community groups began doing their own air testing, often cherry-picking a small number of test results to paint a dire picture about the extent of the contamination. Headline-hunting politicians and longtime critics of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) got involved, and the EPA offered itself up as an easy target by giving slow and sometimes inconsistent answers about whether the air was "safe."

Soon, in some of the city's papers, the "toxic air" story had become a mainstay of local post-attack coverage. Other aspects of the disaster—the mass deaths, the lack of successful rescues after the first day, and the epidemic of depression among city firefighters, to name just a few—were so devastatingly sad, and so inarguably final, that they tended not to make good stories. Neither did the intricacies of public finance and urban planning that were key to the redevelopment of the site.

The environment story, on the other hand, was nearly perfect: It was an ongoing threat, it had a villain (those bumblers at the EPA!), and plenty of already-traumatized victims. Most importantly, there was—and still is—enough scientific uncertainty about the health effects of many of the compounds measured in the air of Lower Manhattan that reporters could, and did, say just about anything they wanted about the gravity of the threat.

Health Risks in Context

From a distance, it looked like a good story. Way up close, I had misgivings. There's always uncertainty in environmental health stories. To me, that's always been one of the great pleasures of the environment beat: There's still so much left to argue about. But with the September 11 story, I found that I didn't have the stomach for the usual give-and-take between environmentalist embellishers and industry apologists over whether the people of Lower Manhattan faced a hypothesized added cancer risk of one in 10,000 or one in 10 million. It all seemed like a make-believe game in comparison to the stark reality of what those dust-covered people had seen and done on September 11.

Why the misgivings? The pollution was real, after all. The pulverization of more than a million tons of concrete, steel and glass—not to mention air

conditioners, computers, copying machines, and much more—had released a very unusual brew of airborne compounds, many of which were known to be hazardous in sufficient concentrations. The dust had seemed to settle on every possible surface, indoors and out. And clinicians were noticing a chronic respiratory condition in hundreds of people, so many that they gave it a name: World Trade Center Cough.

But environmental health issues are meaningful only when risks are put into context. Many reporters detest the word "context" because it's often misused by sources who try to explain away an accurate but embarrassing quote by saying it was reported "out of context." In environmental health stories, however, context is everything. The presence of a chemical in dust on a table, or drifting in mid-air, or even deep inside the human lung, means something only if it wasn't there before and only if there's some evidence that it has a significant effect.

By that standard the evidence was weak, and is still weak, that the contaminants generated by the September 11 disaster pose a meaningful long-term health threat to anyone, with the possible exception of those rescue workers who spent many days on the debris pile without protective gear. There is virtually nothing in the peer-reviewed scientific literature to suggest that the pollutant concentrations tens of thousands of office workers and downtown residents were breathing in the days and weeks after the attack were as hazardous as, for example, the smog inversions that settle over major cities on hot summer days.

But that's not the end of this story, because absence of reliable evidence is not the same as absence of risk. The post-September 11 air plume was so unusual—more glassy than sooty, for example, and alkaline instead of acidic—that the usual ways of assessing risk weren't especially helpful. For example, the air in most of downtown Manhattan met Clean Air Act standards almost every day in the months after the attack, but the Clean Air Act was written to deal with smog, soot and acid rain, not glass fibers. The persistent coughs reported by many people who worked there were undeniably real, even if there was no reliable way to verify the cause of specific cases. And the lack of relevant studies in the scientific literature surely had something to do with the fact that no one had ever destroyed two skyscrapers before in the midst of a crowded U.S. city.

So for journalists who are serious about reporting risk in context, the air-quality issue was difficult, even maddening. I found it especially difficult for personal reasons. Having seen and felt the intense trauma of September 11 from an up-close vantage, I agonized over whether air hazard stories based on weak evidence were, in some small way, adding to the sense of powerlessness and fear that seemed to pervade the city. What was my responsibility? To report only what I knew to be significant and thus be certain I was not recklessly adding to the trauma? Or to report on highly uncertain risks that I knew many people were very worried about, because those risks might someday be shown to be meaningful?

In the end, I tried to pick my way down a middle path, emphasizing in my reports the sketchiness of the evidence. But soon, frustrated and unsure about what to write, I drifted away from the air-quality story and back to another project—about epidemiology and cancer clusters—that I felt much more comfortable with reporting. By then, the Manhattan air story had slipped the bonds of science and become a full-blown political controversy, with health officials making decisions that had little to do with the evidence at hand and everything to do with easing public anxiety. I watched from a safe distance. ■

Dan Fagin has been Newsday's environmental reporter since 1991. He also teaches environmental journalism at New York University and is the president of the Society of Environmental Journalists.

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The Press Portrayed the Story as Fish vs. Farmers

But the Klamath River story is a whole lot more complicated than that.

By Michael Milstein

Here is the way one of my articles described what might be called the center ring of one of the biggest environmental stories in 2001: "Encampments grew on both sides of the fences around the closed federal head gates, creating a surreal scene amid suburban homes on the north end of Klamath Falls. It was the result of what began as an April decision by biologists to help protected fish in an arid basin beset by drought and declines in water quality.

"Up to 200 farmers and their supporters flew American flags upside down outside the fences, illustrating their defiance of the federal government and its ruling that reserved water for endangered lake fish, called suckers, and threatened coho salmon in the Klamath River in this year of record drought. The decision has left many farms in the 200,000-acre Klamath Reclamation Project to dry out in the summer sun.

"On televisions facing federal agents inside the fences, farmers broadcast

videotapes describing the decline of family farms and the government's intentional killing of hatchery salmon. They also played the song 'God Bless the U.S.A.' repeatedly over large loudspeakers.

"When officers turned floodlights on the crowd Saturday night, farmers drove pickup trucks up to the fences so their headlights and spotlights would shine on the officers.

"An ice cream truck, its music jingling, occasionally circled through the crowd that had gathered to watch."

Missing the Story

From across the nation and the world, reporters descended into this circus-like southern Oregon setting more than a year ago to cover an environmental furor nearly a century in the making. It's one that includes many victims and involves complicated science with no clear solutions, enigmatic species and racial tensions, not to mention contorted interstate politics and millions in taxpayer dollars.

Most of the reporters, unfortunately, missed most of that. Instead, they (including me, as you just read) all too often covered the show.

Farmers were the most obvious victims when federal agencies cut off their irrigation water in the summer of 2001. They quickly learned how to use a press that gravitated toward the obvious. They staged protests and, in a flamboyant but largely fruitless exercise, dramatized their plight by illegally cracking open head gates that control water to their windswept farms. Federal marshals swooped in and closed the gates. When it looked like the TV crews were tuckered out and packing up their satellite trucks, the farmers pieced together a makeshift pipeline to suck up water they weren't supposed to have.

The TV crews stayed, of course, watching another round in the pitched battle the press almost universally boiled down to three words: fish versus farmers. This was convenient for the most vocal farmers and politicians, who then could advance the alluring but simplistic argument that farmers are, of course, more important than fish—especially the bottom-feeding sucker, a long-lived monster of a fish that is something of a living fossil and subject to as much speculation as the dinosaurs.

Fox News reporters were hailed during the local Fourth of July parade for telling the story almost exclusively from the farmers' point of view.

But, in all reality, it was far more than fish vs. farmers. There's no doubt that farmers suffered in 2001, but there had long been plenty of environmental and economic pain to go around. It was more accurately fish vs. farmers vs. tribes vs. other fish vs. million-dollar farms in California vs. fishermen vs. wildlife refuges vs. environmentalists vs. drought vs. other farmers. In some parts of the basin, there are 5,600 competing claims for the same water. Wildlife, tribal, farm and other needs all overlap. Even in the wettest year, there would never be enough water to satisfy them all.

This area was, and still is, a massive ecosystem so squeezed of water over the last century it cannot meet all the demands people and wildlife place upon it. That's the fundamental story, but also the forgotten one.

Untangling Its Threads

The Klamath Basin, in an unfortunate way, is a victim of its own success. It's an arid high desert, but the surrounding mountains provided plenty of water that once filled vast wetlands and drew thick clouds of migratory birds. Soon the government moved Indians onto a reservation (later liquidated into logging land), drained the "swamps," and lured ambitious farmers with cheap water from a federal reclamation project. Nobody, other than local tribes, perhaps, much cared about the suckers that flowed into fields with irrigation water and rotted into fertilizer. Nobody worried much about coho salmon blocked by hydroelectric dams.

Farming boomed. But as natural resources like the suckers eroded, the Klamath Tribes began a downward spiral into one of the state's poorest populations. Fishing fleets off the coast of California and Oregon collapsed as salmon runs on the Klamath and other rivers collapsed. Finally the Endangered Species Act led federal agencies to hold enough water for the sucker in the same shallow lake where farmers get their irrigation water. And it required dispensing more water for salmon, which also struggle against massive, but curiously unquestioned, diversions to wealthy farms in California's Central Valley.

When one of the toughest droughts of the century struck, biologists said the suckers and salmon needed all the water. And the farmers, themselves suckered by old government promises of all the water they could want, got caught in the middle—the latest of all too many victims.

My editors and I saw during the initial water allocations that Klamath was boiling into our biggest environmental story of the year and launched a crash series explaining why. But it was hard to stay on track as the drama morphed into a bitter circus. Editors were focused on whether emboldened farmers were getting busted (one wanted to get arrested so badly he chained himself to the head gates only to woefully unlock himself when no cops dragged him away) or whether the National Guard might be called out to control angry crowds. Environmentalists were warned (by the sheriff) to stay out of town for their own safety. Articles offering alternate points of view got reporters branded enemies of family farms. Farmers who broke ranks to discuss retiring some cropland faced bitter hostility.

All sides had scientists who poked so many holes in each other's work reporters rightfully wondered whom to believe. And it seemed insane to try to explain to readers that scientists do not know precisely how much water suckers need when farmers who needed the same water were seeing their John Deeres repossessed.

Often, reporting the story in full made it murkier and more confusing, which consequently made it all the more tempting to not do so.

The story is far from over. Scientists convened by Secretary of the Interior

Gale Norton said in early 2002 that knowledge of the fish was so unclear it did not support cutting off water to farms. They also said it did not support severe cutbacks to fish. They did not say it was bad science—a crucial distinction lost on distressed farmers and in most press accounts—only that science could not prove extra water would save fish. After federal agencies delivered farmers a full supply of water that left downstream salmon with less, more than 33,000 salmon died in the fall of 2002 in what is thought to be the largest adult salmon kill in U.S. history.

Again, science is unclear. Did the low water kill the fish or the high temperatures? Were there too many fish? Was it disease or stress? More likely, it was some combination of all those factors. As much as it's unfair to blame any one factor, it's just as unreasonable to excuse it.

After all, perhaps the only sure thing I can draw from more than a decade of environment reporting is that nothing is clear, but everything is connected. ■

Michael Milstein covers natural resources and public lands for The Oregonian in Portland. Before joining The Oregonian in 2000, he spent more than 10 years covering Yellowstone National Park, science and the environment for the Billings (Montana) Gazette.

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Photojournalism and Environment Stories

A photographer's work 'explores the increasingly complex relationship between people and the environment.'

By Natalie Fobes

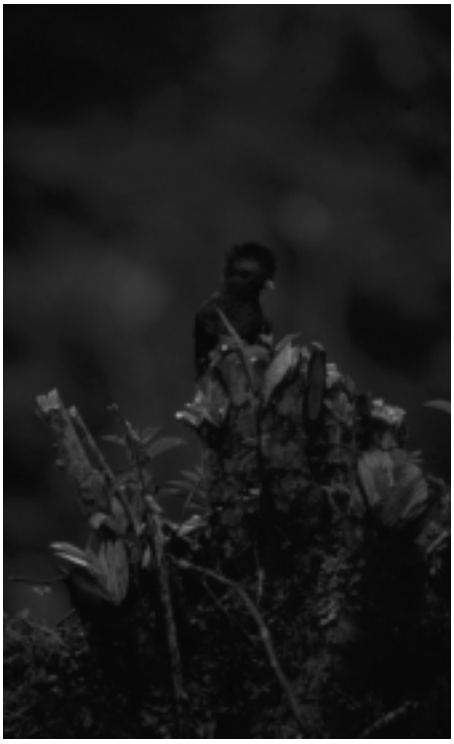
Sweat and rain dripped from my body as I shivered in the predawn gloom of the Guatemalan cloud forest. The hour-long 1,000-foot climb in the dark had tested my stamina and nerves. Now I panted from the thin air of my 7,000-foot perch, or maybe from relief at being safely in my makeshift photo blind, safe from the slick mud reeking of rot, the night calls from night creatures, and shapes moving outside the cone of light from my head lamp. I was waiting for dawn when Guatemala's elusive national bird, the resplendent quetzal, would begin feeding the chick nestled in the hollow tree before me.

I waited. Slowly the cloud forest shapes formed in the gray mist of dawn. I waited. The colors of the orchids gradually emerged. I waited. My stomach growled, and I ate the cold, homemade corn tortillas. After three hours with no quetzal, I was worried. After five hours, I was depressed. After eight hours, I gave up. The birds were gone. The chick must have fledged in the 24 hours since we finished building our blind.

Cloud forest clear-cut in Guatemala: A female quetzal rests on a stump in the middle of a burned-out cornfield. ***Photo by © Natalie B. Fobes 1992.***

Once the chick flies, the adults leave the nest, too. Weeks of scouting the steep mountains of the cloud forest for nests and five nights of building the blind without disturbing the birds were for nothing. I had supporting photographs of the birds, but I lacked the beauty shot, the direct quote, the nut graf photograph that would excite the imagination of the viewer. I'd spend the next few days scrambling to find another nest and, if successful, several nights building another blind.

I'd done everything right and, still, in my initial attempt, I failed. That



A male quetzal sits on the stump of a tree where he used to rest. The Indians cut the tree down. *Photo by © Natalie B. Fobes 1992.*

happens in environments where animals operate with their own set of rules. As I sat cursing my luck, I recalled the circuitous path I'd taken to arrive at this place. Doing this work was so very different from my newspaper days of photographing spot news, sports, politics and environmental portraits.

Becoming an Environmental Photojournalist

In some ways, I have the Pacific salmon to thank for this transition. My 10-year project on salmon and the cultures surrounding this fish catapulted me from newspaper work to becoming a freelance photographer for National Geographic, Smithsonian and other magazines. Along the way I received an Alicia Patterson Foundation (APF) Fellowship , the Scripps Howard Edward J. Meeman Award, and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in specialized reporting. In time, my photographs and words about salmon were published in my first book, "Reaching Home: Pacific Salmon, Pacific People."

Many editors consider me a nature and wildlife photographer. I think of myself as a photojournalist whose work explores the increasingly complex relationship between people and the environment. In my salmon project, the fish served as the thread that wove together the many cultures around the Pacific Rim. Documenting how humans use and abuse the earth's resources was a critical theme in my coverage, second only to the life history and ecosystem importance of the salmon. Even the story of the quetzal included the native people, the Q'echi, their rich culture, and the negative impact their farming had on the bird's dwindling habitat.

Environmental stories are especially challenging for a photojournalist to tell. While a reporter can write an article without cooperation from the subjects, a photographer must have access to do the story well. In the summer of 2001, I shot an assignment for Mother Jones. The writer was looking at the impact Atlantic salmon farms had on wild Pacific salmon in British Columbia. In the mid-1980's entrepreneurs set up net pens in the bays of the province. Rather than catch wild Pacific salmon when they returned to the rivers, these farmers would raise Atlantic salmon, a non-native species, in salt water pens and harvest them when the market demanded. The Canadian government saw it as one way to employ out-of-work loggers.

Many environmental concerns had been raised about farms during the 15 years that I'd been observing the salmon. Some had proven true. But the discovery that large numbers of sea lice were attaching themselves to out-migrating juvenile salmon swimming by the farms was alarming. Just a few lice could kill the two-inch long fish. Many salmon were carrying more than a dozen. Some scientists believed this epidemic, if left unchecked, could doom the region's wild salmon. Based on evidence from Europe, the researchers suspected that the Atlantic salmon farm net pens were inadvertent incubators for the sea lice.

I contacted the salmon farm industry association to request access to the farms. They declined to help. Once I

For good luck, Pete Blackwell kisses the first sockeye caught before throwing it overboard in Bristol Bay, Alaska. *Photo by © Natalie B. Fobes 1991.*

Fobes created more than 500 flags bearing her salmon photos and poems for "Salmon in the Trees." The exhibit symbolizes the importance of salmon to forests. *Photo by © Natalie B. Fobes 2001.*

was in the field, however, it was a different story. Two workers approached me as I photographed the net pens from a skiff. We talked at length about the Mother Jones article, farming issues, and wild salmon. Eventually, they invited me onto the farm to photograph their activities. In this case, my depth of knowledge and understanding of the issues gave me credibility with the workers and added layers to my coverage for the magazine. But few environmental photographers have the time it takes to fully comprehend the complex web of issues involved in any environmental topic.

The Difficulties of Photographing Nature

Those who photograph nature and the environment have separated into many different factions. Some photographers view their work as the opportunity to advocate a certain position; others feel it is only important to get good photographs of wildlife. Some make their living as environmental photographers, but there is a growing number of advanced amateurs who just want to be in nature. With more advanced automatic and digital cameras, the increase of disposable income and rise of ecotravel, amateurs are sometimes producing photographs that rival the pros.

This surge of interest in environmental photography is not without its problems. Anyone who reads popular photography magazines knows when and where to go to photograph bears, whales, eagles, puffins and every other kind of photogenic creature. Some photographers, pros and amateurs alike, believe in getting the picture no matter the costs. Nature is their Disneyland; all they need to do is pay the price. It is a dangerous concept.

This crush of humanity is certainly impacting the animals' behavior. Each summer orca whales feed on salmon in the waters between Washington State's San Juan Islands and Victoria, British Columbia. Tourists come to see the whales with as many as 100 boats—of all shapes and sizes—trailing five or six orcas. It is now nearly impossible to get a clean shot of a whale.

But what's worse is that scientists believe the number of boats, combined with a decline in the salmon and high PCB's in the whales' blubber, have resulted in a loss of 11 individual whales in the past six years. The amount of time the whales have to bulk up on the fat-rich salmon is only a matter of weeks and, as the runs decline, any time spent away from feeding might be harmful. Canadian researchers have found that whales swim faster and change their diving patterns when boats approach. Are we reaching a point where we are loving our animals to extinction?

Far from the bumper-boats in the San Juans are the wildlife photographers who stay in tents, eat bad food, and live without the luxury of showers or toilets in order to fully document the behavior of these incredible creatures. These are images that can advance our understanding of the world's creatures. Unfortunately, the amount of money supporting such important photographic work is declining.

In the golden days of the 1970's and 1980's, magazines like National Geographic and German Geo supported months-long assignments about the environment. I am grateful to Tom Kennedy, former director of photography at National Geographic, for giving me an assignment with which I completed the salmon work I had begun with my APF Fellowship.

Early in the 1990's, budgets were cut. The length of most assignments was reduced to weeks. Then magazines discovered it cost them less to buy the licensing rights to a story already photographed than to pay a photographer's fees and expenses. Editors would know what they were getting and avoid the possibility of an expensive failure. The burden of financing the story was shifted to the photographer. Many of us grudgingly accepted this new paradigm because we wanted to tell these important stories. We used funds from our business or our savings to underwrite the stories. [See accompanying box on Blue

Blue Earth Alliance

Concerned that magazines and book publishers were no longer funding photographers' long-term projects, Natalie Fobes cofounded Blue Earth Alliance (BEA) in 1996 as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation. Fobes describes Blue Earth's mission as supporting photographic and film documentary projects that educate the public about the environment, world cultures, and social issues.

Blue Earth Alliance accepts proposals from members twice a year. An accepted project becomes part of BEA's charter enabling it to qualify for foundation, corporate and private grants unavailable to individuals. The photographer or filmmaker becomes the project's director and works closely with a member of the board. Our grant writer helps the project director to target appropriate funders. BEA also offers the opportunity to display the project's images on our Web site. Blue Earth Alliance has sponsored projects by 24 photographers and filmmakers.

Board members of Blue Earth Alliance present workshops three times each year and project directors speak at schools and community events. BEA publisheds a 66-page booklet, "Shooting From the Heart," which covers all aspects of a documentary photography or film project. It includes articles on organizing the photo story, budgeting, fundraising, publishing and marketing.

For membership information and to see some of our projects, please visit our Web site at: www.blueearth.org. ■ —N.F.

Earth Alliance, a nonprofit organization Fobes cofounded to support photographic and film documentary projects that educate the public about the environment, world cultures, and social issues.] At the same time licensing fees for these images remained the same or even declined while the costs of doing business increased. Some photographers have been driven out of business.

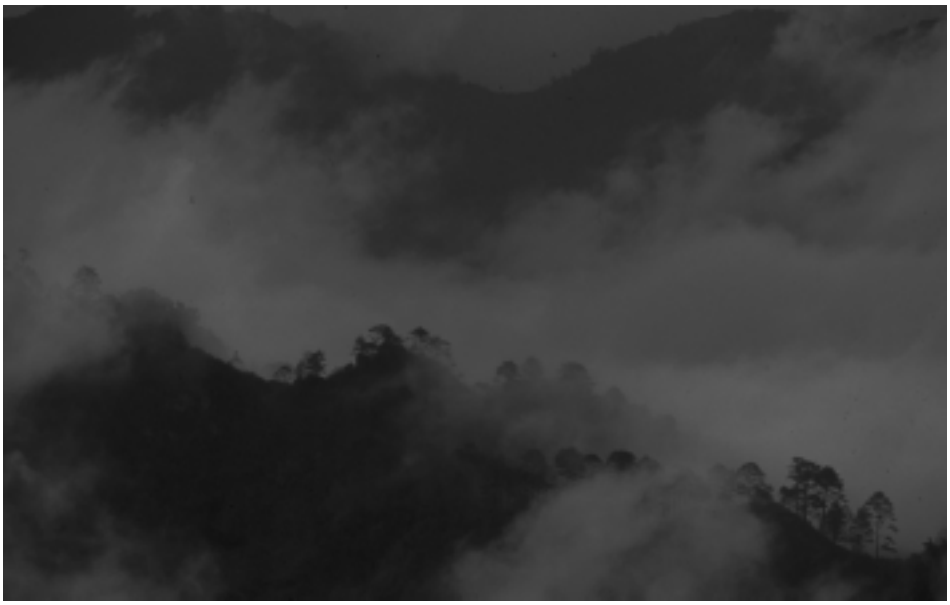
Using Innovative Techniques

But the most serious problem facing environmental photographers and writers is the numbing of the public to the complexities of environmental stories. Rhetoric designed for a 30-second sound bite has had a polarizing effect on the public.

The coverage of the Bush administration's recent forest plan is a good example. In the aftermath of the devastating western wildfires, President Bush proposed thinning trees and underbrush as a way of lessening the risk. He condemned environmental lawsuits and stated that they had prevented the government from removing the underbrush in the past. His new policy would prevent future legal challenges. The insinuation was that the environmentalists were in part responsible for the fires.

Television and the local Seattle newspapers covered the pre-announcements of the policy as well as the President's speech. It was not until I read the next day's Seattle Post-Intelligencer, and watched public television news later that night, that I learned the government's General Accounting Office had found and reported that environmentalists had challenged fewer than one percent of these projects. They had gotten a bad rap that would be nearly impossible to correct.

Distrust and demonization cut both ways. Many of my friends and colleagues are convinced that the only good logger is an unemployed logger. They are astounded when I tell them that some of the most rabid conservationists I've interviewed worked in a logging camp in Alaska.



Quetzals live in the cloud forest—a rain forest situated between 4,500 and 7,000 feet. Often the clouds are below the mountaintops. *Photo by © Natalie B. Fobes 1992.*

So how do we help foster a better understanding of environmental issues? First, put away the rhetorical white and black hats and bring the debate back to the issues and away from the politics or personalities. Don't be content with covering only the superficial. Assign photographers and reporters to areas of interest and let them learn about their specialties. Assign more space to articles about the environment.

Environmental photojournalism will become even more important in the future as our society struggles with the escalating depletion of our once vast natural resources. The challenge for photographers will be to create evocative images that tell the story of what this loss means. And as photojournalists seek out these images, headshots of bear, walrus or salmon won't make it in this era of flash, pop and increasing visual sophistication.

Real decisive moments, not captured in animal farms but rather in the wild, will always captivate us. But there are new photographic approaches that stimulate our thinking, too. In his groundbreaking and successful book, "Survivors: A New Vision of Endangered Wildlife," James Balog photographed animals in a studio. Unlike photographers who hire captive animals and pose them in the wild to create natural-looking images, Balog went out of his way to photograph them in a very unnatural environment. He wanted to force the viewer to concentrate on the magnificence of these endangered creatures.

In my exhibit, "Salmon in the Trees," I printed my salmon photos and poems on flags and hung them from the trees near a salmon stream in a Seattle Park. The theme was the importance of salmon to the forests. It is another example of how photographers can get their message across in a nontraditional way.

Different photographic techniques and formats also surprise the eye. Some photographers hand-color their black and white prints to create images with a hint of mystery. Others use wide-format cameras to capture unpredictable angles. In my second book, "I Dream Alaska," as well as my Orion article about the Exxon Valdez oil spill, I printed my images with the Polaroid transfer process. To do this, I first take a Polaroid photograph of a slide. I then pull the negative from the film pack before the print is fully developed and lay it on a sheet of paper. The dyes transfer to the paper, creating an image with a timeless watercolor quality.

Raymond Moses tunes his drum before the first salmon ceremony at the Tulalip Reservation, Washington. *Photo by © Natalie B. Fobes 1994.*

Another view of the "Salmon in the Trees" exhibit. *Photo by © Natalie B. Fobes 2001.*

Forest clear-cut in Guatemala: Using a stick, Indians poke holes in the soil and deposit seeds. *Photo by © Natalie B. Fobes 1992.*

We must strive to creatively catch the public's eye while we remain true to our journalistic roots. If we don't, we are in danger of becoming the Galapagos Islands of the visual world—interesting, intriguing, but totally removed from the real world. ■

Natalie Fobes, a photojournalist, specializes in photographing cultures and wildlife around the Pacific Rim. Her photographs have been published by National Geographic, Geo, Natural History, and Audubon. She was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in a writing category, won the Scripps Howard Meeman Award, and received an Alicia Patterson Fellowship.

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Darrel Jack pughs a Chinook salmon on Washington State's Columbia River. *Photo by © Natalie B. Fobes 1994.*

Connecting Scientific Data to Real Consequences for People

Power, passion and accountability are key ingredients of environment stories.

By Tom Henry

I wish I could figure out what makes environmental journalism so mysterious to so many people in our business. When done right, it's passionate storytelling with a hard-nosed quest for truth, and this should be the hallmark of our craft.

Yet I remember having a chat at a St. Louis hotel in the mid-1990's with one of the nation's most prominent newspaper editors, a Pulitzer Prize-winner who had recently written for Nieman Reports. Our conversation occurred after one of those inspirational writing conferences sponsored by the Poynter Institute. Our creative juices were flowing. She asked if I thought the environment beat was really the best place for me to achieve my potential as a writer and then murmured something about all those dull scientific documents and dull government bureaucracy. It was a fair question. After all, there is a lot of gobbledygook to decipher. But, as with any type of journalism, what readers read should not be burdened by extraneous details of the often cumbersome reporting process it took for us to get the story to them.

Stories From the Frontlines

Let me illustrate the junctures at which reporting and storytelling merge by sharing two stories involving hospital patients, both of whose situations were tied to environmental reporting projects.

Kim Tolnar was an Ohio woman in her 20's, newly married and on a promising career path when her body was ravaged by leukemia. Her disease was so advanced that she had to spend nine months in one of the nation's top cancer centers in Seattle. One night, when her anguish was particularly fierce, Kim told relatives she thought God had sent her to the Pacific Northwest to die. She tried pulling out a tube from her chest. Her father, Kent Krumanaker, used his loving hand to intercede and his calming voice to talk her out of giving up.

I describe this scene—this dramatic moment—because it illustrates how a seemingly dull and complicated environmental story can have gut-wrenching human elements.

Many people had been suspicious of what lies beneath the River Valley school campus in central Ohio, where Kim and others attended classes for years. The schools were built in the early 1960's on land that had been a military dump. The Ohio Department of Health eventually recognized a high rate of leukemia among River Valley graduates. The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) launched what has become the largest environmental investigation in the state's history.

Environmental activist Lois Gibbs (whose former neighborhood near Niagara Falls faced similar toxic threats in what became known as Love Canal) said that she regarded the risk in River Valley as greater than anything she experienced at Love Canal. And in a scathing, 110-page ruling issued by a federal labor judge in Cincinnati, former Ohio EPA Director Don Schregardus was accused of being more concerned with retaliating against an agency whistleblower than in protect-

A 30,000-foot-tall cloud of black smoke billows from Whatcom Creek after a gasoline pipeline leaked into the creek and was somehow ignited June 10, 1999, in Bellingham, Washington. Two 10-year-old boys and a teenager died. *Photo by Angela Lee Holstrom, The Bellingham Herald. Courtesy of The Associated Press.*

ing public health.

As the Toledo Blade's reporter on this environmental story, what sticks in my mind is the tender resistance from Kent Krumanaker as he stood next to Kim's hospital bed that night in Seattle and used his hand to counter what little strength his weak and frail daughter was able to muster. Their eyes communicated some message that changed their lives. Kim later explained it was a turning point in that her goal went beyond mere survival. Her father said there was "no doubt" in his mind God had spared her for a purpose. From that moment on, she and her parents devoted themselves to a quest for truth and accountability. The family returned home after Kim's Seattle treatments and helped the community organize its crusade in 1997.

In another Seattle hospital, four years after Kim's near-death experience, another father, Frank King, experienced every parent's worst nightmare—and then some. King owns a car dealership in nearby Bellingham. For 23 years, he and his family lived comfortably in an affluent neighborhood where an underground gasoline line passes beneath a park. Their lives changed instantly on June 10, 1999, when the pipeline ruptured and allowed more than a quarter-million gallons of fuel to flow into a creek at that park. Minutes later, there was an explosion and parts of Bellingham were engulfed in a fireball.

King's spunky 10-year-old boy, Wade, had been playing by the creek with his buddy, Stephen Tsiorvas. Both got caught in the flames and had burns covering 90 percent of their bodies. Virtually all the skin above their ankles had melted off. An 18-year-old named Liam Wood, who had been fly-fishing in another part of the creek, died instantly. The two 10-year-olds made it to the burn unit of a Seattle hospital alive, but their parents were told there was nothing they could do to save them. The boys died the following day, but were lucid enough to talk and ask their parents why they had to die.

Following Wade's death, King led a crusade against the pipeline company and won. His efforts awoke bureaucrats in Washington, D.C. to the need for national pipeline reform. Wade's father told a congressional committee he dabbed tears from his boy's eyes as he explained to him what was going to happen. All he could do was tell him that heaven needed a catcher.

Both of these stories—illnesses attributed to toxic waste and death attributed to pipeline safety—have reams of scientific data that are much too sophisticated for most journalists to interpret on their own. But with assistance from experts in making the critical data understandable, each of these stories can then be told with the faces and experiences of children and their families, giving them the power of personal connection.

Power, Passion and Accountability

The power of scientific evidence. The passion of the engaged and the enraged. And the accountability of those who need to be held responsible. These elements are what we, as environmental reporters, strive to bring together. The mission of an environmental journalist isn't different than that of other journalists; there's just different kinds of information to decipher, assemble and tell.

"We do a good job of covering the news," a managing editor of one of my former papers once said at a staff meeting. "Now we have to uncover the news." By sniffing around on this beat, journalists inevitably find paper trails leading them to places where reporters usually end up—in the realms of politics, motivation and money. But for environmental stories, add science as well. Environmental reporting is about getting to the heart of political motivation; it's about developing good instincts to know whom you can trust and who is trying to sell you a bill of goods. And it's about sorting through rhetoric and seeing through the eyes of a lobbyist. It's about knowing what makes people tick.

At the recent Society of Environmental Journalists' conference, the late Rachel Carson's legacy was honored in this, the 40th anniversary of her landmark book, "Silent Spring." Carson was praised as a prophet and rightfully so. What she did in writing that book was challenge conventional wisdom about the pesticide DDT and awaken a quiescent nation to the idea that widespread, excessive use of pesticides could have dire consequences. By raising questions that needed to be addressed, she is now seen as one of the most influential women of the 20th century and certainly the environmental movement's most influential person since the conservation era of Teddy Roosevelt and John Muir.

But Carson wasn't looking for fame. She was a writer whose work had the power, passion and quest for accountability to make a difference for her generation and others. As a result of "Silent Spring," scientists began looking for causal links between chemical exposure and cancer. In 1970, eight years after the book was released, Gaylord Nelson, a Senator from Wisconsin, became the driving force behind America's first Earth Day.

Environmental News Is Now Harder to Convey

For a glimpse at how much more complicated environmental journalism has become since Carson's era, I'll defer to a speech I've heard Casey Bukro of the Chicago Tribune give on a couple of occasions. While writing about Great Lakes pollution in the late 1960's and early 1970's, Bukro did a simple test while on a boat near Cleveland one day: He stuck his hand in Lake Erie. When he pulled it up, it was covered with black, filthy gunk. This was a time when many metropolitan areas around the country had smokestacks spewing so much pollution they had a constant haze hovering over them. Raw waste was being discharged into streams. In 1969, the Cuyahoga River—with petroleum products and debris floating on top of it—caught on fire one day. Once alerted to the toxic nature of these pollutants, many people believed that America's environmental crisis was reaching a point of no return.

Bukro's coverage of the Great Lakes, as well as some hard-hitting editorials published by the conservative Tribune,

A fire tug fights flames on the Cuyahoga River near downtown Cleveland, where oil and other industrial wastes caught fire June 25, 1969. *Photo courtesty of The Associated Press.*

turned up the heat on the Nixon administration to do something about the spiraling concerns people had about the environment. In April 1972, Nixon and Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau signed the landmark Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, a pact in which the United States and Canada set cleanup goals for the lakes. Six months later, in October of 1972, Nixon—who created the Environmental Protection Agency—signed America's Clean Water Act. That's the law for which many of today's sewage and industrial discharge limits are set. Both actions resulted in enormous costs *and* subjected Nixon to pressure from industry groups.

Bukro went on to become one of environmental journalism's pioneers. He covered the beat for years and helped inspire change. But as he noted in a speech at Michigan State University in June 1996, environmental journalism became murkier as the Great Lakes became cleaner. Stories for today's environmental journalist aren't as obvious as sticking your hand in Lake Erie and seeing it covered with oily gunk, he said.

He's right. This isn't a clear-cut type of reporting anymore, nor was it really that simple in Bukro's time. Scientific findings can be subtle, just as the changes they document can be subtle *and* important. To the dismay of some editors, answers don't come neatly packaged as a guilty-or-innocent verdict in the courtroom or a vote tally on a proposed city council ordinance. By the mid-1990's, a generation after Carson raised the specter of cancer being the possible end point for humans overexposed to chemicals, researcher Theo Colborn was building a case for less obvious impacts, such as birth defects and development disorders. These evolving scientific concerns are a reminder of how the environmental beat presents a series of moving targets, shifting as research veers off on new paths, and all the while setting new challenges for us as reporters and as storytellers.

I had the opportunity to meet Bob Woodward in the conference room of The Washington Post in 1992, while I was a Kiplinger Fellow at Ohio State University. Someone asked him to comment about the state of American journalism. Woodward slowed down his delivery to drive home the point he was illustrating with his thumbs-up, thumbs-down motion of his hand. "There's too much of this," he said.

It's true that we live in an MTV world, in which well-educated adults use remote controls to flip through TV channels as if they were children with attention deficit disorder. It's harder now to garner the public's attention to inform—even to educate—people about dangers lurking beneath their feet, whether they involve hidden military waste, improperly maintained underground pipelines, or hazards that haven't yet been reported.

As journalists, we have an awesome responsibility, and we have the power to inflame a community or put it to sleep. Nowhere is that sense of perspective more important than on the environment beat, because of the many gray areas in which we work. And those are what drive environmental journalists to see things that others don't. Last year I wrote a four-day series about how the Great Lakes—the world's largest collection of fresh surface water—will invariably become more valuable this century as the earth's global water shortages become more acute. It was recently named Ohio's top environmental project of 2001 by the Ohio Society of Professional Journalists.

Water. It's so bland, tasteless and boring. Yet it's so essential. It's a dull topic, yet it's also the emerging environmental issue of the 21st century as water supplies vanish, the population expands, and global warming sets in. Water is a fundamental resource like air and land—so basic that most Americans consider it a right we are entitled to use as we please. The reality is most of the world's population today does not even have access to clean water.

I enjoy environmental journalism precisely because it's not the most

popular beat in the newsroom. And because it's not predictable. But the amazing thing about doing this job is how quickly it humbles us when we move outside of our ecosystems. I know the Great Lakes like few other reporters do, but put me in an Arizona desert or a Pacific Northwest rainforest and I'm lost. Yet the parallels I find between those areas and my familiar territory fascinate me, as do the stories in each of those places that are waiting to be told. ■

Tom Henry reports on the environment for The (Toledo) Blade. He joined the newspaper in 1993 after spending four years at The Bay City (Mich.) Times and more than six years at The Tampa Tribune. He has won several awards for environmental writing and was the only journalist to appear at a roundtable session the International Joint Commission put together in 1997 to help commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement signed by President Nixon and Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau in 1972.

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Newsroom Issues Affect Environment Coverage

'One of our bigger problems can be our own employers.'

By Peter Lord

Photographer Andy Dickerman and I left our motel in Nova Scotia at 4:30 a.m. so we could get to the rescue boat that was leaving at dawn. We were working on a series of stories about efforts to save the last 300 or so North Atlantic right whales that still migrate along the east coast. For the next 15 hours, we watched Canadian and American whale rescue experts chase a rare young right whale around the Bay of Fundy and struggle to cut off fishing gear wrapped around its body.

Andy took hundreds of still photographs, shot video for our Web site, and recorded conversations of the rescue team. I took notes and helped with some audio recordings. The team tried again and again to get close enough to the whale to cut away the life-threatening line. The whale—a three-year-old whose sex hadn't been determined yet—dove to escape and at times swatted its huge tail at those who were trying to save it. The effort was emotional because many of the same people had tried to help another whale here the previous year. She was a big female in terrible shape with an 18-foot rope gash across her back. The rescuers chased her for days and argued about whether their efforts were helping or harming her. They said they'd never seen an animal with such heart. She fought until she died. Now they hoped this young whale wouldn't end up the same way.

Later that night, I said to Andy: "Can you believe we actually got paid for a day like today?"

Learning Is Integral to This Beat

Such drama doesn't happen very often. But even absent such an experience, being an environmental reporter can be one of the most important and rewarding things anyone can do. I've been covering environmental issues for about 20 years, and every year I find new stories to tell. Since our whale series ran in October 2000, I did a six-part series showing the damage lead paint poisoning does to Rhode Island's young children. We were told that our pictures and stories finally made legislators aware of the severity of the problem. After four years of failure, the legislature enacted a bill last summer that should lead to greatly reducing such poisonings in the future.

On September 11, 2001, I was sent to Boston's Logan Airport where I saw fear and confusion sweep through the crowds before police finally sent everyone home. As was the case with environmental reporters at many other newspapers, my assignment soon became coverage of responses to bioterrorism. I wrote about doctors and generals, police and firefighters, as they tried to prepare to cope with mass deaths.

Every story required learning something new. For one article, I studied the life of a World War II hero who was instrumental in saving open space in Rhode Island and even more successful at staying anonymous. Then came the spread of West Nile virus, a chemical spill in our state's cleanest river, worries about mercury in fish, bitter battles over tighter fishing regulations, and construction of a huge, multimillion dollar tunnel under downtown Providence to capture sewage overflows.

Environmental reporters are doing a better job than ever with our craft, in part because so many of them take advantage of educational programs at which they learn more about subjects they cover. I help run the Metcalf Institute for Marine and Environmental Rporting at the University of Rhode Island, which offers a week-long science program for experienced journalists and sponsors environmental internships for minority journalists. Other organizations offer opportunities for learning that are up to a year in length. [See page 65 for a listing of training programs.]

Advanced training is needed, if only to better prepare us to confront obstacles that make our jobs more diffi-

cult today. Environmental advocacy groups and company public relations people barrage us with material. One of my biggest challenges is sorting through this stuff and figuring out which issues to focus on. Another is government secrecy that has permeated all arenas—including the environment—in the aftermath of September 11. Add to this the fact that environmental stories aren't so obvious anymore, and the reporting on them is usually a lot more complex. Simple plot lines are a thing of the past.

Newsroom Cutbacks and Practices

One of our bigger problems can be our own employers. At my newspaper, purchased several years ago by the Belo Corporation, we haven't had pay raises for three years. A buy-out took away many of our more senior reporters and editors. And a lot of our better younger reporters have moved on. With these departures, we've lost all kinds of institutional knowledge. And with many of our positions now filled with two-year interns, there are fewer people who will be around long enough to make use of whatever knowledge remains in our newsroom. My editors still do all they can to promote quality journalism, but they're doing it in a newsroom cluttered with an alarming number of empty desks.

What's more unsettling is despite all that's been lost at the Journal, we're still one of the better papers in our area. I've taught young people who have joined some of our state's smaller papers, and they tell me they can't imagine raising families on what they earn. Nor is this just a local problem. Last spring, at the annual meeting of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, Tim J. McGuire, the outgoing president, called on editors to join together to combat the tendency of publishers and television station owners to demand ever higher profits at the expense of quality journalism. In 2001, McGuire said, some 2,000 U.S. journalists lost their jobs for economic reasons.

There's more we can do as individual reporters, too. As environmental reporters, we need to educate our editors to recognize that good environmental stories aren't always obvious ones. And we should look for ways to help reporters in other newsrooms. At the Society of Environmental Journalists (SEJ), we assist each other with news tips, mentoring programs, and story digests. At other times, we provide moral support. Often if a newspaper has an environmental reporter, it's likely that reporter is working alone, as I usually do. SEJ has often been the first place I've turned for help with a story.

Across the country, powerful environmental journalism is being done at small and medium-sized papers. Many of these stories tackle issues with nationwide implications. Unfortunately, much of this good reporting doesn't get much exposure beyond the newspapers' own markets. And when these same newspapers look for environmen-

Training for Environment Writers

Paul Rogers, natural resources and environment writer at the San Jose Mercury News, compiled this list of training opportunities for journalists to improve environmental coverage. "One of the reasons this beat is perpetually interesting is that it's the grandest train wreck of ideological, scientific and financial interests imaginable," CNN science and environment Executive Producer Peter Dykstra once said. The opportunities include:

Knight Center for Environmental Journalism at Michigan State University. Founded in 1994, the program trains students and working reporters to research, write and report about environmental issues. It is chaired by Jim Detjen, a former Philadelphia Inquirer reporter. http://environmental.jrn.msu.edu

Institutes for Journalism & Natural Resources (IJNR). Directed by former Wall Street Journal environment editor Frank Allen, the Montana-based IJNR is a nonprofit organization that, since 1995, has helped train more than 300 reporters and editors through weeklong expedition-style programs from the Great Lakes to the Chesapeake Bay, California to the Southwest. www.ijnr.org

Metcalf Institute for Marine and Environmental Reporting at the University of Rhode Island. Established in 1997, the institute provides fellowships for print, radio and TV reporters, emphasizing basic methods of scientific research, scientific uncertainty and statistics, particularly on marine issues. www.gso.uri.edu/metcalf

Society of Environmental Journalists (SEJ). Founded in 1990, SEJ is the only national membership organization for environment writers. It sponsors an annual conference; offers mentoring, tip sheets, a listserv and regional seminars, and publishes a newsletter. www.sej.org

Western Knight Center for Specialized Journalism. Started in 1999 with a grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the center provides mid-career training and seminars at the University of California-Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism and the University of Southern California Annenberg School for Communication. Topics include environment, biotechnology, globalism, entertainment and new media. www.usc.edu/schools/annenberg/asc/projects/wkc/whoweare.html

Center for Environmental Journalism at the University of Colorado-Bolder. Founded in 1992 and since 1997 home to the Ted Scripps Fellowship, the center offers classroom instruction for students and the Scripps fellowship for working journalists for nine months, allowing them to study environmental science, policy and law in depth. www.colorado.edu/journalism/cej ■

tal coverage of stories outside their regions, often they turn to wire services or wire reports from the national newspapers such as The New York Times or Los Angeles Times.

The result of these practices is that a handful of news organizations end up determining the national news agenda. While journalists can use tools like the SEJ Web site (www.sej.org) to track strong environmental coverage happening throughout the country—such as the stories that recently won SEJ awards (alerting the public to the dangers of fuel transmission pipes, examining problems with Native American logging in Alaska, investigating land speculators in California and pollution hazards in Florida)—a lot of this fine and important reporting is not reaching a broader public audience. And it should.

I'll never forget the appreciation I saw in the eyes of a young mother with three lead-poisoned children whom we wrote about in our series. "You told my dream," she said. All she wanted was a safe, healthy place to raise her children. But no one would listen.

People like this woman need journalists to tell their stories because if we don't, where else can people turn when things go wrong? ■

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Covering Breaking News on the Environment Beat

At The (Baltimore) Sun, a city disaster leads to new investigations.

By Timothy Wheeler

You never know when disaster will strike. For Baltimore, it hit at 3:07 p.m. on July 18, 2001. It was just another sultry, summer afternoon when a diesel engine towing 60 freight cars rumbled into the Howard Street tunnel running through the heart of the city. Each day two dozen trains use the century-old tunnel beneath busy downtown streets and nobody is the wiser.

This time, though, something went terribly wrong. Possibly the rails buckled or a car lurched off the tracks: Federal investigators have yet to determine the cause. Sparks from the derailment apparently ignited the train's cargo, which included paper, wood pulp, and a variety of chemicals. More than an hour passed before fire trucks arrived to find black smoke billowing from both ends of the 1.7-mile long tunnel.

Word that a train was on fire in the tunnel reached The Sun newsroom around 4:30 p.m., about a half-hour before the paper's editors usually meet to determine what stories will be published the next morning. When we flipped on nearby television sets, we saw that TV news cameras already were broadcasting the hellish scene.

Metro Editor Sandy Banisky summoned editors and reporters to the center of the newsroom, where she announced that we would need to respond fast and in force to what appeared to be a major late-breaking story. More reporters and photographers were promptly dispatched to help out those who were already there or on the way.

As reports began to pour in, the news quickly grew worrisome. At least some of the chemical cargo was hazardous, raising the possibility the fire could be releasing toxic fumes or might trigger a violent explosion. People at the scene reported an acrid odor and burning eyes.

Shortly after five p.m., baseball players and fans assembling for an Orioles game that night were ordered to evacuate Camden Yards, near one end of the smoking tunnel. Soon afterward, police began closing major highways into and through downtown, creating gridlock out of an already jammed rush hour. Then, around 5:45 p.m., Civil Defense sirens—a relic of the cold war still tested once a month at lunchtime—wailed for the first time for a real emergency. Some TV announcers urged residents of one neighborhood near the tunnel to leave their homes, while firemen asked people to stay indoors, sweltering with windows closed and air conditioners off.

News Reporters Assess the Dangers

Adding to the confusion—and heightening fear—was the vagueness of information about what the risks were. Fire and emergency officials seemed unable or unwilling to release the train's manifest detailing just what was on board. Environment beat reporter Heather Dewar got on the telephone to see if she could find out from state officials, who are supposed to be notified when hazardous materials are spilled or released into the air.

Of the multisyllabic chemical names being thrown around at the scene (many of them garbled initially), one was immediately recognizable: hydrochloric acid. With 10 years of experience covering environmental issues

before becoming an editor, I knew it was a highly corrosive liquid that could cause severe burns on contact with skin or eyes, and fumes could cause coughing and shortness of breath.

Another chemical name being mentioned was even more troubling: hydrofluoric acid. Used to etch glass and metals, it can burn through skin to destroy bone, cause permanent blindness, serious damage to lungs, and even death. What's more insidious, skin contact with relatively low concentrations won't cause pain or burning sensations until hours later—by which time serious injuries have already occurred.

Realizing that we could be sending reporters and photographers into harm's way, I warned Sandy that we did not know for sure what was on the train, but that there could be some very dangerous substances leaking or burning. I urged her to tell all of our staff on the streets to exercise caution and to leave the scene promptly and seek medical help if they felt any burning or had trouble breathing. But I recognized that those instructions would do little to protect our people if they were enveloped in an acid-vapor cloud.

Like many news organizations, we'd never planned for covering a chemical emergency. We had had plenty of practice scrambling to cover weather disasters—blizzards, hurricanes and tornadoes. We even had a plan, though it was badly outdated, for covering an airplane crash at Baltimore-Washington International airport. But nothing like this.

One of our new reporters, Kimberly Wilson, fresh from Seattle where she had helped cover recent rioting at the world trade meeting there, asked where our gas masks were. Her former paper had issued masks so reporters covering the conflict wouldn't be overcome by tear gas, she said. We had none.

As if a potentially toxic fire was not enough to worry about, a major water main that ran just above the tunnel broke around six p.m., knocking out electrical power to homes and businesses, flooding some downtown streets, and reducing or cutting off water pressure to parts of the city. Telephone and Internet service also were interrupted—both locally and in far-flung places—because the underground inferno fried fiber-optic cables running under downtown streets that carried a major chunk of the East Coast's telecommunications.

With about two dozen reporters on the streets or working telephones, we pulled together enough information to write four stories about the fire and its impact for the next day's paper. One of those stories, on the tunnel's history, noted that fire officials had acknowledged more than 15 years ago that they worried about the risks of shipping hazardous materials underneath the city by rail. "The problem would be just getting in there to fight the fire," a federal transportation safety official had said. "If you had an explosion, fire could shoot out both ends like a bazooka."

Reporting on a Disaster Leads to New Investigations

There were no explosions, but the heat inside the tunnel soared to 1,500 degrees Fahrenheit. At least 22 people, including two firefighters with chest pains, were treated at hospitals, most for respiratory or eye irritation. But officials assured Dewar, our environment reporter, that air monitors had not detected any toxic fumes emanating from the tunnel.

As the underground fire continued to burn out of control into the night, though, we still didn't know exactly what chemicals the train had been hauling. Our police reporter on the scene—more used to dealing with shootings than chemistry—managed to get a verbal rundown from officials in the emergency command post, but the chemical names he called in were garbled. With the deadline looming, I finally got a spokesman for the railroad on the phone and convinced him to read the train's manifest to me—enabling us to report that nine of the 60 rail cars carried chemicals. We ran a box in the next day's paper listing the six different compounds and their potential dangers to people. (Instead of carrying hydrofluoric acid, the train had two tankers full of fluorosilicic acid—often added to drinking water supplies to prevent tooth decay. This substance can still be extremely toxic, causing severe burns if it is inhaled or touches skin.)

With no information that toxic chemicals were leaking or burning that first night, our stories the next morning skirted the issue. None of the head-

Heavy smoke from a train fire in midtown Baltimore billows out of the entrance of an underground tunnel at Oriole Park at Camden Yards, July 18, 2001. *Photo by Kenneth K. Lam/The (Baltimore) Sun.*

lines, or subheads, talked about threats to the public, except to characterize the train's cargo as "toxic" and "dangerous." The top of the main story focused on the disruption caused by the fire and water-main break before identifying the chemicals on the train and briefly mentioning what harm they could do. A state environmental official was quoted, saying that air monitors at both ends of the tunnel had picked up no whiffs of either acid or other "compounds of concern."

The final crisis of the night was an internal one. Around 11 p.m., we learned that the water-main break had deprived our printing plant of water needed to run the presses. What's more, police roadblocks were preventing pressmen from getting to work. Our managing editor, Tony Barbieri, telephoned Mayor Martin O'Malley and the city's public works director, appealing for help. "It was very touch and go," he recalls. "I remember thinking, here's the biggest story in Baltimore in 10 years, and we're not going to be able to publish." Water pressure was restored just in time, and the pressmen were allowed past the roadblocks to get the paper out.

The fire raged on for four more days, and our reporters maintained a round-the-clock vigil outside the tunnel while we published three or four stories a day on the struggle to control the blaze. In the end, although one car of chemicals was consumed by flames and another tanker full of hydrochloric acid leaked, though downtown traffic and commerce were disrupted, no one was killed or disabled by the fire. Many breathed a sigh of relief, saying it could have been much worse.

On the fire's second day, we reported that the train that had derailed and caught fire was just one of countless shipments of hazardous materials that pass unheralded through the city by rail. After the crisis was past, we found that the city's plan for dealing with chemical leaks and fires, though mandated by federal law, was woefully inadequate; for example, it didn't even mention the underground rail tunnels. Fire officials, who had refused to let us see the plan during the five-day emergency, acknowledged afterward that they had never consulted it.

Our reporting on the cleanup from the tunnel fire, and the search for clues to what caused it, continued through the rest of the summer. There were two sequels to the train fire—a small chemical fire in a pharmaceutical factory that forced nearby residents to evacuate and an underground explosion of chemicals that had apparently leaked into sewers from the derailed train weeks before. We began looking into the potential risks to the community from the many hazardous chemicals that are stored and used at factories and water and sewage plants around the Baltimore area. Our environment reporter, Heather Dewer, had proposed months earlier writing about the "worst-case" chemical accident scenarios on file with the government. But until this disaster happened, this important story was not one we'd devoted much time or space to telling.

Before we could get that story into the newspaper, though, September 11 raised new fears about terrorists targeting chemical plants and shipments. Dewer completely overhauled her lengthy investigative piece to focus on those threats as well as the far more likely dangers from accidents. By then, however, many in the public were more concerned about giving terrorists ideas than about being warned of hazards they lived with. Her two-page package and bulls-eye map of chemical danger zones that appeared in the paper in October 2001 elicited complaints as well as praise, even though we withheld significant details about the nature and locations of the chemicals stockpiled in our area.

The blanket coverage we'd given our city's tunnel fire proved to be a good newsroom rehearsal for the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks when we dispatched teams of reporters to New York and Washington to respond to those disasters. Again, though, we gave little thought to the environmental health hazards reporters might face at Ground Zero—concerns that firefighters and emergency workers have since raised [see Dan Fagin's article on page 53].

Creating Protections at the Newspaper

Since those twin disasters, the paper's top editors have devised a plan for publishing in the event the downtown newsroom or our remote printing plant are unusable, whether because of fire, flooding or some act of terrorism. But we have yet to draft a similar blueprint for covering chemical emergencies, in part because the daily drumbeat of news has denied us the luxury of time to reflect on it. Also, it would be very difficult to put on paper all the different disaster scenarios that might unfold or to envision how we would cover each one.

Perhaps the best preparation for covering unexpected—but not unanticipated—environmental calamities like the train fire is to have people on staff, either environment beat reporters or research librarians, who know the issues and how to get technical information quickly. Beyond that, it helps to have good relationships with scientists at the local colleges and universities, whom you can consult for quickie courses on chemistry and toxicology, among other things.

Meanwhile, Sandy Banisky, our metro editor, vows to get those gas masks, just in case disaster strikes here again. ■

Timothy Wheeler handles The (Baltimore) Sun's environmental coverage as an editor supervising the paper's science, medicine and other specialty beats. He spent a decade covering the environment during 16 years as a reporter at The Sun and its now-retired afternoon counterpart, The Evening Sun. The Sun's coverage of the train tunnel fire earned the Society of Environmental Journalists' first annual award for outstanding deadline print reporting, given in October 2002.

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Networks Aren't Tuned in to the Environment

By using storytelling to illuminate issues, 'we tricked everyday viewers into paying attention to environmental news.'

By Natalie Pawelski

There's a saying among reporters who cover the environment: environmental stories don't break. They ooze. And because they do, they present a challenge for those of us in television, a medium addicted to breaking news, especially if you work for the network that invented the nonstop news cycle.

Back when CNN was the only 24-hour news outlet, it wasn't quite as tough to get time to cover beats that might not lend themselves to fast-paced breaking news stories. Several shows were built around such reporting—science and technology, health, food, travel and parenting. Each had a weekly half-hour showcase. So did the environment.

The CNN show "Earth Matters" aired from 1993 until just after AOL acquired CNN in January 2001. I hosted and reported for the show during its last few years. During much of that time, "Earth Matters" was usually the second highest rated show of the network's Sunday schedule. This was pretty good for a show with a small budget, tinier staff, and Sunday afternoon time slot.

Using Storytelling to Report Environment News

Why did "Earth Matters" work? I think it was because we stayed away from the thou-shalt-recycle, thou-shalt-hug-a-tree, activist-oriented school of environmental coverage. Instead, we used storytelling to illuminate environmental issues. In doing so, we tricked everyday viewers into paying attention to environmental news.

Our efforts paralleled what our print brethren (and sistren) call "narrative journalism" these days. We mixed solid reporting with techniques of fiction—character, setting, plot and theme. The stories concentrated on people, not policy. But by keeping the viewer engaged, we got them thinking about the policy part, too. One example: We did a story on mountaintop removal mining in West Virginia. Coal companies blast 400-to-600 feet off the top of mountains to get at the coal that lies beneath. It's a relatively new method of strip mining, and it produces more coal with fewer workers. So far it has not only flattened peaks, but also buried hundreds of miles of streams in rocky residue.

My crew and I stood on a mountaintop cemetery with a man whose family had lived and played in those hills for generations. We looked down on a flattened moonscape that used to be the mountain next door. We walked with a grandfather—a former miner—who cried remembering his ruined town, the ruined stream where he used to swim and fish with his grandfather when he was a boy. We also visited a mountaintop-removal miner—a father of three whose job is better paying and much safer than crawling in underground mines could ever be. And we toured a mined-out mountain that a coal company touted as rehabilitated. It was still flattened, but planted with grasses and some trees. The scars of mining were less obvious.

The people's own words told the story. But the opening visuals sold it to the producers. "The mountain state is losing its mountains," is how my script began, as viewers saw aerial shots of the West Virginia landscape in early autumn. It looked like multicolored bubble wrap writ large. They saw a chunk of a mountain blasted away and followed the camera's eyes from mountains of lush fall foliage to scraped, dead, artificial plateaus. And to connect this story to our viewers' lives, they heard how Americans get most of their electricity from coal.

The story aired first on "Earth Matters." But its visuals and characters made it an easy sell to other shows on CNN and its sister networks. With this story—and hundreds of others—we created a shorter version that would fit more easily into a packed newscast. This way, these stories could be used on all of CNN's networks, from "Headline News" to "CNN International." CNN affiliates got them via Newsource satellite feeds.

Over the years, viewers watching CNN's regular news lineup got a healthy dose of reporting on environmental issues. We dove to the world's only undersea research laboratory, using the occasion to talk about the health of the coastal ocean and the nature of marine research. We toured an Alabama neighborhood plowed under because of PCB contamination and talked about corporate responsibility and what is and isn't known about toxic pollution. We got caught in a bison/snowmobile traffic jam in Yellowstone and focused on the controversy about snowmobiling in the world's first national park.

When "Earth Matters" was cancelled, a few of us stayed on the environment beat. But a lot of our freedom to cover stories we thought were important went away. Instead of doing good work for the show, knowing it would also find a home on other CNN shows, we had to sell stories to other news show producers before getting the green light to devote any resources to our reporting.

Environment Reporting Isn't a 'Real Beat' on Television

In the early days of the Bush administration, environmental stories were still

a relatively easy sell. Our crew went to Colorado to talk to people about Gale Norton, then the nominee for Secretary of the Interior. And we spent time in Washington, D.C. tracking stories about environmental policy, including the debate over drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the fight over storing nuclear waste at Nevada's Yucca Mountain, and the Bush administration's decision to freeze and review dozens of Clinton-era environmental initiatives.

We were busy, and we were not alone. The Tyndall Report, which tracks network newscasts' content, found that for network news, 2001 was on a pace to exceed the amount of environmental coverage aired in 1989—the year of the Exxon Valdez and the high-water mark for environmental coverage on television. Of course, September 11 changed all that. And with the trend toward fewer taped reports and more live shots and bickering heads, it's gotten harder to sell, in advance, well-produced environment stories.

But right now, coverage of energy is more important than ever. As Washington ponders its next steps in the Middle East, oil coats and colors the entire process. There is the al-Qaeda angle, too: If it weren't for oil, there probably would not have been an enduring American presence in Saudi Arabia to fuel Osama bin Laden's rage and recruiting efforts. Oil interests are using the call for "energy security" to push for more drilling on public land, while environmentalists work to paint energy conservation as patriotic. It's unquiet on the electricity front, too—from the Enron crash to debates about renewables and the possibility of clean coal. And nuclear power raises particular security concerns in this new and anxious world.

In newspapers across the country, environment reporters have been covering these issues for years and have built up expertise. But, unlike newspapers, television networks don't recognize environment reporting as a real beat, one that deserves specialists. Right now, CNN is the only U.S. network with people who are actually called "environment correspondents:" I work on the domestic front; Gary Strieker roams the world, and Sharon Collins holds down the environment desk at "Headline News."

I'd like to see more broadcast and cable executives take a page from newspapers and recognize the value that environment reporters bring to the newsroom. Boosting environment coverage could also attract those famously coveted younger viewers: Poll after poll shows they are especially interested in environmental coverage.

Even oozing stories have their dramatic moments, and good environment reporting is beautifully suited to television. The visuals are often stunning, the characters are usually compelling, and the questions raised strike at the way all of us live our lives each day. It takes some experience to understand how science, economics and social issues intersect in battles over environmental issues. Viewers deserve experts in this kind of coverage. It's too bad that, in most cases, that's not what they're getting. ■

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Radio Uses Sound and Script to Transport Listeners to a Place

'In environmental reporting, nothing is more elemental than the sense of place.'

By Peter Thomson

When the Society of Environmental Journalists (SEJ) handed out their first annual awards for reporting on the environment this fall, the judges said of one of the winning entries, "The pictures were as good as the writing. And that's no small accomplishment for radio." The award went to NPR's "Living on Earth," for a feature story on the long-running conflicts over Alaska's Tongass National Forest.

I sit on the board of SEJ, and I used to work for "Living on Earth." And while I wish I could say I had something to do with either creating the story or bestowing the award, I can't. But the judges' comments cut to an essential truth about radio: When done well, there is no more compelling, intimate and resonant medium for telling stories and for telling environmental stories in particular. There's something about sound, especially the sound of a human voice, which engages the brain. Often, it's surprisingly simple sounds that work best, woven in with clear, evocative writing. It can be a single gunshot heard in the vastness of the New Mexican desert or the monotonous, unceasing flow of water in the southeast Alaska rain forest.

A good piece of radio journalism uses sound and voice to transport its listeners to places, far away or familiar, ordinary or unique, better than any

other medium. In environmental reporting, nothing is more elemental than the sense of place. The environment is, after all, that which surrounds us.

The Sound of Pictures

In the SEJ award-winning "Living on Earth" piece on the Tongass, producer Guy Hand first draws listeners in with a wild scene of the opening of the herring season off the town of Sitka, but then quickly steps back to invite us into the big picture. To do this, he just lets the water flow. At first, we hear a trickle of water—just by itself for a couple of seconds, then the sound continues behind the reporter's voice:

"… And as the largest intact temperate rain forest in the world, its fertility is fueled by water. Alaska State Writer Richard Nelson."

The water continues as Richard Nelson's voice emerges: "Rain is the god here. Rain is what makes this forest. Rain is to southeast Alaska as sun is to the desert."

More water and the reporter again: "Water is the one thing that touches and fuses and influences everything else in Alaska's panhandle. Even the bookstores. A sign in the Old Harbor Bookstore in Sitka says, 'Please don't drip on the books….'"

And the water continues.

Perhaps it doesn't come through in print, but that's exactly the point—the sound of an unceasing gurgle and drip, drip, drip of water weaves together with the voices to create mental images and a sense of the place that no piece of writing, and for that matter no images, can achieve. I don't know where Hand recorded his little rivulet of water, but what it sounds like to me—what it *conjures up* for me—is rainwater running off a roof and splattering onto the ground. The roof is probably covered in moss. The ground is saturated, so the water is pooling up. In my mind's eye, I sense the air as gray and heavy, the surroundings as deep green and brown and laced with mist. And in the roughly 40 seconds that this section runs, I'm feeling soaked and shivering, oppressed and somehow enthralled by all this water.

That's an awful lot of experience and emotion to get out of a single sound. And it washes over me without a word of explanation about what I'm hearing. It doesn't *need* any explanation. In fact, it's more effective without any. My imagination is piqued by the simple, relentless sound, and then it is free to roam. At the same time, the script imparts crucial tidbits of experiential information. In its single sentence—"A sign in the Old Harbor Bookstore in Sitka says, 'Please don't drip on the books.'"—I learn that this is a town right by the sea, that it's a community where there are still small, independent businesses, and that it's a place with a sense of humor. And all of this information comes to me through that most elemental relationship of our species—the connection between the human voice and the human ear. Of course, I have no idea whether Hand was thinking this clearly about the impact of every beat and syllable of this section, but he's nonetheless composed a lesson in the art of radio.

Earlier in this piece, Hand used more detailed description where it *was* needed, to build upon sound that's both more complex and specific. At this point, Hand has brought listeners into the countdown to the opening of the herring season. We hear motors and splashing water.

> HAND: As soon as Fish and Game announces the herring opening via radio, diesel smoke explodes from the stacks of every boat.
> MAN: Look at all this smoke!
> HAND: … And each begins dropping seine nets into the sea. Soon, they're pulling uncountable masses of wriggling, silver-skinned herring to the surface. It's as if the ocean were made of fish. Nothing in my two weeks in the Tongass has shouted more loudly of its fertility than this churning circus of herring and humanity.

As Hand's example demonstrates, good writing for radio is simple, precise, intimate and evocative. It pays attention to the rhythm of the story and hangs comfortably on the ear. Words are delivered with sensitivity and empathy. They are spoken, not announced. Ultimately, radio reporters are nothing more or less than old-fashioned storytellers, and their words and voices merge with the tape to create something more than the sum of its parts—a feeling of presence for the listener. The experience enables listeners to come to know and care about the places the story takes them and the people they meet.

Here is another example, from a story that I *did* edit, in 1996. We're in New Mexico, crouched in juniper bushes with a couple of young men with rifles. They're hunting coyotes, although the coyotes are just a stand-in for a more significant quarry, wolves. Our story is about the battle over reintroducing wolves to the Southwest, and although these two men have told us they would not kill a federally protected wolf, it's clear where they stand on the issue. The sound we hear is pretty much *nothing*. It's quiet. Just the dead, flat air of the wide-open desert.

Producer Sandy Tolan then pulls listeners into the bushes with these men.

> TOLAN: The young men are still. In the pale, fading light, a coyote appears from behind a juniper bush. Skinny and alert, he sniffs the air. Jason draws a bead with his Remington 30 aught six.
> (Sound: BANG!)
> TOLAN: He misses. Then he whistles. The animal stops one last time and stares back.
> (Sound: BANG!)
> TOLAN: Jason misses again.

It's a simple but powerful scene, which in some ways works as a metaphor for the entire story. The culture of the Southwest is shifting; cowboys and ranchers are losing influence to environmentalists and urban dwellers. After being exterminated to protect cattle generations ago, the wolf will probably be brought back to the region. Nothing captures the ethos of the Old West more than the simple sound of a rifle shot. But in the Old West, the cowboy

never missed his mark. Something has changed, and this uncomplicated scene captures it perfectly.

And that second shot—it wasn't in Sandy's original script. But he told me about it, and I urged him to put it in. The point had been made, and the scene would have been complete without it, but there was just something about lingering in the scene a little longer with that piercing-the-silence-of-nature, make-no-mistake-about-its-meaning sound of that gunshot, hanging in the air for the second time, and missing again. It just added immensely to the weight and resonance of the moment. With the sound of the rifle shots, the dull quiet of the desert and the hushed voices of the young men, listeners can feel that they are right there with them. No other medium can take us this close. This story also pulled down a couple of awards for "Living on Earth."

Environment Stories and the Rhythm of Real Life

In 1999, I went to Alaska as the 10th anniversary of the Exxon Valdez oil spill was approaching. I *was* the reporter this time, and I found myself in the kitchen of a couple who were both former fishermen and whose lives were basically shattered by the event. They had been telling me about how the spill nearly destroyed the market for wild Alaska salmon and how their town, Cordova, had since been torn apart by unremitting anger, depression, divorce and suicide. I tried to recreate this moment in the piece as I'd experienced it—as one of profound sadness and despair. But in the middle of it, their dog ambled blithely into the kitchen. I recorded the familiar scritch-scratching of its claws on their hard floor, the clinking of its collar, and the madcap flap of its ears as it shook its head.

The dog's appearance had absolutely nothing to do with "the story," but I decided to put it in anyway. It broke the tension and gave listeners—just as it had given us—some relief from the gravity of the moment, without stepping back from its intense intimacy. The dog soothed us in the story in the way that pets do in real life. It *was* real life. I didn't comment on this in the script; instead, we merely hear the sounds, the woman saying "That's a good dog!" and me saying, "Sheelagh and Ross's dalmatian trots in from the other room." This gave the listeners a chance to catch their breath and gave me the opportunity to steer the story toward a small scrap of hope that Sheelagh and Ross, and their community, were hanging onto. No awards for that one, I'm afraid.

Radio also has its limitations. While it's particularly well-suited to some environmental stories, with others its limitations can be more pronounced. Environmental stories are about connections and relationships, many of them subtle and unseen. They tend to evolve slowly over time and often need a good deal of exposition of background and context. They usually involve a broad array of perspectives along with the head-scratching science that is often at once arcane and highly uncertain. This complexity makes some environmental stories particularly challenging to tell in a medium as ephemeral as radio.

Sound can't capture everything. Newspapers or television can feature images of cryptosporidium microorganisms, for instance, but those bugs don't make any noise. Nor does drinking water contaminated with them sound any different coming out of the tap than clean water does. But a little creative thinking or even dumb luck can always help. When I was reporting a story on drinking water quality for "Living On Earth," I happened to be staying with a friend in Philadelphia who runs her tap water through a Brita filter. I used the sound of her filling up her water container and complaining about the city's bad water. Later, in reporting the same story, I went to a farm to look into agricultural contamination of waterways. One of the cows obliged me by defecating right in front of my microphone, a few dozen yards from a creek. I used it in the story.

We got an award for that one, too. ■

Peter Thomson was the founding editor and producer of "Living on Earth" and in nearly 10 years with the program also served as senior editor, west region bureau chief, senior correspondent, and special projects editor. He's now a freelance journalist based in Boston.

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Corrections:

Because of an improperly informed change that we made to Robert Lee Hotz's article, "The Difficulty of Finding Impartial Sources in Science" (Nieman Reports, Fall 2002, V. 56, No. 3) contains an error. In the print version, Ashley Dunn is referred to as "former technology editor at the Los Angeles Times." Dunn is in fact science editor at the Los Angeles Times. In "The Devolution of a Science Page" (Fall 2002), the name of the Star Tribune's reporting team was misidentified. The team is the Health, Environment and Science team.

Both errors are corrected in the online version of the magazine (at www.nieman.harvard.edu). We regret both errors. ■

A Beat About Business and the Environment

A broadcast journalist starts to see stories through a more complicated lens.

By Christy George

When I was a political reporter, politics was the lens through which I viewed the world. But when I started covering business and the environment for "Marketplace" radio, I came to see money as a more accurate lens, driving politics as much as environmental policy and business decisions.

"Marketplace" began specializing in multidisciplinary beats with its health desk, just in time to chronicle the tobacco lawsuits and the rise of managed care. Since then, the show has added beats focusing on business and transportation and the arts and technology. Still, the business and environment beat was hardly our invention: The Wall Street Journal has done a superb job covering this combined beat for a long time, and Journal reporters who are on the environment beat routinely consider economic impacts whether they're covering coal in West Virginia, smog in California, or farming practices in the heartland.

The result of this combination could have surfaced the worst tendencies of each beat—wonky environmental reporting with dry, dense business writing. But that didn't happen. For one thing, environmental reporters are often perceived as preachy, while business reporters tend toward boosterism, so combining the beats can neutralize both impulses by canceling them out. And, from the beginning, my editors also never demanded that I define this beat as being merely about corporate carpooling programs or the cost of recycling to business. Instead, it evolved into a beat that gravitated toward big-picture stories. And there was always plenty of conflict. Simply put, there exists a fundamental clash between the goals of business and the way nature works. This beat gave me room to explore it all.

Chronicling the Clash

The Western economic system demands open-ended growth, but the planet is a closed loop ecosystem. The emphasis on quarterly profits, constantly rising consumption, and endless growth is squarely at odds with slow-moving but inexorable planetary forces such as climate change, deforestation and the depletion of topsoil and fresh water. Our continued existence as a species depends on the availability of clean air and water, intact wetlands and forests, and ecosystems with healthy and diverse populations of plants and animals. But our economic system often does not assign a monetary value to any of these things. Some in the field of environmental economics have tried to quantify such intrinsic values, but their efforts have been met with mixed reviews. In fact, some corporations with the most to lose have questioned the validity of science, period. (This is not to say that Wall Street seems all that scientific—or even rational—about its number-crunching, either.)

Covering the intersection of business and environment liberates me from some constraints faced by full-time science reporters. For instance, I don't waste time rehashing the endless debate over whether climate change is human-caused. Instead, my stories are about how seriously the business community is taking the prospect of warmer temperatures, weirder weather, rising seas, and a ban on fossil fuel burning sometime in the not-too-distant future. It turns out that many large corporations are pursuing a two-track strategy. They are clinging to old technology until the last drop of oil is gone while simultaneously preparing for a time when it might be necessary to put a meter on the sun.

Some are even rebranding themselves as part of this preparation. Concern started with insurance companies, which were shocked at rising payouts during the 90's—a decade chock-full of 100-year weather events. Next came the petrochemical giants (except Exxon Mobil) and the auto industry. BP (whose new slogan is "Beyond Petroleum") has recast itself as an "energy company," and Ford Motor Company now says it's in the "transportation business."

What such companies are paying attention to is what scientists call the "precautionary principle." Though industry refutes the concept publicly, it turns out that choosing the safest path is as useful a decision-making tool in the arena of profit-making as it is in figuring out how to handle a hole in the ozone layer or the specter of multiple species extinctions.

A Bounty of Stories

The beat is always relevant.

Take some of the biggest recent news stories: The Enron story wasn't just about manipulating energy markets to make money, but also about nurturing Capitol Hill allies into making big policy changes like deregulating the power market, rushing to build more gas-fired power plants, suspending environmental regulations, and reducing oversight of utilities. Enron might be effectively gone, but those changes still ripple.

And the terrorism we experienced on September 11 reshaped the business and environment beat as much as any other part of our lives since then. Already the war against Afghanistan has solidified shifting alliances controlling oil and gas resources in central Asia, and war with Iraq could further alter world petroleum supplies and

distribution and thus have a major impact on energy policy, related environmental consequences, and the national economy. And there are the stories about what did *not* happen after September 11. The Bush administration did not launch a push for energy conservation or a WPA-style investment in renewables.

The beat suffers the same problem the science beat does: It's always tough selling editors, who are attuned to the fast and new, on stories about slow-moving incremental changes. And there are special problems for radio—it's hard to capture the sound of endangered grizzlies and even harder to record the climate changing. But all stories worth telling are ultimately about people, including stories on this beat, and for television, complex and challenging business stories about the environment can be visually rich.

I now make documentaries full time for public radio stations throughout the nation and for Oregon's statewide television network. The longer form offers more air time to deal with the tectonic themes I discovered covering business and the environment. But when I worked for "Marketplace," I also managed to file frequent 45-second, solid pieces, so I know it can be done. And it should be done.

A word about balance and objectivity: Scientists shy away from making definitive pronouncements about things they cannot yet prove. But policymakers forge ahead, even in the absence of scientific proof, and make decisions that can be essentially massive environmental experiments. My goal as a journalist is to record what's happening while framing the stakes so listeners can make informed decisions as citizens.

Though my lens was different on my "Marketplace" beat, the old reporting mantras still worked. Question authority. Think global. Act local. And follow the money. A good story will emerge. ■

Christy George produces documentaries at Oregon Public Broadcasting (OPB). She started at OPB in 1997, creating the business and environment desk for the Los Angeles-based national business show, "Marketplace," where she shared in a 1998 DuPont-Columbia Silver Baton Award and a 2000 Peabody Award. She won a 2001 Pacific Northwest Emmy for her TV documentary, "The Oregon Story: rural.com." She is on the board of the Society of Environmental Journalists and was a Knight Journalism Fellow at Stanford.

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Fighting to Get Environment Stories on Television

A veteran journalist uses fresh strategies with editors.

By Jacques A. Rivard

I have been covering the environment for Société Radio-Canada (SRC), the National French TV News of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, since 1981, first in Montreal, then in Vancouver. Why did I choose that specific area of coverage, and what did I learn over all these years? Here are some answers.

Fifty years ago, I was growing up in Rivière-du-Loup, a small and clean city of 15,000 inhabitants 100 miles east of Quebec City, on the shores of the St. Lawrence River. I would watch my grandfather catch five-foot-long striped bass that were plentiful in the river. When I began working for the CBC as a journalist, I tried to assess how many species of fish were living in the St. Lawrence River. The striped bass and half of the other species of fish that once thrived in the river had disappeared. I tried to understand why. Twenty years later, I am still seeking answers.

In time, I began to also report on how clean the air is that we breathe, where the tons of contaminated waste go, and the cumulative impact of pollution on health and on climate. I covered many United Nations conferences—on ozone depletion in Montreal in 1987, on global warming in Toronto in 1989, on the import and export of toxic waste in Basel in 1989, on environment and sustainable development in Rio in 1992. In 1995, I was awarded a Nieman Fellowship in environmental studies at Harvard University. That fellowship recognized the 15 years I'd devoted to covering the environment but it also acknowledged the battles I'd been fighting to convince my editors of the importance of this beat. It's an argument that I am still having to make to them today.

Letting Editors Know Why Environment Stories Matter

What have I learned? When a journalist is the first to report on something, it is difficult. When coverage involves reporting on people and their problems, it is even more difficult. And when these problems deal with their environment, it becomes almost an impossible task. Why? During much of this time, I was working in Quebec, where the economy had been adversely affected by the political uncertainty of a possible provincial secession from Canada. In this province, the media establishment believed more strongly than anywhere else in Canada that economic development was the most important story to cover. Environment came last.

That is why I've had to fight hard to keep covering the environment, even

threatening to resign to make my point. And in that time, I've succeeded in explaining the NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) syndrome and done follow-ups on international conferences on energy, global warming, ozone depletion, dangerous waste, health hazards, all the while working on the national TV news. Difficulties arose when I tried to explain scientific phenomena such as ozone depletion, or tried to give progress reports on these subject during daily newscasts, when most of the time was devoted only to hot, hard news.

After a while I realized that if I wanted to educate people about the environment, I needed to work in a different format than daily news. My reporting would work better in a weekly program about ecology. Then, an opportunity for this seemed about to appear. Five years ago, SRC created RDI, a CNN-type all-news network. They had planned a weekly show on the environment and even considered me for the position of anchor. But the project did not materialize because the editors thought that it was too costly. They decided instead to create a fashion show.

Now I am the SRC correspondent on Canada's West Coast, where I use most of my free time to assess the impact of global warming on the environment, mainly in Northern Canada and in the Arctic. In four years of reporting on climate change in the north, in the Yukon and Alaska, I've covered a wide range of issues—the impact of the melting of the permafrost on structures, cities and roads; the movement of the tree line north to where there is only tundra, and the loss of newborns in the porcupine caribou herd because of increased snowfall. I've also followed the research being done by scientists from Canada, Japan and Denmark on Mount Logan, the highest peak in Canada, to determine through ice cores whether there was a cycle of warmer temperatures 150,000 years ago.

This summer, I visited the Arctic to assess how the melting of ice in the Northwest Passage is threatening the sovereignty of Canada, since the United States now wants its ships to use this shorter seaway rather than the Panama Canal. I did stories about Tuktoyaktuk, a Canadian village on the Beaufort Sea, which would be the first human settlement to be moved inland because of global warming. Soil erosion up there has been accelerated by the lack of ice cover. I also showed how builders in Alaska and the Yukon, as temperatures rise, are reacting to the melting of the permafrost by using thermosyphons—20 foot tubes exposed to air filled with carbon dioxide that freezes the permafrost back.

I've devoted a lot of reporting time to covering what I believe is the most important issue in the environmental field today—global warming and its impact on the northern structures and habitats. If we are dealing with a temperature increase of one degree at our latitude, in more northern regions the difference could be more than five degrees. And this change could affect not only the structures created by man but natural habitats, such as forests, and animals.

After the Rio conference in 1992, I encountered a lot of problems on my beat. After the many promises made about resources to help developing nations reduce global warming gases, they were not fulfilled. My editors, who paid for my trip to Rio, now considered all this fuss to be about almost nothing. It was, it seemed, almost impossible to make rich nations, already fighting budget cuts, assist in the environmental needs of poor countries. For me, it meant a daily fight to give our viewers environmental information.

Using a New Strategy to Cover the Environment

More recently, as public opinion polls suggested that economy and health care were the issues that interested the most people, I decided to propose economic and health-related stories that were, in fact, environmental reports. My strategy worked. For example, the incidence of asthma in children living in big cities is now endemic, and costs to the health care system are enormous. One contributing cause is atmospheric pollution. Another example: A special police force has been set up to try to stop the theft of old-growth trees in British Columbia. Each year, $20 million in timber value is lost. I told this environmental story as it is seen through the economic scope. Both stories were very well received because they were sold as health and economy-related news and not as environmental reports.

Also now because of the debate regarding the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, it has become easier to sell environment stories. This is because a majority of our Canadian viewers want Canada and the United States to ratify the agreement, even if it is going to be tough for the economies of the Western world. Public interest in climate change and global warming is why I take the opportunity while on the West Coast of Canada to go north on a regular basis. There I can assess the impact of global warming on these very sensitive ecological regions that are already the most affected by climate change. With the opposition to Kyoto coming from Washington, and the push for ratification in Europe, our viewers are more interested than ever in getting up-to-date information on global warming, a situation that could impact future generations as nothing else ever before.

My hope is that there will be more specialized journalists covering environmental stories. I also hope the networks will air environment stories on a regular basis to give viewers a sense of continuity in the information they receive. The best way to do that is through a weekly program, one I still think the SRC should create, one like "Earth Matters," which CNN recently decided to kill. ■

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Using a Camera to Document Global Warming

'This is a magnificent and urgent story just beginning to be told.'

By Gary Braasch

Climate change is happening. I have seen it with my own eyes. I have stood in the empty rookeries of displaced Adelie penguins and felt the chill of huge icebergs separating from a receding ice shelf on the Antarctic Peninsula. I saw the young black spruces growing higher than ever before on boreal hillsides in Alaska and witnessed subtle changes on the tundra. I can see the ablation of glaciers near my home in the Pacific Northwest and have photographed again the 150-year-old images of great Swiss glaciers to show them wasting away. In North America I've photographed early blooming plants and migrating birds arriving sooner than expected. Along the coasts I have seen rising tides and heavy storms erode beaches and felt the anguish of native Alaskans as their village is increasingly washed away.

These and other observations were made beginning in 1999 as part of my photographic project, "World View of Global Warming." I wanted to move beyond the raw statistics, the charts, and the predictions that are easily dismissed. I wanted to look at the earth itself, with the eyes of a natural history photographer, and report on what changes were already underway. It seemed to me that despite the accumulating scientific evidence of the circumstances and potential consequences, awareness about this issue was largely absent from political debate, rarely written about, and seldom talked about around kitchen tables. A visual connection was needed.

In the years since then, I've crossed both the Antarctic and Arctic Circles, ventured above 15,000 feet in the Andes to photograph receding glaciers, dove on damaged coral reefs with scientists monitoring ocean warming, and followed scientists into the field in Europe and North America. I found that physical systems like oceans and glaciers are being altered. Animals and plants, adapted during thousands of years to strict relationships of temperature, moisture and food availability, have no choice but to respond to changes in their habitat. In remote locations and in familiar gardens and parks, scientists are devoting their careers to measure what is happening, documenting the effects of global warming, and interpreting the results.

What I saw and learned on my photographic journeys offers strong confirmation of the global warming predictions we have been hearing since the mid-1980's. The sources I used for guidance and documentation are hundreds of peer-reviewed studies in scientific journals and sections of the Intergoernmental Panel on Climate Change report and interviews with scientists. The scientific evidence has become a little better known in the past few years and, earlier in 2002, was acknowledged in the Environmental Protection Agency's policy paper "Climate Action Report 2002," even as President Bush persisted in opposing the Kyoto Protocol on limiting greenhouse gases.

Photographing and reporting on these effects presents a great challenge. These changes have been unfolding for 50 years or more. Each year, the effects are incremental, small and subtle, if not literally invisible. But after more than three years visiting scientists and their research sites my photographs have accumulated incremental effects of their own. The evidence these photographic images offer has proven compelling, even to skeptics. They have been published widely, from Time, Life and Discover to textbooks, environmental Web sites, and exhibits.

But can any photographs "prove" that global warming is a fact? The pictures, like the natural science they depict, certainly don't render courtroom proof. Rather they offer evidence of tight correlations among, and long-term observations of, physical events. Most of these photographs require captions to make their point strongly, but with this assistance, the story line they illustrate does start to clearly emerge.

Photography's message is strengthened because the effects of global warming are frequently seen in earth's most beautiful and sensitive landscapes, at the poles, in the mountains, and on the edges of plant and animal ranges. Treasured and threatened ecosystems and creatures can be shown in their transitions.

I have come to understand that I am documenting one of the crucial, overarching events of the 21st century. As global warming exacerbates overpopulation, food crises, and coastal degradation, its consequences might affect more people than did war in the last century. Whatever the human role, there are six billion of us on the planet now, deeply interconnected and affected by environmental changes. We are going to have to live with them and reduce activities that make them worse.

This is a magnificent and urgent story just beginning to be told. In time, each of us will see it. ■

Gary Braasch's climate project is facilitated by 501(c)(3) tax status through the Blue Earth Alliance of concerned documentary photographers. The project has a Web site at www.worldviewofglobalwarming.org.

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Antarctica

From the bridge of the National Science Foundation research ice-breaker Nathaniel B. Palmer, the scene is breathtaking, even mystical. Four searchlight beams arrow down from above me to a vanishing point over dark water. Sea smoke sweeps in along the beams and occasionally an iceberg is illuminated. We are approaching the Antarctic Circle along the west side of the Antarctic Peninsula.

This is my first trip to this southern continent, for which I have waited 40 years since I first read about it as a kid. I've come now because in those years the average temperature along the Peninsula has risen about 2.5 degrees C (~5 degrees F), by actual measurement at British science stations. The Antarctic Peninsula, which stretches 900 miles north toward South America, has a more moderate climate than the rest of the continent. Its great seasonal changes provide many benchmarks against which to measure climate shifts. Scientists are studying the effect on ice shelves, penguins, tiny plants, and the all-important plankton and krill of the Southern Ocean.

On my 1999 journey south, I accompanied Hamilton College geologist Eugene Domack to the disintegrating Müller Ice Shelf—a scene that was repeated in much larger scale in 2002 when a huge part of the Larsen Ice Shelf broke apart. This part is thought to have been intact since the end of the last ice age 10,000 to 12,000 years ago.

In papers by Domack and others, the recent regional warming is viewed as unusually rapid, though it is not the only time warmth has diminished these ice shelves. A concern of scientists is that continued warming and ice shelf destruction will lead to increased flow and melting of tidewater glaciers and continental ice streams. Unlike the melting of ice shelves that are already floating, this will add to sea level rise. My images help us visualize the scale of these events and provide a sense of proportionality to the amount of ice involved in even a tiny section of a small ice sheet in the vastness of Antarctica.

For Adelie penguins, the effect of warming is due to a changing relationship between the winter sea ice, the preferred rookery sites on rocky points that melt free in summer, and the krill on which they feed. Montana State University professor and ornithologist Bill Fraser has studied the Adelies near the United States Palmer Station for more than 25 years. He has seen some rookeries diminish to forlorn pebbly flats while others continue to teem. Penguins seek dry nesting sites within a short foraging range of the edge of the pack ice, beneath which the shrimp-like krill are found. Warming winter temperatures along the Peninsula reduces the pack ice, which then melts farther out in summer, too far from some rookeries. Also, according to Fraser's correlations, the warming air combined with more open water leads to increased snowfall on some nesting sites, causing breeding failure. Adelies, numbering in the millions, are not endangered as a species, but they are sensitive monitors of climate changes as their population decreases in Fraser's study area, but increases farther south. ■ —G.B.

A male Adelie penguin disgorges krill for its chick.

The disintegrating Müller Ice Shelf, Lallemand Fjord.

Ornithologist Fraser at a diminished Adelie colony on Torgersen Island.

Photos by © Gary Braasch 2002.

The Arctic

At earth's opposite pole, the Arctic is experiencing a similar heat wave. Unlike the Antarctic land mass with its two-mile thick ice cap that holds 90 percent of the world's fresh water, the northern pole is an ice-covered ocean surrounded by land. Antarctica is home to ocean mammals and penguins, but no land mammals and only two plants. The Arctic lands have vast boreal forests and tundra, which serve as habitat for many land mammals, including bears, caribou—and human beings, since seven nations claim Arctic territories, which are a source of petroleum, timber, minerals and fish.

The summer thaw across this ocean and landscape is a huge biologic and climatic event whose timing and scale scientists are studying intensively. Using Greenland ice cores, pollen layers in lakes, permafrost probes and tree ring coring, scientists estimate that temperature is the highest it has been in 400 years. Since 1974, warmer temperatures have contributed to a thinning of the permanent Arctic sea ice pack from nine feet to six feet and shrinkage of its overall breadth by 14 percent.

To document changes in Arctic ice, I flew on a NASA laser mapping plane that found that Greenland's outlet glaciers appear to be moving faster and creating more icebergs in the north Atlantic. I can photograph the melting Arctic ice, but its crucial influences on earth's weather cycles are subtle—so far. However, a theory that increasing meltwater from the Arctic will eventually disrupt the Gulf Stream might be tested sooner than expected, according to new research by the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. This year its research ships found the most Arctic water ever in the Labrador Sea.

A rise in summer temperatures might sound like good news, but its effects are ominous and beginning to show. I've witnessed insect attacks that have killed four million acres of white spruce in Kenai, Alaska. Changes correlated with temperature rise threaten all the boreal forests that ring the Arctic and comprise one-third of the world's forests. At the same time, the boreal forest and its associated shrub population are starting to migrate north, overtaking the native tundra. Geophysicist Tom Osterkamp's research shows Alaska permafrost temperature has increased up to 1.50 degrees centigrade since 1980. At his temperature site near Denali National Park, Osterkamp can show how far the once-frozen tundra has subsided. The damage from collapsing permafrost extends from the Fairbanks area north to the Arctic Ocean coast.

The native village of Shishmaref on the Bering Sea is losing houses rapidly to permafrost thaw and rising sea level. Such scenes are repeated around the entire Arctic shore. Some native prey animals—walrus, seabirds, caribou—are beginning to be affected. In some areas, polar bears cannot reach their prey due to diminished sea ice. Perhaps most threatening, dying forests, thawing permafrost, and drying tundra are beginning to pump a huge flux of carbon dioxide and methane into the atmosphere in a region that once served only as a carbon absorber. This feedback loop could combine with increased absorption of solar heat by open tundra and ocean to escalate the rate of change. ■ —G.B.

Icebergs issue from Jakobshavn Glacier into Disko Bay, West Greenland.

Geophysicist Osterkamp shows permafrost thaw-down near Healy, Alaska.

Native village of Shishmaref, Alaska, undergoing attack by Bering Sea erosion.

Photos by © Gary Braasch 2002.

Glaciers and Sea Level Change

When I began my project, "World View of Global Warming," glaciers presented another very visible indication of climate change. Throughout the 20th century, glaciers in the temperate and tropical zones have been shrinking. Because scientists and photographers have been attracted to glaciers since the 19th century, there is informal documentation of what this ice has looked like through the years.

The shrinking Rhone glacier, in 1859 and in 2001.

Finding usable "before" images can be tough given the many gaps in the record of dates and circumstances of historic pictures. Locating the previous photographers' viewpoints can be very difficult: Many were not recorded or were on trails long since blasted away for highways. I first tried this in Peru in 1999. With directions from Andean glaciologist Alcides Ames of Huaraz and clutching a copy of the previous photograph in my gloved hand for constant comparison, it took long days of scrambling on rugged ridges above 15,000 feet to reach the points where other photographers apparently once stood. The change in the glaciers is very obvious even before one finds the matching view to create a set of convincing images.

Perhaps the most dramatic glacier withdrawal that can be seen in my comparative photographs is based on an 1859 photo and etching of the Rhone glacier in the Bernese Öberland, Switzerland. Back then, ice filled the valley right to the tiny crossroads of Gletch. By 2001, modern highways replaced the trail, and the glacier was nearly out of sight, 2.5 km distant and 450 meters higher. I've since found images from the 1930's that provide more details about the glacier's retreat.

High tide on Delaware Bay near Cape May.

University of Colorado glaciologist Mark Meier has published frequent reports of worldwide glacier recession and its effect on sea level rise. In 2002, he calculated that glacier melting could contribute 0.65 feet or more to the sea level during this century, and sea level is already about six inches higher than it was 100 years ago. The rate of rise is increasing as warming seawater expands. Early in this century the estimated rate of increase might be enough to inundate low-lying areas in the Pacific Islands, Bangladesh, the Everglades, and coastal zones in Florida and along the Atlantic coast. My photograph of a normal high tide on Delaware Bay shows the tiny area that remains for migrating shorebirds to forage for horseshoe crab eggs before being forced up against storm sewer outfalls near Cape May, New Jersey. This feeding situation now is added to other environmental obstacles confronting roughly one million sandpipers, red knots, and turnstones on their migratory flight from South America to the Arctic.

In California, marine biologist Rafe Sagarin of the University of California at Santa Cruz found that some tide pool habitat had changed when he revisited a 60-year-old study at Hopkins Marine Laboratory at Monterey, California. Summer sea temperatures have risen more than one degree during that time, and his new survey showed many warm-water tide pool animals had increased while those favoring colder water had decreased. These changes in small animals are harbingers of shifts that are likely to affect coastal life, including that of humans. ■ —G.B.

Sagarin at Monterey tide pools.

Photos by © Gary Braasch 2002.

Covering the Environment From Rio to Johannesburg and Beyond

A Brazilian journalist describes his frustration with the beat.

By Marcelo Leite

Within 10 years, the United Nations (U.N.) sponsored two earth conferences, in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and this year in Johannesburg. Brazilian media coverage of each was strikingly different.

In 1992, Folha de São Paulo—one of the nation's leading newspapers—assigned a team of at least 10 journalists (not including photographers) to report on the Rio conference. Each day a minimum of two pages were filled with news about environmental issues, ranging from stories outlining the details of U.N. paperwork and multilateral negotiating process to coverage of Greenpeace demonstrations and shaman happenings at Flamengo Beach some 20 miles away. Competing news outlets based in Rio, such as Jornal do Brasil, printed a *daily* six-page special section under an "Ecology" banner.

Ten years later, Folha sent only three journalists (two reporters, one photographer) to South Africa to produce copy for a mere three-quarters of a page each day, about 60 percent less coverage than 10 years before. Had Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso not been going, only one reporter would have covered the entire conference.

There is, however, for me a similarity about both experiences: Though the sources were very different, I emerged from each conference with a sense of deep frustration because of my belief that the highly threatened global environment needs more attention and remedies in the form of concrete actions by all governments. As a journalist who covers environmental issues and has therefore witnessed the growing scientific consensus about the poor health of the planet, I don't think that this belief prevents me from doing my job, since I regard "artificially balanced" coverage as often promoting anti-environmental positions.

Environmental coverage in Folha de São Paulo.

The 1992 Rio Conference

For four years, I'd been preparing to cover the 1992 Rio conference. Back in 1988, the Amazon rain forest had become a story of international interest after it was learned that about 10 percent of the jungle had already been cut, an area comparable in size to France and roughly five-sixths the size of Texas. And, paradoxically, I and most other Brazilian journalists learned of this issue through reading alarming stories and editorials about the destruction of our country's rain forest in the foreign press. This awareness led to my first two trips to the Amazon. As I learned about the complexities of the rain forest ecosystem, one of my guides was the U.S.-born ecologist Philip Fearnside at INPA—Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas da Amazônia, in Manaus. After going there, I plunged into a long period of reading and research about the rain forest during a year and a half sabbatical in Germany, on a fellowship from the Krupp Foundation. Of course, while I was still trying to understand more about what was happening, the Germans wanted only to hear firsthand accounts about the Amazon disaster from a Brazilian science journalist.

By the end of 1990, I was back in Brazil and focused on the rain forest and related global issues, such as climate change and pressures poverty places on environmental resources. My frustration surfaced when on the eve of the Rio Conference I was assigned to coordinate the team instead of being able to do the reporting for which I'd been preparing. Too often this is what happens in Brazil. When a journalist's reporting on a beat rises above aver-

age, management often promotes the reporter to a coordinating position in the newsroom, effectively preventing that journalist from using the knowledge and access to sources that have taken years of work to build.

Despite my professional discontent, the Rio conference turned out much more positively than had been expected. U.S. President George Bush attended at the last minute as a result of international and domestic political pressure. And two very important U.N. conventions were signed, one on climate change, the other on biodiversity. Wealthier countries did not commit themselves to specific financing goals towards supporting sustainable development in poorer nations, but at least they accepted a target of doubling their development-aid spending from an average 0.36 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). (In fact, even in our Rio coverage, most of our stories were about the financing of sustainable development in poor countries, not actual environmental issues.) At the conference's conclusion, it seemed that global environmental issues were on a promising, albeit difficult, track.

The U.N. homepage for the Johannesburg summit 2002.

This expectation could not have been more off the mark. As economic good times emerged in some developed nations, most notably in the United States, environmental concerns plummeted from their place as a priority. The United States—the world's dominant consumer of environmental resources—kept to its unsustainable path of consumption as Americans' fondness for gas-guzzling sport utility vehicles grew. Meanwhile, fuel prices rose steadily in almost all other nations. In 10 years, worldwide carbon dioxide emissions went up 4.6 percent, while official development aid from developed countries went down to 0.22 percent of GDP, instead of up to the 0.7 percent agreed to in Rio. Early in his term, President George W. Bush made clear that the United States would not ratify the Kyoto Protocol (an international agreement to curtail global warming) in spite of a decade of excruciating negotiations.

The 2002 Johannesburg Conference and Beyond

As a result of this downward spiral of environmental issues in the global agenda, environmental journalists sensed that the conference, dubbed Rio + 10, was going to be a total flop. President Bush kept his word and never showed up; Secretary of State Colin Powell came on his behalf on the last day of the summit. Nevertheless, hundreds of news outlets throughout the world sent reporters to Johannesburg. Our newspaper published a six-page special section before the summit. It presented a rather pessimistic view, such as the lead story that appeared under the headline, "A Década Perdida do Ambiente" ("The Environment's Lost Decade"). Our reporters sent daily stories from Johannesburg about efforts the Brazilian delegation and many European Union countries made to get a commitment that 10 percent of global energy production would be from clean sources—nonfossil, non-nuclear and no gigantic hydropower—by 2012. (The current share is 2.2 percent.) And they reported on the thwarting of this effort by the United States and Arab oil-producing countries.

American journalists were there, too, but the conference's timing converged with the first anniversary of September 11, so their reporting didn't receive the attention it otherwise might have. With talk of possible war also dominating the American news, these negotiations taking place in endless meetings in a distant African nation about issues that can seem like abstract entities were unlikely to draw much public interest in the United States.

I stayed in São Paulo, sending my young assistant editor, Claudio Angelo, to cover the summit. My general directive was for our two-member team (Angelo plus a political reporter/columnist) to bypass the daily haggling over commas and brackets in official U.N. documents and identify and speak with the conference's leading figures, including heads of state and respected environmentalists. I wanted to portray

for our readers "the big picture," but even as the conference began I knew this assignment was doomed to failure since no significant action was to come out of Johannesburg. One story stood out, however, and that was an interview Angelo did with chimpanzee expert Jane Goodall, which gave our readers a sense of how difficult, long and demanding environmental transformation can be.

After the disappointment with Johannesburg, and a sense that the international environmental situation appears stagnant right now, science and environment journalists in developing nations are back to their daily work of reporting on regional and local issues. For instance, support is still coming from entities in the United States and European countries to assist sustainable initiatives in and about the Brazilian rain forest. These funds and expertise help to maintain the ongoing work and research of emergent Brazilian research nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) such as Instituto de Pesquisa Ambiental da Amazônia (www.ipam.org.br) and Instituto do Homem e Meio Ambiente da Amazônia (www.imazon.org.br), both located in Belém do Pará, which is roughly halfway between São Paulo and Miami.

During the past decade, these innovative NGO's have been involved in painstaking gathering of data about basic ecological relationships, forest dynamics, and timber industry patterns of (so far predatory) operation. These data are proving crucial for devising a rational way of reaping what the rain forest has to offer without compromising its ability to grow again. This is the only way to preserve the five million square kilometers of the Amazon (about 60 percent of Brazil) and at the same time find a sustainable source of living for about 20 million people (some 12 percent of the Brazilian population) who live there. The NGO studies have been published in renowned journals such as Nature and Science, and these reports are making the rounds even in our capital, Brasilia, where rational policies for the rain forest are in the process of being slowly decided.

These are the kind of success stories we are now eager to report. Perhaps, in a reverse of the usual pattern, some of our reporting will find its way into the foreign media. It is my hope that maybe someday American and European journalists and decision-makers will realize there is more to the rest of the world than corruption, backwardness and threats, and focus on the ways in which richer countries are implicated—for better or worse—in such circumstances. But to report and see these connections, the focus would at least momentarily need to be diverted from Ground Zero and its aftermath. What happened on September 11 is surely something never to be forgotten, but there are also other extremely critical issues that ought to be remembered by everyone—including the United States. To persistently try to keep environmental issues high on the priority lists of editors and decision-makers should not be mistaken for advocacy. Rather, it is the job we should do in being the ones who watch carefully and report what happens in our own backyards and in the global environment. ■

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Environment Reporting in China

There is government control and strained finances, but coverage of the environment is flourishing.

By Sun Yu

In 1984, China Environment News was launched in Beijing. It is said that it was the only national newspaper specializing in environmental reporting in the world. At that time, environmental reporting was in its infancy and, in China, no other media outlets were reporting environmental news. People rarely heard the term "environmental protection." China Environment News brought to public attention national environmental policy, laws and regulations. It also exposed the polluting behavior of factories and disseminated environmental knowledge to the general public. Its mission was to promote environmental awareness and let people know of China's dedication to environmental protection. Due to its reporting efforts, China Environment News was honored with the "silver medal" by the United Nations' Environment Programme (UNEP) for its significant contributions in 1986. The next year, UNEP ranked China Environment News on the Global 500 Honor List. Now, in an effort to attract additional readers, China Environment News has added a weekend edition and more feature stories.

Reporting on People's Lives

During the past decade, environmental media have seen a great transformation and have flourished in China. Now environmental issues are covered by both broadcast and print media. Major media agencies at national and local levels have special reporters to cover environmental news and have columns or programs dedicated to the environment. In 1993, an environmental coverage campaign, "Across China Environmental Protection Centenary Action," was initiated. More than 6,000 reporters from news agencies at the national and local levels throughout China have taken part in this action.

Each year a theme reflecting the most pressing environmental problem has been selected for the campaign. Reporters send stories to their news agencies. This media campaign has been very effective in promoting environmental protection. Many resources have been provided for coverage of major environmental protection campaigns, such as resisting garbage from abroad and cleanup activities of the Huaihe River and Lake Taihu. Environmental reporting has also played an important role in supervising and changing the behavior of factories and enforcing the law. There are also some foreign environmental and nature TV programs being broadcast on China's national and local television stations. For instance, "Earth Story" is broadcast on a China Central Television (CCTV) station every night.

Environmental reporting in China has also seen some changes in reporting style. In the 1980's and the early years of the 1990's, environmental reporting in China was covered in a narrow sense and limited to coverage of three kinds of pollution—waste water, waste gases, and solid waste. It failed to pay attention to the central element of the environment: people. To clean the heavily polluted Huaihe River and Lake Taihu, local environmental bureaus closed many small paper mills and dying factories. When reporting this event, news media only focused on the environmental cleanup and failed to report on what the factory workers would need to do to survive.

The Web site of China Environment News was launched on World Environment Day 2000. Top-level officials of the State Environment Protection Agency talked about environment issues via the site on the same day. ***Photo by Deng Jia.***

In recent years, to adapt to readers' interests and needs, China's environmental media has broadened its concept to include this "larger environment." Reporters pay more attention to the lives of ordinary people and cover new topics, such as green food and ecotourism. For example, to conserve the ecological system of Daxinganling forestry reserve, in 1999 the Daxinganling Forest Corporation stopped felling trees. When CCTV reported this news, its coverage focused on the changing role of the corporation workers from lumbermen to tree-planters.

Journalists Interact With Government Officials

Unlike its Western counterparts, which are independent entities, China's media agencies are still regarded as the government's throat and tongue. In recent years, the government has started to deregulate the media sector, especially in less sensitive areas, such as sports, recreation and business. Chinese media have gradually become market-oriented; even private and foreign capital is entering this sector.

Even with these changes, the administrative structure of most media organizations remains the same. For instance, China Environment News is still affiliated with the State Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and serves as SEPA's propaganda organ. The topics covered as news are selected in a top-down manner. As SEPA's propaganda organ, China Environment News has to cover routine activities of SEPA's top-level officials and devote space to reporting on SEPA's administrative conferences. In recent years, China Environment News has tried to reduce the number and length of these types of news stories.

This administrative structure also gives China's environmental media advantages. News agencies receive government support and resources to help in reporting. The media campaign I mentioned earlier was initiated by the National People's Congress. As the nation's major environmental newspaper, China Environment News enjoys administrative support from SEPA in boasting its circulation and has relied primarily on SEPA to increase its circulation to more than 230,000, a high figure among the special interest newspapers. By contrast, the English edi-

tion of China Environment News, which was targeted at foreign readers, went out of business in 1998 since it lacked this governmental advantage in the foreign market. The English edition was co-funded by UNEP and SEPA in the late 1980's, but UNEP stopped funding it. The paper had few paid subscribers and focused instead on selected foreign and domestic environmental organizations, sending them copies free of charge. After several years of losing money, China Environment News stopped publishing it.

Chinese environmental publications. *Photo by Deng Jia.*

As a developing country, however, environmental reporting in China suffers from financial strains. Because its main clients for advertising are environmental companies, and these companies don't earn a lot of money, this revenue hasn't been very high. This means that news agencies specializing in environmental reporting have few resources to do much investigative reporting or to send reporters to cover distant news events, especially when these events occur abroad. When the Kyoto climate conference was held in 1997, only Xinhua News Agency sent a reporter to the conference. Originally, China Environment News didn't have an interview plan. I applied for funding from a European environmental nongovernmental organization to participate in the conference as its member. In this way, I was able to cover the Kyoto conference for China Environment News.

The Urgency of China's Environmental Cause

China is the largest developing country in the world, yet its per capita forest and water resources are far below the world average level. China cannot afford to further degrade the quality of its resource base. It must find ways to balance economic development with environmental protection. In recent years, several large events have given the cause of China's environmental protection new impetus. In the summer of 1998, a rarely seen flood hit the upper and middle reaches of the Yangtze River. The flood, aggravated by the problem of logging trees in the upper Yangtze River, caused serious economic damage and loss of human lives. Due to degradation of the ecological environment in nearby Hebei province, dust storms have occurred frequently in Beijing in recent years. Such problems have aroused the concern of the general public and the Chinese government.

To cope with environmental problems, the Chinese government has adopted measures to ban lumbering in natural forests on the upper reaches of the Yangtze River. And because China has been selected as the host country of the 2008 Olympic games, it must meet the Olympics' environmental requirements. To do this, Beijing is taking actions to improve its air quality. As a responsible government, in the recent Earth Summit, Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji also announced that the Chinese government ratified the Kyoto protocol.

As the Chinese government pays more attention to the environmental cause and the general public shows more concern about environmental problems, China's environmental media are presented with a very good opportunity, and it is likely that more resources will be allocated to environmental reporting. Since the start of 2002, China Environment News has increased its publication from four to six issues per week and changed its name to China Environment Daily. China needs the media to advocate for the importance of environmental conservation, and the environmental media should continue to play an important part in this endeavor, as they have in the past. There is a long way to go, and the environmental media still face challenges, but the future for this kind of reporting seems more promising than it ever has before. ■

Sun Yu, the 1999 environmental Nieman Fellow, is an editor of Fortune China magazine (the Chinese edition of Fortune). She was reporter and editor of the Chinese and English editions of China Environment News for 12 years and was awarded the 1998 United Nations Correspondents Association bronze prize for her coverage of the Kyoto climate conference.

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Reluctance to Read News About the Environment

'. . . trying to convince people about the importance of protecting the environment sometimes falls on deaf ears.'

By Nanise Fifita

In Tonga, an island nation in the Pacific Ocean, environmental journalism is a new idea. Many islanders have been reluctant to embrace the news this reporting brings their way, but during the past decade coverage of environmental stories has maintained a slow but steady momentum.

Located in Western Polynesia, the Kingdom of Tonga consists of 171 islands, 45 of which are inhabited. On these islands, which are ruled by a constitutional monarchy, people have traditionally relied on the resources from land and sea for their livelihood. Skillful farmers have predicted the weather and chosen the best time for planting crops by studying the position and shape of the moon. Until recently, the use of chemicals, fertilizers and pesticides in cultivating the land was unheard of. Similar traditional methods were practiced for fishing and navigation. But those ways are changing, too.

As a journalist who has reported on environmental issues in Tonga, I've found that trying to convince people about the importance of protecting the environment sometimes falls on deaf ears. Many people are simply not interested; they tend to assume that things like land, trees, plants, sea and fish—the resources they depend upon for their livelihoods—will always be there. Others cling to the belief that their Creator will constantly and endlessly supply everything for them; to them, overuse or abuse of resources is not an issue.

Working within this landscape and mindset means that reporters must gain special skills for their work to be effective. Journalists must begin by understanding and respecting the traditions and cultures of an island or region. They need, then, to use that knowledge to work with community elders and other key people to allow them to communicate the particular threats or damage that is occurring to their most important sources of livelihood.

At a regional environmental seminar for Pacific reporters organized by the Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) in 2001, many journalists expressed the view that the process of educating islanders about the importance of conserving natural resources would be a slow one. Even collecting information about this topic from a particular community or village would probably present problems for reporters. But participants felt that it is also very important to stress in their stories that safeguarding and preserving the environment is also a vital health and economic issue.

The Difficulties of Reporting Environment Stories

Let me share some examples. In the first one, a small village in Tonga was not aware that their next-door neighbor is the host ground for obsolete power transformers that contain PCB's, a toxic and dangerous chemical. The area was located along the coastal lagoon in the main island, Tongatapu. When I learned about this situation, I was horrified to think that PCB's might have leaked into this lagoon, which is the source of seafood for tens of thousands of people who live in the area and those who might buy seafood sold at the market.

I quickly set up an interview with a local government environmental officer and his foreign counterpart, who measured the level of PCB's present on each transformer. I gathered from the interview that people who live nearby and along the coastline were never made aware of the danger. The most challenging part of my reporting happened when I tried to talk to some of the people in the area. In my initial attempt, no one was willing to talk to the camera. People were afraid that they might say something that would offend government leaders or create some form of social disharmony; others felt that talking with a journalist would infringe on their traditional duty of respecting their leaders. Some of the residents who were fishermen, weavers or unemployed residents said they were not in a position to comment on matters that government might deal with eventually. Most people wished to express their opinions off-camera and with anonymity.

In these private conversations, many people told me that they wished the government would quickly relocate the transformers and conduct an immediate and thorough cleanup. Others wanted medical checkups to be done on their health conditions. Some even went to the extent of questioning concerned officials on why they failed to inform them earlier or whether they chose to hide these facts.

Given this experience, how best could a journalist collect the kind of information with which people could be effectively educated? The technique I used might be regarded as one in which it is difficult for me to maintain objectivity. But what I was trying to do was to convince people that what they had to say and the level of their concern could help speed up government attention and action in tackling the problem. Not speaking would lead them nowhere. I also wanted them to know that health issues and their livelihood are important issues to be emphasized and that they have the right to air concerns in matters which directly

affect them and their children. Unless they pushed for their voices to be heard, their main source of economic livelihood from the lagoon might continue to be jeopardized.

In another example, an island or a piece of land along the coast might attract foreign investors who will turn its natural beauty into a tourist resort. With the lure of big cash, landowners might be only too willing to give in without considering the consequences. Natural trees and plants would be cut down and, in their place, houses and other facilities will be built. The sewage and drainage system from this resort would likely damage fish and living organisms along the coastal area.

So what would be the role of the media in this situation? Often, in radio and TV coverage of such stories, reporters bring together comments and views expressed by both sides in the debate. Environmentalists from government and civil groups often cooperate with people in the area to express the fear that such a large-scale project might disrupt the status quo. These voices often make headline news in both radio and TV Tonga news bulletins, asking questions about how many tourists our Pacific Island countries want and what might happen to the environment with their arrival.

Another area of concern is the amount of danger to the environment and people's lives caused by the constant use of pesticides and agricultural chemicals. Agricultural stories, which often dominate the daily news of both mediums, often speak to the amount of agricultural exports and how, in turn, they boost the local economy. But during the past several years, and with the help of PINA and the Asia-Pacific Forum of Environment Journalists (APFEJ), reporters from Asia/Pacific countries have been reminded of the role they play in adding more depth to the discussion of these issues. As a member of APFEJ, I stress to my colleagues that when they cover agricultural stories, they need to seek other angles—both positive and negative—that touch on environmental issues. From listening to those who call in to radio programs and independent feedback from the public, it seems that people are beginning to appreciate the value of such coverage.

Through the years, Radio Tonga News has highlighted many environmental stories, which were the result of closer cooperation with government and nongovernment organizations, communities, lobbying groups, as well as concerned citizens. Such stories have involved coverage of global warming and the greenhouse effects, rising sea levels, and other threats to the environment, which are being vigorously debated among major world powers. Not surprisingly, these are rather sensitive issues to people in the Pacific, particularly those who live in low-lying islands, such as Tuvalu, Kiribati and Nauru. On TV news programs, visual images show people what is happening. And with these pictures illustrating the issues, there emerges greater understanding by people of the need for more of this kind of coverage. ■

Nanise Fifita, a 1991 Nieman Fellow, is the editor for Radio & Television Tonga News of the Tonga Broadcasting Commission. In July, Fifita received a Pacific Ocean Sciences Fellowship from the Washington, D.C.-based SeaWeb organization in conjunction with PINA to study the destruction of marine and terrestrial environments in the Pacific Ocean.

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Satellite Imagery for Environment Reporting

Journalists can use these images and data to report and illustrate stories.

By Claire Parkinson

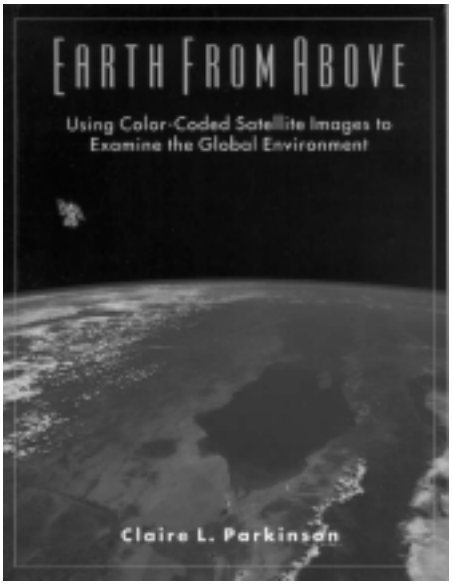
During the past several decades, satellite technology has provided an amazing new ability to observe the earth-atmosphere system. With satellites, the most remote regions of the globe can be viewed as readily as the least remote regions, and data can be collected globally within a few days. Some instruments can obtain surface data even in the presence of a substantial cloud cover, while other instruments can provide the data to produce three-dimensional visualizations of the structure of such atmospheric phenomena as hurricanes and thunderstorms.

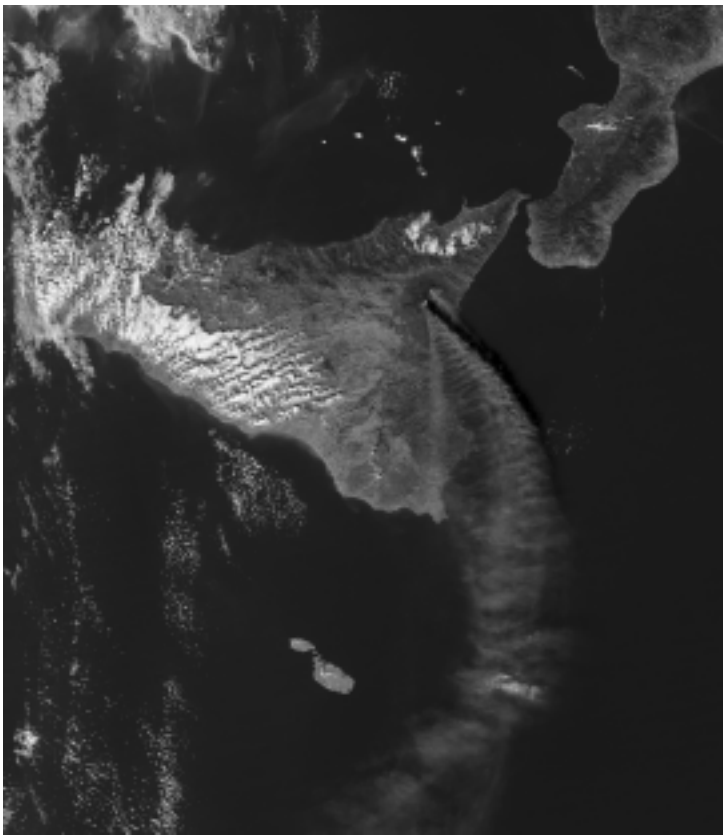
Satellites collect data relevant to a wide range of environmental topics, from the ozone hole and low-level pollution in the atmosphere, to deforestation and glacier retreats on the land, to algae blooms and El Niño-signaling temperature patterns in the oceans, to biomass burning and shrinking lakes or eroding coastlines. In each of these cases, and many others, the amount of information that the satellites can provide is enormous. By carefully selecting satellite imagery, these pictures can be used quite effectively by reporters to illustrate many points. For example, journalists who might be reporting on the shrinking of the Aral Sea (caused largely by the diversion of inflowing waters for such purposes as irrigation) can vividly portray this shrinkage by presenting side-by-side, identically geolocated images from different decades.

Types of Satellite Data

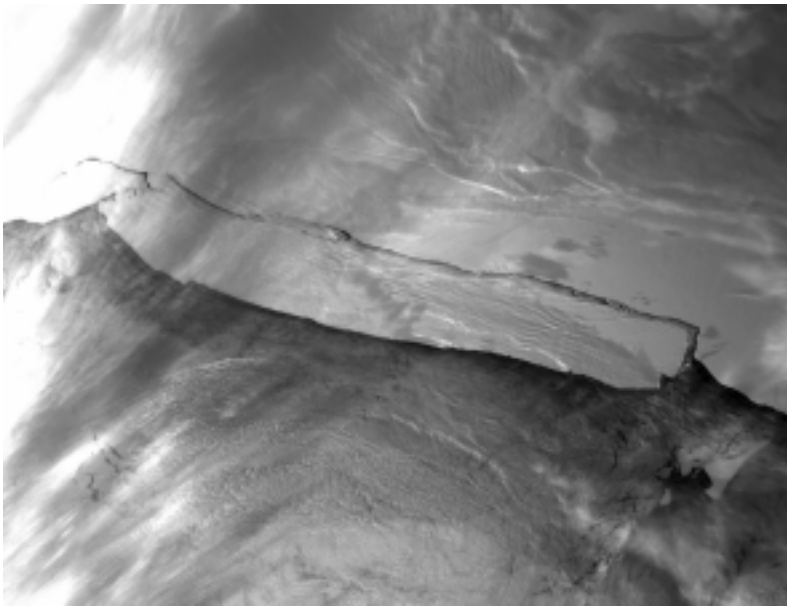
Satellite data come in different types, but a common factor is that all satellite instruments measure radiation and only radiation. Some sensors measure various wavelengths of visible radiation, all of which our eyes can see, and other sensors measure ultraviolet, infrared, microwave or other types of radiation, none of which our eyes can see. In any event, no matter what the topic of ultimate application, what's measured directly is exclusively radiation.

Satellite images constructed from visible data have one inherent gigantic advantage, which is that the images are generally readily understood just by looking at them: Clouds look like clouds, sea ice floes look like sea ice floes, land/sea boundaries are readily identified, etc. Furthermore, the value of some visible imagery has been clear since the first earth-observing satellites were launched decades ago. A prime example of this utility is provided by the visible imagery of hurricanes. Hurricanes form over warm ocean areas, fed by evaporation from the ocean beneath. In view of their oceanic origin, prior to satellites hurricanes were often not observed until just hours before landfall. Now they are readily recognizable in satellite visible images, often days before landfall, thereby enabling what can be lifesaving warnings





Eruption of Mount Etna, in Sicily, as viewed from NASA's Aqua satellite on October 30, 2002, using data from the Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS) instrument. *Original image in color, courtesy of the MODIS Science Team.*

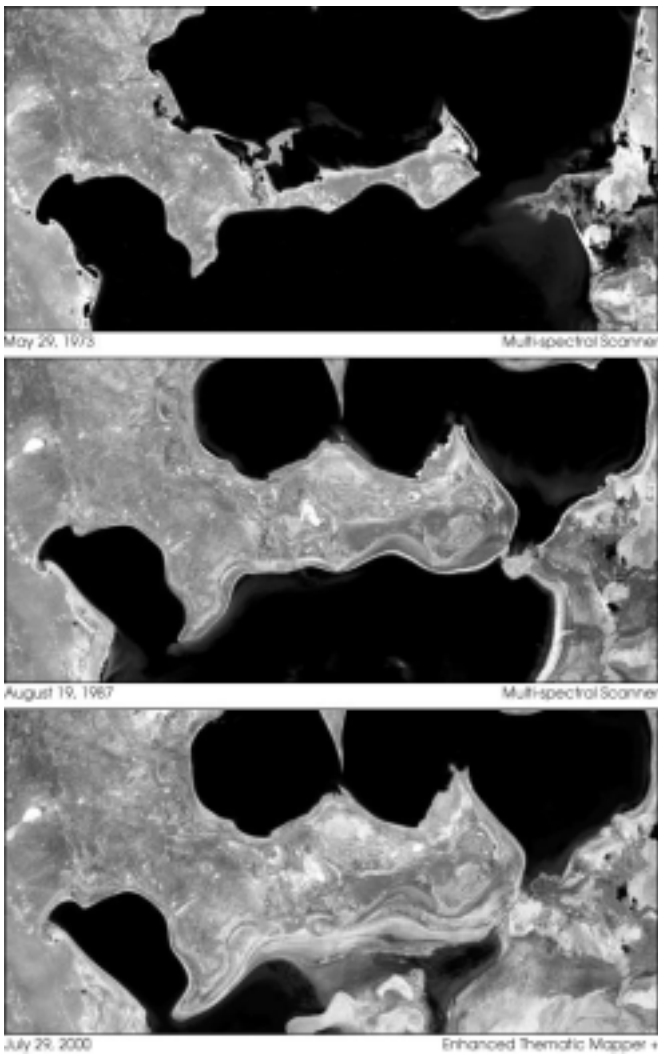


Calving of a major iceberg off the coast of Antarctica, as viewed from NASA's Terra satellite on March 28, 2000, using data from the MODIS instrument. This iceberg is twice the size of Delaware and broke off from Antarctica's Ross Ice Shelf, necessitating remapping of the coastal boundaries. *Original image in color, courtesy of Jacques Descloitres and the MODIS Science Team.*

to the communities along their paths.

Visible radiation is often ideal for observing hurricanes, clouds or, under clear conditions, many phenomena at the earth's surface. Satellite instruments measuring only visible radiation, however, have the same limitations that our eyes have. They are unable to measure phenomena that our eyes can't see, and any data they collect on surface phenomena are obscured if there's a substantial cloud cover intervening between the surface and the instrument.

Fortunately, many phenomena that cannot readily be measured with visible radiation can be determined through the use of other types of radiation. Temperatures, whether atmospheric, land or oceanic, can be calculated (at least approximately) from infrared data. The ozone amounts in the atmosphere can be calculated (again at least approximately) from ultraviolet data. Many surface variables, including snow cover, sea ice cover, and vegetation cover, can be monitored even in the presence of a substantial cloud cover through the use of microwave data. The list goes on and on, with many dozens of variables being able to be calculated through satellite observations, using one type of radiation or another.



Shrinking of the Aral Sea, in west-central Asia, as viewed in three Landsat images, from May 29, 1973, August 19, 1987, and July 29, 2000, respectively. The increased land area (gray) and reduced sea area (black) is clear as one progresses from the 1973 to 1987 to 2000 image. The shrinkage of the sea, caused by humans siphoning off millions of gallons of water from the inflowing rivers, has destroyed the sea's fish population, eliminated the former profitable commercial fishing industry, and caused thousands of tons of salty soil from the former lake bed to be blown across the region, damaging crop yields and air quality. *Original images in color, courtesy of the United States Geological Survey EROS Data Center, based on data provided by the Landsat Science Team.*

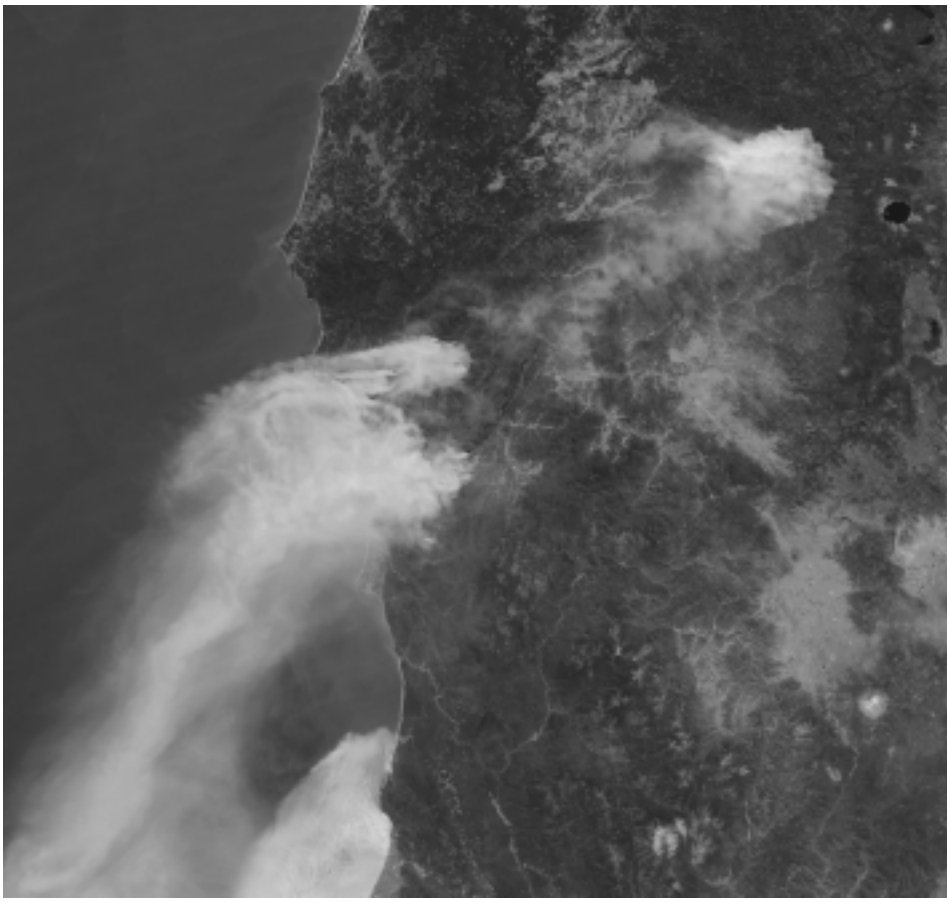
Using Information Collected By Satellites

Of course, no matter how good they are, for the satellite data to be useful the user must be able to understand them. For much of the data, scientists and computers greatly aid this process by converting the streams of numerical information into maps, often color-coded, of the relevant geophysical quantities. The color codes used by scientists in research publications are often intimidating to the general public because of having too many colors, sometimes seemingly randomly selected. This is not a difficulty for people used to color-coded images, and it often increases the amount of information relayed. However, if the same color scale is used to present the image to readers or viewers who are intimidated by the scale, the amount of information relayed could sink to zero. Therefore, it is often appropriate to simplify the color scale, sometimes to the point of doing away with the numerical color bar altogether and instead presenting just the image and a statement in the caption along the lines of: Warm temperatures (or high ozone amounts, etc.) are indicated in shades of red and cold temperatures in shades of blue.

Fortunately, by now computers are so advanced that, in general, changing color scales is relatively minor. Journalists who want to use a satellite image to illustrate a story but find the available image too complicated should not hesitate to ask the image provider to adjust the color scale (even to a gray scale for a black-and-white publication). Also, since most scientists are not astute regarding color choices, it would not be out of line for a journalist to make suggestions.

As with all sources of information, satellite data can be misused. A very important aspect of environmental issues concerns changes over time, such as increasing atmospheric pollution, decreasing water quality, global warming, or sea level rise. Satellite data can very effectively monitor and help to illustrate environmental changes in many variables. However, like statistics, they can be misused to give a distorted picture of the change that has occurred.

Consider, for instance, a satellite record that reveals a particular variable increasing from 1980 to 1985, then decreasing back to the 1980 level by 1990, increasing back to the 1985 level by 1995, and decreasing back to the 1980 level by 2000. In this case, the full record clearly shows a systematic 10-year cycle; but if someone presents only the 1985 and 2000



Wildfires burning in Oregon, as viewed from NASA's Aqua satellite on August 12, 2002, using data from the MODIS instrument. The fire was sparked by lightning and by August 14 had consumed over 375,000 acres in Oregon and northern California. ***Original image in color, courtesy of Jacques Descloitres, MODIS Land Rapid Response Team.***

results, it can look like a 15-year decrease, whereas if someone else presents only the 1980 and 1995 results, it can look like a 15-year increase. In cases like this, to show a more complete picture, it's often extremely useful to present satellite-derived time series in addition to the satellite imagery. The time series, if available, can be presented as an insert in the corner of an image.

Similarly to the case of images and the options for color scales, time series can be made more or less informative and understandable depending on the choice of averaging interval. For example: Satellite-derived time series of northern hemisphere and southern hemisphere monthly average sea-ice concentrations from the late 1970's to the end of the 20th century provide a great deal of information, but the only signal that comes through well in the monthly average plots is the well known and totally unsurprising fact that much more ice exists in winter than in summer. The seasonal cycle so dominates the picture that the long-term change is not visible. By simplifying the plots to show only yearly averages, however, it becomes clear that the northern hemisphere ice cover decreased overall, while the southern hemisphere ice increased, although neither uniformly.

The northern hemisphere case of decreasing sea ice coverage has received considerable attention because of its possible connection with global warming. Without the satellite record, which provides global sea ice coverage every few days, evidence of the changes would be far less comprehensive or convincing. The satellite-derived plots give a much more complete picture of overall changes than any individual image could and show the reader much better than most verbal descriptions both the direction of the changes and the considerable fluctuations.

Understood well and used properly, satellite-derived imagery and plots can add substantially to the information relayed through articles about environmental issues and environmental change. ■

Claire Parkinson is a climatologist at the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, using satellite data to examine global climate and climate change, with a focus on polar sea ice. She is also project scientist for the Aqua spacecraft, launched on May 4, 2002, and author of the book "Earth From Above: Using Color-Coded Satellite Images to Examine the Global Environment," published by University Science Books.

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Finding Environmental Satellite Images on the Web

Claire Parkinson compiled a list of Web sites where reporters can find a wide selection of satellite imagery relevant to environmental topics. They include the following:

www.nnvl.noaa.gov/
www.osei.noaa.gov
www.jpl.nasa.gov/earth
www.spot.com
http://visibleearth.nasa.gov
http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/Newsroom
http://edcwww.cr.usgs.gov/earthshots/slow/tableofcontents ■

Words & Reflections

In "Breach of Faith," the second of two volumes edited by journalists Gene Roberts and Thomas Kunkel, the authors continue their in-depth examination of the consequences of concentrated ownership on journalism and democracy. **Frank A. Blethen,** publisher of the family-owned Seattle Times, in reflecting on the ideas set forth in "Breach of Faith," praises the valued service these editors have given to their craft by assembling this book and its companion, "Leaving Readers Behind." As Blethen writes, "They remind us that institutional owners of newspapers and other media will, if left unchecked, continue their relentless disinvesting in journalism and community service." The authors lead readers through various examples of disinvestment brought about by ownership concentration but, as Blethen says, he would have liked Roberts and Kunkel to "speak out more in their own voices," and to do so "forcefully—from their own experiences and in response to what they see happening in our industry." Blethen takes his own advice and departs from the book to reveal his ideas about what steps are necessary to solve this crisis.

Two other editors, Leonard Downie and Robert G. Kaiser of The Washington Post, have also written recently on this topic. Their book, "The News About the News," is reviewed by **Seth Effron**, special projects director at the Nieman Foundation. Not surprisingly, the consequences of consolidation of news organizations and media companies are again a primary focus, and Effron cites the authors' observation that "Instead of the laser-like focus on tough, accurate reporting and good writing, newsroom leaders are forced to divert their attention to financial considerations." Effron also points out that the authors work hard to draw attention to examples of best practices that demonstrate how quality news can flourish, even in this business environment.

Nancy Bernhard, author of "U.S. Television News and Cold War Propaganda, 1947-1960," offers her thoughts about "War is a Force That Gives Us Meaning," a book written by Chris Hedges, who spent 15 years covering wars for The New York Times. She finds that his "excellence as a journalist is both his strength and weakness here," observing that he "tells evocative stories, but draws no conclusions" and raises important questions, many of which he leaves unanswered. The book, she concludes, is neither memoir nor history. "Rather, it provides a window into the understandably troubled mind of an outstanding war correspondent."

In our final piece in this section, we spotlight the words of **Bob Giles**, Curator of the Nieman Foundation, from his speech, "The Vital Role of the Press in a Time of National Crisis." His remarks address how journalists can act as watchdogs of government even as it shrouds its actions in secrecy. "In such times," Giles said, "the most patriotic role the press can play is to fulfill its constitutionally protected duty to aggressively probe and question those who have the power to make the decisions that can affect our society and our liberty and that can put our service men and women in harm's way." As part of the Nieman Foundation's ongoing Watchdog Journalism Project (read more about this project in Curator's Corner), Nieman Reports will alert readers to watchdog articles that offer reporters and editors ideas about why such reporting is necessary and how it can be done. In this issue, Giles's speech, Joseph A. Davis's environment reporting article, and Richard Read's story about INS reporting carry the watchdog label. ■

The Consequences of Corporate Ownership

'Our democracy is in crisis from the loss of independent voices serving as its watchdog.'

Breach of Faith: A Crisis of Coverage in the Age of Corporate Newspapering
Gene Roberts and Thomas Kunkel
University of Arkansas Press. 288 Pages. $29.95.

By Frank A. Blethen

In the winter of 1979, as part of my professional development, I spent six months observing at the fast-growing Charlotte Observer. Charlotte was part of Knight Ridder Inc., at the time a fairly new publicly traded chain of newspapers. Like other newspapers in the chain from the Knight side, Charlotte retained the trappings of journalism and community service then synonymous with the Knights. Journalistic luminaries David Lawrence, Jr. and Jim Batten had been recent editors. Rich Oppel had just become its new editor.

With hindsight, I now see the warning signs that portended the transformation of a newspaper company known for journalism to a corporation known as a handmaiden of Wall Street and its institutional investors. For it was in Charlotte that I first heard newspapers being referred to as "assets" and communities called "properties." For the first time I was exposed to talk of profit margins and stock price, talk that replaced what I had been used to hearing—talk of journalistic aspirations and public trust.

I was only exposed to this for six months. Gene Roberts lived in it at The Philadelphia Inquirer for many years before that once proud journalistic paragon was reduced to a revolving door for editors and continually lowered journalistic aspirations. Reading "Breach of Faith," the new book that Roberts and Thomas Kunkel edited, reminded me of this turning point for newspapers some 23 years ago. Roberts and Kunkel, seasoned journalists themselves, have compiled an enlightening series of testimonials chronicling a trend that has imperiled our free press and, therefore, our democracy.

Changing How We Look at What Newspapers Are

In chapter five, "What Do Readers Really Want?," Charles Leighton raises the issue of research and focus groups, and questions whether they have replaced journalistic integrity and community connection, and if they are corrupting our news reports. During my time in Charlotte, I spent a month with each of the department heads from news, circulation, advertising and marketing. The first question each one of them asked me was the same: "Tell me about your research and your focus groups." To my embarrassment, I had to confess I wasn't sure what a focus group was and that the research we did at The Seattle Times was infrequent and not very sophisticated.

Feeling rather inadequate, I sought out a newspaper researcher who was familiar with The Seattle Times. I asked if he felt the Times was missing the curve and the industry was leaving us behind in regard to research. I have never forgotten his response.

"Frank," he said, "if I did a research study for you and it told you to completely change the content of The Seattle Times, what would you do with it?"

I hesitantly answered, "I guess I'd throw it in the trash can."

He responded, "Right answer."

He explained the reason I could do that was that I had lived my entire life in the community my family's newspaper serves. He reminded me of the deep connections that develop when a family has lived in a community for 100 years and four generations and when our publisher and editor tenures are measured in decades. He noted that the then-emerging class of newspaper managers in the expanding public chains needed their research and focus groups because they didn't know their communities. They didn't grow up in them, they hadn't lived in them long, and they didn't intend to stay in them.

We have since learned to use research and focus groups effectively at The Seattle Times as a supplement to our deep roots, and we have become a sophisticated marketing organization. But our use of them is embedded in the context that we are, first and foremost, a values-based journalism and news company. Our business is news and community service. Financial stability is to feed our journalism, not to maximize profits or personal wealth or to boost stock prices.

Concentrated Ownership

This story speaks volumes about what is wrong with our industry today and why concentration of newspaper ownership and Wall Street control is ultimately incapable of providing the community connection and journalism essential to an independent press and the survival of democracy.

Our democracy is in crisis from the loss of independent voices serving as its watchdog. Editors Roberts and Kunkel do the news industry and democracy a great service by publishing "Breach of Faith." It is a terrific follow-up to their book last year, "Leaving Readers Behind." In this recent book, Roberts and Kunkel expose the disinvestment and lack of community connection that ownership concentration has brought us.

Both books significantly add to the growing chorus of concern about the very serious threat to democracy resulting from the increasing concentration of newspaper ownership. They remind us that institutional owners of newspapers and other media will, if left unchecked, continue their relentless disinvesting in journalism and community service. These financial investors have no choice, nor do they care. They have a singular fiduciary responsibility. It is maximize profits and keep stock prices up. It drives a short-term business mentality that leads to disinvestment as a means of maintaining profits. Community service and quality journalism have no value to them.

Each chapter of "Breach of Faith" takes the reader through a specific area of disinvestment that has been brought on by ownership concentration. The chapters on less state house coverage and less training provide excellent examples.

A Forceful Response

Still, there are missing elements I would have liked to have seen in the book, elements I hope Roberts and Kunkel address next. The two of them should speak out more in their own voices. Now that the dialogue around ownership concentration and its disinvestment in journalism and community service has started, we have a host of books and articles that try to slice, dice and analyze the problem. To anyone paying even a little attention, the case has been made. Even casual newspaper readers have noticed the increasing blandness and narrowness of most of America's corporate-owned newspapers. Local television and radio news now have little or no substance. "If it bleeds, it leads" is more true today than ever.

What we need are respected voices like Roberts and Kunkel speaking forcefully—from their own experiences and in response to what they see happening in our industry—about this devolution of journalism, why it matters, and what the solutions are. In short, it matters because democracy cannot function well and will not survive if it doesn't have an independent press with a variety of voices and a genuine commitment to journalism and to the communities they exist to serve. Roberts and Kunkel are well positioned to lead this discussion and to begin giving visibility to solutions. Indeed, the solutions are obvious and easy. The more difficult questions are whether we can muster the will to insist on them and whether we've already lost so much of our independent voice that this story won't be adequately told.

I regard four steps as necessary to solve this crisis.

1. Preserve the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC) cross-ownership ban that it is considering lifting.
2. Preserve and enforce FCC ownership restrictions pertaining to TV and radio.
3. Pass new legislation to limit the number of newspapers and other media and information channels any one corporation or person can own.
4. Repeal the federal death tax that effectively forces independent family-owned newspapers and other businesses to sell to large corporations.

The Wall Street money-managers, who control most of our newspapers, care only about stock prices, profit margins, and increasing earnings. They hire and develop professional managers whose income and stock options are based on short-term financial performance. They do not reward publishers and editors for journalism, for community service, for racial and cultural inclusion. We have entered an era of newspaper CEO's, managers and publishers who rarely have news backgrounds or sensitivities.

With chains controlling over 80 percent of America's daily newspapers and 75 percent of newspaper circulation, we have pretty much lost our diversity of voices. Massive disinvestment in news by the public companies and most of the large chains has left too many newspapers with insufficient resources to tell democracy's important stories on either the local or national level.

The worst omissions and the most egregious ethical failures in our business increasingly have to do with what isn't covered, not what is. Whether it's a lack of resources, a lack of will, or a lack of journalistic sensitivity, ownership concentration has led to a loss of the critical independent storytelling ability that is vital to a democracy.

Important News Coverage That Isn't Happening

If "Breach of Faith" has a missing chapter, it has to do with the lack of coverage of critical topics, including ethical transgressions involving the self-interest of publishers and owners. I believe the concentration of newspaper ownership, the control now wielded by financial-institution investors and its impact and implications, is one of the most important stories of our time. One piece of this story is the heavy lobbying of the FCC and regulatory agencies by the large newspaper and media companies to get rules relaxed or eliminated to further their desires for more ownership concentration of television, radio and cable. Next up are their efforts to try to repeal the limited ban on cross-ownership of newspapers and television stations in the same community.

A tantalizing question is why the large corporate newspapers and chains aren't aggressively covering this story. And why they aren't discussing with readers the impact of these changes on democracy and the American public. Is it their lack of resources and will? Or is it because it's not in their financial interests?

On September 10, I passed through Chicago's O'Hare airport. I was returning to Seattle from speaking at a symposium on "The Independent Family Newspaper in America: Its Future and Relevance" at the University of Illinois. During my layover, I picked up a copy of the Chicago Tribune. The lead business story, with a large photo, was about an analyst extolling the virtues of

buying newspaper-company stocks in spite of the deteriorating stock market. The story featured Gannett and Knight Ridder, but also made strong mention of the Tribune Co. as a good buy.

Was this an appropriate story for the Tribune Co.'s flagship newspaper? More to the point, why hasn't the Chicago Tribune reported more prominently the Tribune company's leading role in lobbying for repeal of the FCC cross-ownership restrictions? It is because the owners, their executives, and even some editors have a financial stake in the story being left untold? Is it some measure of the conflicts created by financial-market ownership, stock options, and corporate self-interest that a question like this even must be asked?

To its credit, in editorializing in support of removing the FCC restrictions—which it characterizes as "obsolete" and "out of touch with reality"—the Tribune acknowledges its corporate interest. But it bases its case purely on financial considerations and competitive opportunities. The public good, the health of democracy, and the well being of local communities are not considerations. This illustrates how dangerous the ownership concentration and the Wall Street control has become. It is ownership concentration that is advancing the cause of greater concentration by removing government limits that were put in place to protect the public interest.

Among other things, hasn't deregulation and ownership concentration clearly been shown to be a risky proposition? Aren't there lessons to be learned from the damage done by the relaxing of controls of savings and loans, the airline industry, banking and telecommunications? And, in those cases, mostly money was at stake. With the FCC rules, public good and democracy are at stake.

Isn't that a story good newspapers should be reporting?

'Only in Variety Is There Freedom.'

I delivered the opening keynote at the symposium in Illinois and borrowed a line from journalist Walter Lippmann for the title: "In variety there is freedom." It was from a speech Lippmann gave over 50 years ago in which he said, "there is safety in numbers and in diversity and being spread out and having deep roots in many places. Only in variety is there freedom." He also said the secret of a truly free press is "that it should consist of many newspapers decentralized in their ownership and management and dependent for their support—upon the communities where they are written, where they are edited and where they are read."

Lippmann's wonderful description of a free press is still valid today. It is vital to our democracy's survival. Unfortunately, it is not a model that works for short-term financial investors.

Gene Roberts and Tom Kunkel have put together another fine volume that moves this very important dialogue forward. I look forward to hearing more of their personal voices, advocacy of solutions, and pushing all of us to find the will to act. ■

Frank A. Blethen is the publisher of The Seattle Times.

A Rigorous Look at the Work of Newsrooms Today

In this era of bottom-line journalism, the authors document how quality in news reporting can triumph.

The News About the News: American Journalism in Peril
Leonard Downie, Jr. and Robert G. Kaiser
Alfred A. Knopf. 292 Pages. $25.

By Seth Effron

Picture this scene: A newspaper editor interviews an applicant whose resumé shows little newsroom experience. "So kid, you want to be a journalist. Take this copy of 'The News About the News: American Journalism in Peril.' Read it. If you still want to work in the news business, write me an 800-word essay on why you want to be a journalist, then come back to see me in a week. If not, keep the book. It's on me."

This exercise might be a good thing to ask each journalism applicant to do. "The News About the News," written by Leonard Downie, Jr., the executive editor of The Washington Post and Robert G. Kaiser, the Post's former managing editor, provides a stark and honest assessment of the current news business. It is an important and thoughtful examination of the roles journalists and journalism play in Americans' lives and in their democracy. After reading it, anyone thinking of working as a journalist in the 21st century will have a clearer understanding—and warning—about what to expect.

In their analysis, Downie and Kaiser don't pull any punches. The consolidation of many news organizations and media companies into just a few Wall Street-driven corporations for which newsgathering is not the primary busi-

ness has weakened news operations. More importantly, in many instances, quality of content and civic concern are sacrificed in the quest for high profit margins. But as this book points out, places still exist in large and small communities where there are opportunities to practice quality journalism. And the authors document how top-notch news operations can also be good for the company's bottom line.

The arguments presented in "The News About the News" aren't idealistic. After all, the authors work for a news organization that places great emphasis on strong economic performance. And they aren't naive. Throughout the book, Downie and Kaiser acknowledge that "journalism won't exist without financial support—someone has to pay the journalists and the expenses of gathering news." They also make the point, by offering strong examples and frank testimony, that the evolving "show Wall Street the money" attitude of corporate owners has altered the jobs (and outlook) of people most responsible for the quality of journalism in news organizations. Instead of the laser-like focus on tough, accurate reporting and good writing, newsroom leaders are forced to divert their attention to financial considerations.

"Newspaper editors and television news directors … have been held more accountable for controlling costs and increasing profits than for improving the quality of their journalism," Downie and Kaiser observe. They point particularly to newspaper chains Knight Ridder and Gannett and to corporations that own networks and local stations such as General Electric and Disney.

The authors try to be optimistic about the future of newspapers and the Internet as places where good journalism can flourish. They also look with a hopeful eye at the prospects for broadcast journalism but, in this attempt, they aren't as convincing. (Perhaps this is because the authors have made their careers in newspapers.) Take this example from their look at broadcast news: "Heather Nauert had only her blond, youthful good looks and a sincere desire to become a television star when she joined the world of talkers on the Fox News Channel," they write. "… What were the thirty-year-old's qualifications? 'When I first saw her I thought Heather was our demographic, that she could bring in younger people,' Fox News executive producer Bill Skine said. 'When you have a pundit who is young, and knows what they're talking about, they exude more energy.'"

Instead of the laser-like focus on tough, accurate reporting and good writing, newsroom leaders are forced to divert their attention to financial considerations.

The Internet is emerging as a place where people can find news. And it is also a place where media organizations are looking to present news in original and more effective ways. These aspects of the role of new media receive thorough examination. But the authors fail to discuss another area in which the Internet is having a critical impact on journalism by changing the ways in which reporters find information, reach sources, and report the news. Questions about this are left unaddressed. It would have been good to hear the authors' views on whether easier and increased access to information through technology (no matter where the journalist might be) is making news coverage more competitive, accurate and complete. Or whether it gives reporters the ability to present broader perspectives. Perhaps such topics can be covered in a future edition.

Kaiser and Downie make a strong effort to highlight examples of best practices. These illustrate how quality news can flourish. And in doing this, they don't restrict themselves to large metropolitan and national papers. At times, however, the book seems to become almost too clinical in its examination. What is missing are examples of the passion that people contribute to creating great news organizations, large and small, an attribute the authors know good journalism requires. Finding that passion, providing an environment where it is appropriately focused and nurtured, might be critical ingredients in keeping newspapers, news magazines, broadcast news outlets, and evolving Internet news operations economically strong and vital contributors to our civic strength in the 21st century. ■

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A War Correspondent Tries to Make Sense of What He's Seen

'Why, he wanted to know, do human beings fight wars?'

War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning
Chris Hedges
Public Affairs. 212 Pages. $23.

By Nancy Bernhard

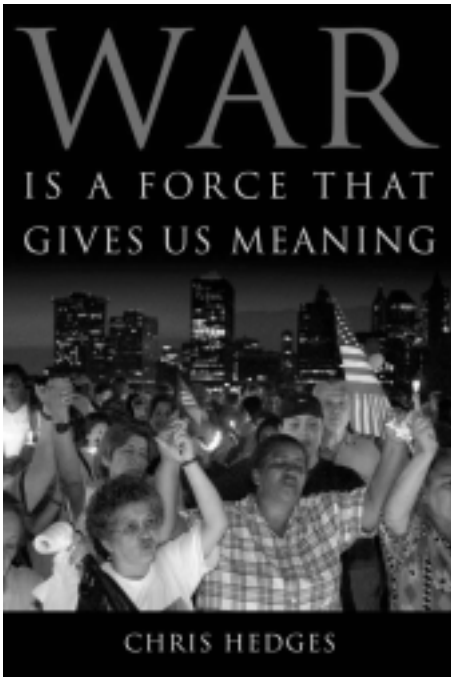
Chris Hedges spent 15 years covering El Salvador, the Middle East including the Gulf War, and the Balkans, witnessing more war than many generals do. When he took a breather as a Nieman Fellow in 1998-99, he read Latin classics and tried to make sense of what he had seen, including why he'd chosen to spend so much of his life witnessing horror. Why, he wanted to know, do human beings fight wars? The book he has written in answer, "War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning," is presented as "a call for repentance."

Despite its personal genesis, the book is not a memoir. Most of its evidence consists of Hedges' recollections, but he shapes the chapters around broad, universal categories such as nationalism, memory and the seduction of battle. He ranges across time and space, jumping from Kuwait to World War I, to Bosnia and ancient Rome, within a few pages. His excellence as a journalist is both his strength and weakness here. He tells evocative stories, but draws no conclusions. The book raises a multitude of worthwhile questions, but misses both the systematic analysis of the best history books and the introspective persistence of the finest memoirs. Rather, it provides a window into the understandably troubled mind of an outstanding war correspondent.

Very briefly in his opening and closing chapters, Hedges offers a view of war as a narcotic whose properties provide the antidote to modern boredom and placidity. In what will surely be a widely quoted sentence, he offers, "The rush of battle is a potent and often lethal addiction, for war is a drug, one I ingested for many years." War gives people something important to do: It places them on the knife-edge between love and death or, as Freud defined the fundamental struggle and meaning of life, between Eros and Thanatos.

This is a worthy and provocative perspective, yet it is clearly that of an educated Westerner. The "shallowness," "vapidness" and "trivia" that Hedges claims dominate our lives and "increasingly our airwaves" is experienced by those of us who live in privileged and industrialized nations. He writes about the "attraction" of war, but this can only refer to feelings of those who independently choose to be part of war, such as correspondents. Nowhere does Hedges distinguish between why people start and fight wars and why correspondents feel drawn to witness and write about them. They all might partake of the adrenaline rush of survival and moral clarity, but there are crucial differences between the leaders who start wars, the citizens whose homelands erupt in violence, and those who rush to bear witness. The average Bosnian soldier, or Palestinian teenager, or Salvadoran militiaman might understand that war offered a chance for glory, but not because there was nothing on cable. No pacifist, Hedges believes that armed action is sometimes just, as chemotherapy is sometimes required to arrest cancer, but he finds few causes that are both heroic and violent.

Instead, he concludes, human beings have a base tendency to express themselves through violent force. People go to war because of an intrinsic human urge to subsume our consciousness in a grand shared enterprise that exalts a national "us" above



an unworthier "them." He writes that the nationalist myths needed to legitimize slaughter are usually racist and opportunistic, and women subscribe just as willingly as men do. And, he asserts, the press bears responsibility for spreading and reinforcing these narratives. The one instance Hedges cites when a people shook off such a tale of superiority was the American experience in Vietnam. Momentarily, we escaped our triumphal nationalism and drank a draught of humility. But then Ronald Reagan's brand of patriotism and the Persian Gulf War made bloodlust fashionable again in the United States, with the press once again the primary culprit in spreading the fervor.

Hedges' violent view of human nature has long roots and important re-

percussions in fields of inquiry from biology to theology and equally long counter-traditions, none of which Hedges addresses directly. While he earned a divinity degree 20 years ago and esteems academic discourse, Hedges does not connect his observations to 2000 years of reflection on humanity's darker side. Those who reach page 150 will read, "Illusions punctuate our lives, blinding us to our own inconsistencies and repeated moral failings." It is a worthy discovery, but Hedges might have acknowledged that his readers have likely encountered this thought before.

Despite the centrality of nationalist cant to war, Hedges reports that the myths vaporize in the face of actual battle. A Marine Corps lieutenant colonel strapping on his pistol belt just before crossing into Kuwait told him, "[N]one of these boys is fighting for home, for the flag, for all that crap that the politicians feed the public. They are fighting for each other, just for each other." An enormous literature on the psychology of combat trauma reveals this point. The close fraternity of soldiers (and, one assumes, correspondents) sharing the transformative battlefield experience is the community crucial to one's physical survival; ongoing contact within this community is key to psychological recovery. This may account for Hedges' overwhelming sadness. Some of his best friends have been killed, and many of the rest are still in war's addictive thrall.

Yet the book leaves reason for gratitude. The author, a tough reporter who refused to participate in the Pentagon's Gulf War pools, ably identified and sorted through the myths he encountered. For his principles, he found himself a prisoner of the Iraqi Republican Guard, who confiscated his M-65 jacket with the copies of "Antony and Cleopatra," "The Iliad," and Conrad's "An Outcast of the Islands" in its pockets. You couldn't invent a more cultured, conscientious war correspondent. The book makes one grateful that Hedges was the eyes and ears of his readers in the war zones of the late 20th century. One can regret his current pain and still praise his reporting career as the highest public service.

There is poetry as well as wisdom in the title, "War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning." We can hope that Hedges will continue trying to answer more thoroughly the questions he has poignantly raised. ■

Nancy Bernhard is author of "U.S. Television News and Cold War Propaganda, 1947-1960" (Cambridge University Press, 1999). She teaches "Reporting From the Front" in the Expository Writing Program at Harvard University.

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WATCHDOG

The Vital Role of the Press in a Time of National Crisis

'Watchdog journalism begins with a state of mind: accepting responsibility as a surrogate for the public.'

Bob Giles, Curator of the Nieman Foundation, addressed participants of the "Mapping the News" conference at American University on September 28, 2002. Giles underscored the essential role of watchdog journalism and described the difficulties being encountered by journalists because of government actions. He also suggested important questions that journalists should be asking.

What follows are Giles's remarks:

In last Sunday's New York Times, I came across a piece with the headline, "A Place to Find Out For Yourself About the War." The story, by Eric Umansky, described a Web site for a military watchdog group called Globalsecurity.org that had published detailed satellite photographs of a United States military installation in Qatar, tracking changes that foretold a buildup for a possible attack on Iraq.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was said to have grumbled about it. But the site was clearly beyond the reach of the Pentagon and its intense efforts to control information. As I surfed the site and viewed several satellite images that had been posted, and then thought about Rumsfeld's discomfort, this struck me as a powerful example of a free and independent press. A free and independent press is an important cornerstone of our democracy to keep alive in these days that are being described as a time of national crisis.

I am not a student of mapping or satellite technology, but it was painfully clear to me from the background material sent to me by Chris Simpson [the American University professor who organized the conference] and from re-reading his revealing piece in Nieman Reports last winter, that the productive and informative use the global press has made of satellite images has been aggressively shut down by a government fearful that media access to this information would provide aide and comfort to our enemies.

Elaborate new regulations have given the U.S. government what is being described as "shutter control" over U.S.-licensed satellites. Some experts are suggesting that these regulations ignore a core principal that has governed such circumstances in the past: that the government must make a compelling case of clear and present dan-

ger in disallowing satellite images to be sold commercially for news and, perhaps, other uses.

I noted this morning in your sessions the contrast between the desire of the policymakers for secrecy and the impulse to get information out that was expressed by the representatives from the Census Bureau, the Department of Agriculture, and the United States Geological Survey. The Bush administration's determined efforts to control information to which the public is entitled and should have is part of a larger pattern of restrictions in the name of security that is affecting civil liberties and the treatment of noncitizens from Arab countries.

Government Information Is More Difficult to Get

Last October, the month following the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, Attorney General John Ashcroft issued guidelines for how government agencies were to handle information requests under the federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). The FOIA, which first became law in the 1960's, enables journalists and the public to access papers, documents and memoranda from various government agencies.

There has never been an easy relationship between the public and the press and the officials in government offices responsible for responding in a timely way to FOIA requests. But the meaning of the Ashcroft memo signals even more difficult times ahead. He directed federal agencies to consider national security, enhancing the effectiveness of our law enforcement agencies, protecting sensitive business information and, not least, preserving personal privacy in determining whether to release information under FOIA.

It did not escape notice that informing the public or serving the public's right to know was not among the priorities Ashcroft instructed government officials to consider. He promised the Justice Department would stand behind any agency official whose decision to deny FOIA access was based on any of the new priorities.

The American Society of Newspaper Editors met with senior officials responsible for administering FOIA and were reassured that this was not a major policy change but simply a "natural shift" under a new administration and should not result in significant change in how requests for information are handled.

The reality, as we've observed over the past year, is quite different. These comments from a recent article in the American Journalism Review emphasize this reality. John Dean, the famous Watergate figure, has called the Bush administration "startlingly Nixonian" in its passion for secrecy. William Powers of the National Journal has written, "This administration keeps secrets like nobody in Washington has kept secrets—maybe ever." And journalist Bill Moyers said recently, "Not only has George W. Bush eviscerated the Presidential Records Act and FOIA, but has clamped a lid on public access across the board."

We're familiar with the demonstrated evidence, well reported in the press, of how executive powers are being employed in wartime climate in Washington.

- Tracking down, holding for questioning, and refusing to identify publicly immigrants, mostly from Middle Eastern countries.
- Monitoring conversations between some people in federal custody and their lawyers.
- Establishing military tribunals to try foreigners accused of terrorism. Initially the tribunals were to be secret, but the administration relented under pressure from the public, the press, and Congress.
- Closing deportation hearings.

The President recently signed legislation that jails or fines journalists who publish sensitive leaks—a decision that essentially revives the Official Secrets Act that President Clinton vetoed as being "well intentioned" but over-broad and so it might "unnecessarily chill legitimate activities that are at the heart of a democracy."

The Homeland Security Act [signed into law by President Bush on November 25, 2002] has serious implications for access by the press and public. It would create an exemption from FOIA for any information voluntarily submitted to the government. It would provide corporate immunity from civil procedures when information is voluntarily submitted to the government, and it would preempt state and local openness laws when the federal government gives states information. And in connection with the establishment of the White House Office of Homeland Security, the Office of Management and Budget has been instructed to create a new classification for information. Something called "sensitive but unclassified." The idea is to keep information away from the public and the press without formally classifying it as secret.

There is no definition for "sensitive" nor is there any information about who would have the responsibility for declaring information "sensitive but unclassified." Indeed, the idea of keeping unclassified information away from the public is not new. A recent article in a publication called Secrecy News reported that there are "at least a dozen distinct systems of unclassified information control, including various provisions implementing the International Traffic in Arms Regulation and the Export Administration Act," to name two. The article notes that some of these provisions impose penalties for disclosure of unclassified information that are more severe than for disclosure of classified information. A new set of regulations to further hide unclassified information would create an additional layer of public information intended to be kept out of reach of Americans.

This pattern of secrecy recalls the work of the Commission on Protecting and Reducing Government Secrecy, chaired by Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, which reported in the mid-1990's that the federal government's secrecy system urgently needed reform, that millions of documents had been classified as "secret" and had remained "secret" long after the requirement of

secrecy had expired.

To be sure, a tricky balancing act exists between adherence to the laws and customs of a civil society requiring openness and full representation for the accused and what the administration is calling the "new reality" that requires setting aside many of these important democratic conventions as a means of increasing homeland security and preventing future attacks.

Each of us in the news media has an important role to play in pressing for openness and access and for breaking down the barriers of secrecy that have been imposed in the name of national security.

American values of liberty and equality have prevailed in times of crisis when presidents attempt to seize dictatorial power that many believe betray these fundamental democratic principles. Robin Toner's piece in The New York Times in the fall of 2001 noted that President Bush was "only the latest of many presidents to restrict civil liberties in wartime." The story recalled that Abraham Lincoln, Woodrow Wilson, and Franklin D. Roosevelt had placed national security above aspects of personal liberty or constitutional rights, "almost always with the support of both the public and the courts." Occasionally, these restrictions lead to serious violations of civil liberties, such as the internment of Japanese during World War II, depriving them of their constitutional protections. Years later, in hindsight, internment became a matter of considerable national embarrassment, for which our government agreed to pay a price.

In fact, during the 20th century, the most restrictive suppression of citizens' First Amendment rights of free speech and association came not during wartime, but after the victory celebrations ending World Wars I and II, when fear of Communism prevailed. The Palmer Raids of 1918-1921, named for President Wilson's attorney general, Mitchell Palmer, focused on "Communists, Bolsheviks and 'reds' who were believed to be eating their way into the homes of the American workman." In the McCarthy era of the late 1940's and early 1950's, Senator Joseph McCarthy raised alarms about internal subversion and, by naming names and publicizing lists during speeches and Senate hearings, damaged the reputations of hundred of government employees, intellectuals and university professors.

Our deep-rooted values of free expression ultimately prevailed in these dark times, largely on the strength of public opinion more than on the actions of the courts. In the weeks and months immediately following September 11, the traditional checks and balances of our democratic system were quickly set aside in the interest of national unity.

The voices of dissent in Congress fell silent. The House and Senate failed in their fundamental duty to provide a forum for debate and inquiry about administration policies and actions.

The Watchdog Role of the Press

A public stunned by attacks and nervous about what future threats we might face became pliant, accepting the administration's version of events, its secrecy impulses, and the constriction of some of our liberties. In this environment of growing uncertainty and pronounced patriotism, it is left to the press to be the vigilant watchdog of those in power, to make sure that the "right" to know does not become just the "need" to know.

In many respects, the press has performed admirably. The nation's major newspapers have set a standard for enterprising, authoritative coverage. The journalists who parachuted into Afghanistan and moved across that forbidding terrain with the Northern Alliance, beyond the reach of the Pentagon press pools and often in peril, created a 21st century version of the courageous and independent war correspondent.

Still, there were some shameful moments for the press. When the administration advised the television networks to not broadcast interviews of Osama bin Laden that were being made available by the Arab news channel, Al Jazeera, the networks meekly complied. There were times when some in the press seemed to be intimidated by the public's perception of the patriotic journalist as someone who wore an American flag button and didn't press government officials with hard questions.

In such times, the most patriotic role the press can play is to fulfill its constitutionally protected duty to aggressively probe and question those who have the power to make the decisions that can affect our security and our liberty and that can put our service men and women in harm's way. The most reassuring recent development in support of openness and transparency in our society came last month in a decision by the federal appeals court in Cincinnati, which ruled that the Bush administration acted unlawfully in holding hundreds of deportation hearings in secret based only on the government's assertion that the people involved might have links to terrorism.

The legal challenge was raised by four Michigan newspapers whose reporters had been shut out of a deportation hearing on a Muslim cleric who had overstayed his tourist visa (see story on this case on page 7). The case is important on its merits, of course, and likely will get review in the U.S. Supreme Court. More significant, however, was the language of the opinion, written by Judge Damon Keith of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth District.

Judge Keith crafted a ruling that spoke powerfully to the value of open-

ness and the danger of secrecy in our democratic society. "Democracies die behind closed doors. A government operating in the shadow of secrecy stands in complete opposition to the society envisioned by the framers of our Constitution .... When the government begins closing doors, it selectively controls information rightfully belonging to the people. Selective information is misinformation."

Judge Keith's opinion was not only a rebuke to the Bush administration but also a clarion call to journalists to ask hard, probing questions in a time of national crisis. Murrey Marder, retired diplomatic correspondent of The Washington Post, has been the guiding force and benefactor in the development of the Nieman Foundation's Watchdog Journalism Project. Marder believes the press is by no means penetrating enough, vigorous enough, public-spirited enough, or courageous enough about reporting and analyzing the performance of those in power, whether it be elected or appointed, whether it be in corporate boards, union halls or professional offices.

Marder's premise about the press came from his own experience during the cold war in which, he believes, the nation paid a heavy price for secrecy and deception used to justify military actions and for a pliant press willing to censor itself or lacking the will to challenge the official version of events. The tragedy of this lack of will was borne out in the sweeping revelations of the Pentagon Papers, which disclosed the flawed thinking of the U.S. government that led us into the Vietnam War.

Watchdog journalism begins with a state of mind: accepting responsibility as a surrogate for the public. It includes investigative reporting, but it is by no means limited to that. This state of mind should affect reportorial behavior in coverage of the presidency, the nation's corporations, and the town council.

The terrorist attacks found the American press lacking adequate experience or preparation. A decade of diminishing international coverage meant that the press had not sufficiently educated itself nor informed the nation about the hostility coalescing in parts of the Arab world that would destroy our perception of homeland invincibility. In these times, our nation needs an activist, searching, challenging press that will ask hard, probing questions.

Asking Questions About the Iraq Situation

The developing story about a possible attack on Iraq provides a current example to help us understand the questions the press should be asking. What we know about this situation is, in large measure, what the Bush administration wants us to know. We have read stories telling of leaked battle scenarios. We are well informed about the coalition-building and the diplomatic efforts to win the support of allies and the U.N. Security Council. We are familiar with the failure of Congress to effectively debate our emerging Iraqi strategy and the struggle of the Democrats to challenge the President without seeming to be unpatriotic.

But what are the questions the press is not asking? Some were suggested in a recent New York Times op-ed piece by Nicholas Kristof, who wondered about the consequences of a Shiite Muslim uprising in cities beyond Baghdad and whether they would lead to battles between Shiite rebels and the Iraqi army, leading perhaps to a civil war. Questions we need to think through, Kristoff was saying, center on what will we do on the morning after Saddam Hussein is toppled. Do we send in troops to try to seize the mortars and machine guns from the warring factions? What will America do if there is a civil war? Or if the Iranians seek to capitalize on an unstable Iraq? In the north, what would America's response be if the Kurds attempt to take advantage of the chaos to seek independence? What if the Turkish Army intervenes in Kurdistan? And, finally, how will Iraq be governed after Saddam?

There may be no answers just now to these questions. But the press must raise them and examine them and inform our citizens about America's capacity and preparedness for responding to the range of consequences that could emerge from a military attempt to overthrow Saddam Hussein. Asking the questions will force the administration to respond. It will inform our citizens about the risks and uncertainties of acting as the administration appears to want to act. And it will ultimately help shape the debate and the range of options the President is able to pursue.

Each of us in the news media has an important role to play in pressing for openness and access and for breaking down the barriers of secrecy that have been imposed in the name of national security. The burden of proof must always be on the government to show beyond doubt where national security interests justify any exemptions to official accountability and transparency in the use of power.

Those of you who are working with images—the maps, the photographs, the pictures from outer space—all are part of this important effort to call for more access, more openness, more accountability.

I hope you will keep this obligation in your cross hairs as you explore the many fascinating and important skills and techniques of your craft here this weekend. ■

The "Mapping the News" conference, held from September 27-29 at American University, provided a forum for discussion among journalists and those who work in government, industry and nongovernmental organizations about ways to deepen understanding of a place—its culture, demographics, geography and history—and how this process can make telling of news stories more vivid, engaging and understandable. Many of the conference sessions focused on ways to use tools—such as geographic information systems and satellite imagery—to assist in gathering valuable information.

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Journalism Education

"To teach the craft of journalism is a worthy goal but clearly insufficient in this new world and within the setting of a great university," Lee C. Bollinger, the new president of Columbia University wrote when he suspended the Graduate School of Journalism's search for a dean last summer. He then appointed a 36-member task force to examine "what a preeminent school of journalism should look like in the contemporary world."

While this task force was meeting, Nieman Reports invited some of the nation's leading journalists and journalism professors to present thoughts about how journalism education can be improved and the training of journalists better connected with current practices and issues. **Geneva Overholser**, who teaches in the Missouri School of Journalism's Washington bureau, contends that "journalism needs leadership from journalism schools" in coping with challenges posed by profit pressures and changing ownership. And as "an admirer of good solid craft training," she writes that "For craft training to be accorded due respect does not mean all else must be shunned."

Melvin Mencher, professor emeritus at Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism where he taught for 28 years, observes that "Good journalism programs blend theory with practice, craft with substance … [and] teach the craft through content." He quotes former editor Hoke M. Harris of the Winston-Salem Journal who said, "The major emphasis should not be on how to write but on what to write, lest the prospective reporter become an empty flask, all form and no content." New Media Program Director **Paul Grabowicz** teaches journalism students at Berkeley how to use Weblogs to explore the debate over intellectual property. He writes that educators need to do a better job of "teaching the basics, while confronting new issues," while also using new media technology so that students can "come to grips with what journalism is—as well as with what it could and should be."

Stanford University journalism professor **William Woo** moves out of the classroom and the United States to reflect on what he thinks is a critical question in this debate: What is the purpose of journalism? "If you cannot answer that with some confidence," he writes, "you can neither practice journalism with any direction nor teach it with any conviction." **Philip Meyer**, the Knight Chair of Journalism at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, observes that the journalism that once "worked fine as a craft," is "being phased out." He says, "It's time to circle the wagons, redefine ourselves as a profession, and start protecting our values in an organized way." In transforming journalism into a profession, Meyer envisions important roles for journalism educators to play.

Nancy Day, who directs Advanced Journalism Studies at Boston University, finds many essential lessons for journalists emerging from much-maligned "skills courses," and notes that good journalists emerge from many different pathways. Columbia, she writes, should be wary of allowing its successful program to "… join the ranks of the inchoate maw of mass communications." **Dale Maharidge**, a visiting professor at Columbia, observes that because "journalism defies rules that govern other disciplines … it's dangerous to change the fundamental way journalism is taught …." Journalism is, he writes, "as much an art form as a profession or trade and, as such, it should be treated differently within a university." ■

The Worthiness of Bollinger's Challenge

'For craft training to be accorded due respect does not mean all else must be shunned.'

By Geneva Overholser

Like just about every subject we journalists touch, the argument about the value of journalism schools gets continually forced into a false dichotomy. Some editors lament journalism education's increasing prominence, swearing instead by the smart young person with a good liberal arts education. Others contend there's no guarantee like a good journalism degree that a job candidate has the essentials.

This is an endless and unanswerable argument since the only proof is in the work of an individual. Some folks find themselves a good liberal arts education while they are at journalism schools. Some don't get one at Harvard. Some learn more from editing the college newspaper than from attending classes. Some folks who drank too hard, lived too hard, and never went to college write like angels and become great journalists. Others are sentimental drunks.

The notion of either/or clarity on this question is false, as is the suggestion that Columbia must hold fast to peerless teaching of lede-writing lest it veer into terminally useless chin-stroking. Columbia, like all of us, could use a good self-examination, yet journalists work in a trade famously averse to change. Our academy is no different.

Embracing Broader Issues

Answering the questions, "Why do we need journalism schools?" and "What ought Columbia to be?" comes down to this: Journalism needs the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism—as it needs Missouri and Medill and all the rest—because for journalism to thrive (or perhaps even to survive) it needs a thoughtful, smart and practitioner-enriching academy. Just as our nation badly needs more intellectual and moral leadership from its university presidents, journalism needs leadership from its journalism schools. We need a place where thoughtful people do instructive research and make interesting pronouncements and produce illuminating case studies, a place that can bring all this to bear on the education of students—and also on the trade and even on the civic life of the nation.

Leadership from journalism schools could, for example, inform and elevate the long-running debate about profit pressures on journalism through research. Such study could focus attention on a comparison of media-company practices with what other industries are doing in training and research and development. Or it could examine the community impact of different kinds of newspaper ownership or provide measurements of journalism excellence that could be used alongside profit numbers when media executives gauge success. Such leadership could be there to respond with a powerful accounting of the ways in which press freedom has served the American public during the past year when yet another survey shows plummeting support for the First Amendment. This leadership could, during crises like the Washington-area sniper shootings, enrich the debate about police/press relations with a thoughtful and detailed affirmation of the value of making information public.

Good business schools do this kind of thing for the business world, law schools for law, medical schools for medicine. Journalism is as essential as these professions. It isn't possible for us to renew our craft without thoughtful places to stimulate and nourish the minds of those who lead the way.

What Columbia does, matters. Columbia is in the nation's media capital. It is the only Ivy League journalism school. It is also home to the Pulitzers and other visible recognitions of excellence. The outcome of the Columbia deliberations will matter—to journalism educators, to journalism, and even to the public.

Journalism is sick today in ways that make our democracy sick as well. Lee Bollinger, the president of Columbia, has a promising background to bring to this challenge. He's an editor's son, a Freedom of Information Act lawyer by training, a university president of evident skill and largeness of mind. His interest and desire to do something other than allow the journalism school to continue along its set path honors journalism. Ours is hardly the discipline, after all, that most academics would choose to take so seriously, to spend so much time on, to attract so much attention to.

I take Bollinger's concern as a positive thing for journalism, a positive thing for a craft that demands a probing and thoughtful examination. Such an examination might not be his intent, but I prefer to think the university will enter into deliberations that are at least as substantial as the predictable debates about skills vs. theory. As one of five people who examined Columbia's journalism school in a report to the provost when the previous dean took over, I'd be inclined to assure the worried observer that the traditions of the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism are sufficiently well lodged as not to be easily shaken. And I say this as an admirer of good, solid craft training.

For craft training to be accorded due respect does not mean all else must be shunned. To ponder the suit-

ability of the school engaging in the study of broader issues is not the same thing as consigning it to the production of dreary communications theory papers no one will read. Indeed, the questions I have in mind go in the opposite direction—toward relevance, rather than away from it. In our craft, we need leadership. We need to have the hardest questions asked and sound and thoughtful answers sought. We need an academy that embraces journalism with all its heart, but that also is civically engaged and intellectually substantial enough to nourish journalism.

That's what I hope Bollinger can accomplish. I can't imagine that a commission of 36 can accomplish it. But I can imagine that a great university president could come closer to mobilizing these forces to get the task accomplished than anyone else. I wish him luck, that all of us might benefit. ■

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What Should Be Taught in Journalism Schools?

An aspiring reporter 'doesn't need to learn how—he needs to learn what.'

By Melvin Mencher

The Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University is famed for its use of New York City as a laboratory for training students to become working journalists. But the university president challenged this teaching approach by contending that such "skills" training is "clearly insufficient in this new world and within the setting of a great university." He wants, he said, "a more reflective, more comprehensive education" to be offered by the school, one that is "more intellectually based." Skills training, he said, should be left to the workplace.

Though directed at the Columbia journalism program, Bollinger's remarks have been taken to apply to journalism education in general, and once again journalism educators feel called upon to defend the content and the value of their work and address a recurring issue in academe—whether journalism education is a university discipline.

Divergent Paths

Bollinger's assessment of journalism skills training is consistent with an academic line of attack that has diluted or killed several programs. And, given the altered direction some journalism programs have taken in recent years, the defense might well be unconvincing. If it is, worthwhile programs might suffer along with weaker ones.

At the University of Michigan, the journalism program was abandoned a few years before Bollinger became president there. "The issue was whether or not a vocational program had a home in the arts and sciences," says Michael Traugott, the chairman of the Department of Communication Studies. The department now offers a B.A. in communication studies and a Ph.D. in mass communications. No skills courses are offered.

At the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the mass communications program is "geared more toward the intellectual and theoretical side of the profession," reports The Chronicle of Higher Education in its article about Columbia. Sharon Dunwoody, the director of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, is quoted: "If students want more skills-based training, we refer them to Medill. Or, in the old days, Columbia. There, there's no bones about it—it's skills training."

This distinction between journalism and communication education is fairly new. For a while, the green-eyeshade instructors and the chi-square Ph.D.'s managed to co-exist. The newsroom types taught reporting and writing, and the credentialed faculty taught the history of journalism and similar courses. The programs trained students to work for print and broadcast.

With the explosive growth of the media, the study of communications became an attractive discipline for students and scholars. Journalism no longer defined the area of study. The Association for Education in Journalism renamed itself, becoming the Association for Education in Journalism & Mass Communication (AEJMC), and its journals underwent similar name changes. At one point, an attempt was made to drop the word journalism from the association's title, but this was short-lived when it was pointed out that much of the organization's funding came from the newspaper industry.

As the newsroom veterans on the faculty retired, they were replaced by instructors with advanced degrees, some with print and broadcast experience. But experience was not essential; degrees were. A recent newsletter of the AEJMC lists 48 job openings; 27

require the Ph.D., and 12 prefer it. Once hired, the instructor knows that promotion and tenure require research that can be published in refereed journals. Journalistic writing counts little.

A degreed and published faculty helps to keep at bay the suspicious liberal arts faculty and budget-cutting administrators. The former harbors doubts about journalism education as a discipline; the latter is eager to lop off departments whose demise would cause little or no public reaction. Indeed, following Bollinger's criticism of the Columbia program as too skills-based, his words found enthusiastic support in columns in The Wall Street Journal and New York Magazine.

The deputy features editor at The Wall Street Journal described the Columbia journalism school as a "one-dimensional 'trade school.'" That epithet, along with "vocational education" and "skills training," hound journalism educators, some of whom have helped in their own denigration. Their emphasis on technology and technique has crowded out too much substantive content in course work. Endless hours spent with computers and cameras, a fascination with the digital documentary, storytelling and first-person narrative techniques, instruction on how to write a story for multimedia (convergence journalism) come at the expense of instruction in the subject matter of journalism—how the courts work, the sociology of the police department, the clash of service-demanding constituencies with real estate interests in setting the municipal budget, how the property tax discriminates against school children in rural areas and inner-city school districts, the correlation between mortality rates and race and class.

Teaching Craft Through Content

Good journalism programs blend theory with practice, craft with substance. Their faculties realize that before the technology can be utilized and writing techniques applied, the reporter needs to be able to put the statement and the event in some context. Good programs teach the craft through content.

Most programs allow journalism majors to roam through the college catalogue to take courses that please them. The journalism accrediting council used to require three-fourths of the major's hours to be liberal arts courses. Under pressure to loosen this general requirement, the council now requires 80 hours of general education, 65 of which must be in the liberal arts and sciences. The permissible hours in journalism courses have been increased from 32 to 40.

This is regressive. The direction should be toward a required core curriculum that provides students with the general knowledge that helps the student see the patterns and relationships that underlie events, a set of courses that help the student understand the utility of Irving Kristol's remark, "A person doesn't know what he has seen unless he knows what he is looking for." Such course work provides the background that allows reporters to make useful hypotheses that guide their reporting. As the American philosopher John Dewey put it, "We cannot lay hold of the new, we cannot even keep it on our minds, much less understand it, save by the use of ideas and knowledge we already possess." Among the required courses possible are a foreign language, U.S. history, a physical and a social science, introduction to philosophy, municipal government, and college mathematics.

The application of background knowledge to a specific situation marks the fully functioning practitioner. This is a skill we count on when we ask our lawyer to draw up a contract, visit the dentist for root canal, or ask the doctor to set a daughter's ankle broken on the soccer field. It is no less important to the journalist.

I asked a few journalism instructors why their work is so suspect, why it is held in such low esteem, why the instruction in skills in other professional schools is respected but is scorned in journalism programs. "I think some of it has to do with money," said the head of one program, "and therefore class. There is inherently nothing more noble or more challenging in a career in law than there is in journalism. Yet colleges yearn for law schools. The day that the average reporter in White Plains earns what the average lawyer in White Plains earns, journalism will look a whole lot purer to academia."

Another said that there is an element of insecurity among journalism instructors "caused by the din of criticism of the media among the professorate. These people dislike their newspapers, hate broadcast news. So how can preparation for such a tawdry enterprise be a legitimate discipline? We live with this every day, and we are put on the defensive."

But another demurred. He said his students are eagerly sought by instructors in other subjects, that they are welcome as curious, hard-working, and thoughtful. His program demands a B average of applicants for admission.

Some years ago, the Nieman Fellows were asked about journalism education. Hoke M. Harris, editor of the Winston-Salem Journal, said, "The major emphasis should not be, I think, on how to write but on what to write, lest the prospective reporter become an empty flask, all form and no content." The student with talent, he continued, "doesn't need to learn how—he needs to learn what." ■

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Melding the Competing Demands of Basic Skills and Emerging Issues in Journalism

At Berkeley, a professor is using Weblogs as a new approach to teaching both.

By Paul Grabowicz

When the controversy over the future of journalism education erupted at Columbia this summer, I thought of a meeting we held a few months before to pick apart the new media curriculum I direct here at U.C. Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism. We've had these gatherings for several years, periodically bringing in editors and publishers at online and traditional media companies, entrepreneurs in the information and technology industries, and others to critique our course offerings. But at this latest meeting, the criticism was more sweeping: Journalism schools and the media were failing to address a whole range of pressing issues. Among them:

- The war brewing over intellectual property and copyright laws that could shape the future of technological innovation, the media, and public access to information.
- The proliferation of nonprofit and other nonmedia Web sites that were reporting and publishing their own news stories, posing both a challenge and an opportunity for media organizations.
- A batch of new technologies being cooked up in university and private laboratories that promised to be every bit as disruptive to media business models and the practice of journalism as the Internet had been.

We were also chastised for not better motivating our students to break out of traditional media molds, to be more experimental and innovative, take more risks, launch their own ventures.

In earlier meetings of this sort, the main message had been the need to train students in solid reporting and writing skills and sound journalism ethics and practices. Why the difference now? Maybe something had changed out there. Perhaps it was just a different mix of people. Whatever the reason, I came away convinced that journalism education somehow needed to do a better job of both—teaching the basics, while confronting new issues. This seems like much the same dilemma Columbia now faces—training future journalists, while questioning the role of that profession in society.

But how can all of this be put into a single curriculum? Should survey and lecture courses be added to analyze the media and society? If a school moves in that direction, where then do professors find time to teach solid reporting and writing skills, while providing ample time for students to experience realistic assignments?

Tackling New Topics in Journalism By Using Weblogs

Here at Berkeley, we tried to begin reconciling some of these competing demands with a new course called "Creating an Intellectual Property Weblog." It was an effort to address the issue of the delicate balance between copyright protections and the free flow of ideas. By offering this course, our students can join in the growing discussion about the power of the media and entertainment industries, a debate that has been elevated to the Supreme Court in the Eldred v. Ashcroft case. That lawsuit challenges Congress's most recent extension of copyright terms as unconstitutional, saying it stifles innovation to protect the profits of giant media conglomerates.

What is also important about this course and approach is that we are tackling this topic by using a newer media form—the Weblog—that challenges many of the basic assumptions of journalism. Weblogs allow journalists to create simple Web pages to which they can post short, constantly updated commentaries on issues they are covering, with links that direct people to stories and background information elsewhere on the Web.

What happens to journalistic objectivity in a medium like this that begs for personality, voice and opinion? What becomes of a story narrative when a Weblog posting is mainly a pointer, marking the beginning of a conversation in which other readers will construct the rest of the story? What role do we give those readers? Are they to be fenced off in a "comments" section of the Weblog or allowed to be equals who can contribute directly to it? What distinguishes a journalism Weblog like ours from a Weblog published by a private citizen acting as a "journalist?" And who edits the damn thing? Or is it edited at all?

In this class, we made the traditional skills of reporting and writing central elements of our work, requiring students to produce original stories that will be integrated into our Weblog. We also teamed up with an investigative reporting class that will slice off a piece of the intellectual property issue to produce a more in-depth story. Finally, we opened up the class to students from other departments in an attempt to bring into our discussions and work nonjournalistic perspectives. The class is a mix of students from the School of Information Management and Systems, the law school and the computer science department, as well as the jour-

nalism school. In addition, we brought in guest lecturers from the legal profession and the Weblog community.

As I write this, we are barely halfway through the semester, so it is far too early to know if the class will be a success. But it has been one of the most intriguing and stimulating courses I've ever been involved in. And it might point to some ways out of the quandary Columbia and journalism education are now in.

This course, or others like it, might help to address the big-picture issues about the future of journalism and do so within the framework of reporting and writing. Such courses can thus serve double duty—allowing students to explore ideas and issues, while also working on improving their technical skills.

This approach offers other benefits, as well.

- By making classes more interdisciplinary, by bringing in instructors and, probably more importantly, students from other academic departments, we can gain fresh perspectives and insights.
- By having online, digital media be more a part of normal coursework at a journalism school, rather than a separate program, the interactive, multimedia and democratic nature of these new media makes students think harder about exactly what it means to be a journalist.

Other schools have already experimented in this area. Northwestern University journalism students designed prototypes of news and information packages for digital tablets. At the University of Southern California, the journalism and engineering schools have partnered to devise ways of presenting news in immersive 3-D environments. Columbia itself was a pioneer in working with students to use the 360-degree "omnicamera" to cover public gatherings and other news events.

Approaches like these take traditional journalism and apply it to new media forms. As students continue the important task of learning to become better reporters and writers, they also are forced to come to grips with what journalism is—as well as with what it could and should be. ■

Paul Grabowicz spent most of his journalism career as an investigative reporter at newspapers, principally The Oakland Tribune. At U.C. Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism he is new media program director. He co-teaches "Creating an Intellectual Property Weblog" with John Battelle, founding managing editor of Wired magazine and former publisher of The Industry Standard. The class Web page is at: www.journalism.berkeley.edu/program/newmediaclasses/weblogs/

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The Bridge Between the Classroom and Journalism

The purpose of journalism education can't be addressed without determining why journalists do what they do.

By William F. Woo

Last summer, I talked with journalism students in Hong Kong and six Chinese cities—Beijing, Shenyang, Chongqing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shantou. They reminded me a good deal of the ones I see at home. They are bright, idealistic and not particularly well informed about the world. Wherever I went, they wanted to know about the differences between journalism education in their country and the United States.

Obviously there are many, but I preferred to think of an important similarity, which is purpose. "What is the purpose of a journalism education?" I asked them. Quickly, we'd find that this question could not be answered without addressing a larger one: What is the purpose of journalism?

If you cannot answer that with some confidence, you can neither practice journalism with any direction nor teach it with any conviction. And you probably cannot study it, either, without ending up with a confusing mess of theories, rules and anecdotal craft wisdom. So we would start, these Chinese students and I, from an examination of first principles, which is always an excellent place to begin any inquiry.

As it happened, the purpose of journalism and journalism education was much on my mind. Shortly before I left for China, the highly publicized search for a new dean of the Columbia Journalism School was suspended. The school's president, Lee C. Bollinger, declared that "To teach the craft of journalism is a worthy goal but clearly insufficient in this new world and within the setting of a great university."

Journalism and the Public Trust

Moreover, I had been reflecting on a course that Jay Harris, the former publisher of the San Jose Mercury News, and I had taught a year ago at the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California at Berkeley. We called the course "Journalism and the Public Trust." In it were the seeds of an

answer for the Chinese students.

The purpose of journalism, I said to them, is not all that different from the larger purpose of surgery, which is more than simply cutting people open and sewing them back together again. The real purpose of surgery is to heal. Similarly, the purpose of journalism goes beyond reporting and writing stories. It has to do with something more fundamental, which I have come to think of as serving the public trust.

Some Chinese journalists and educators are grappling with what the concept of a public trust means for their country's press, but in the United States, the notion is clearer. Or at least, it used to be. As the authors of the First Amendment understood, to be free, men and women must be able to make their own decisions, particularly their political decisions. They understood that people cannot have liberty without access to information and that government, by its inevitable nature, strives to limit what people can know.

The relentless acquisition and independent presentation of that information is the public trust the press serves. This concept even transcends democracy. Like journalism, it is only a means. Democracy is a system that is the political means to liberty, just as journalism is the professional means by which we serve the public trust.

By declaring that teaching "the craft of journalism is a worthy goal but clearly insufficient," President Bollinger makes a useful point. Young journalists who know how to report and write but are ignorant of the social, historical and theoretical context of their profession are doomed to live in the shallows. Similarly, journalists who have been taught all about theory, history, ethics and the law of the press but who cannot go out, get the story, and write it are equally useless and ought to be in another line of work. Neither the one nor the other is equipped to serve the public trust.

As I talked with the Chinese journalism students, increasingly it occurred to me that whether we should be teaching craft or academic breadth involved the wrong choices—or if not wrong, then irrelevant ones. The case for doing both well is so obvious as to seem not worth much further discussion.

The great task for us, as journalism educators, is to equip our students with a firm sense of the public trust—how it developed, what it means to America, how it manifests itself or is betrayed by the work that individual journalists and news organizations do.

In fact, the question of whether craft or academic breadth is a worthy and sufficient goal "within the setting of a great university," strikes me like asking whether it is best for young people to join the Army or the Navy when the military already has been hijacked by a half dozen warlords. I use "a half dozen" advisedly. That's the number of corporations that Ben Bagdikian, in the sixth edition of his book "The Media Monopoly," says "dominate all American mass media" and provide "the country's most widespread news, commentary and entertainment."

The fact that fewer and fewer corporations own more and more of the media is scarcely a secret. Nor is it a secret that privately owned news organizations are becoming an endangered species and that three-quarters of the country's daily newspaper circulation is the product of chains. By now, it's also well known that the large institutional investors, who represent thousands of individual investors, are concerned with the financial performance of news organizations and not the quality of their journalism.

What are the implications of this for journalism education? Some institutions might be turning out whiz practitioners of craft. Others might be producing journalists rich in historical, social and theoretical understanding. But what does it matter if the owners of America's media don't recognize the value in the journalist's role in serving the public trust?

The great task for us, as journalism educators, is to equip our students with a firm sense of the public trust—how it developed, what it means to America, how it manifests itself or is betrayed by the work that individual journalists and news organizations do. Our journalism programs, departments and schools need to become the places where such concepts are nurtured, protected and ceaselessly advocated.

These are things I tried to get across to the Chinese students this summer. Despite the differences between our systems, they sensed some fundamental similarities. Their press, too, is in a time of great change, as reliance on public subsidies is being replaced by reliance on the market.

So I said to them what I said last fall to our students at Berkeley: A press that is hostage to its investors is no more a free press than one that is hostage to government. Surely, great universities, and even lesser ones, can understand this. ■

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Journalism's Road to Becoming a Profession

There are key roles for educators to play in this transformation.

By Philip Meyer

When journalism was a craft, we could get along without journalism schools. But the craft model isn't working anymore. As long as journalism was in a steady-state condition, with neither the skills nor the environment in which they were applied changing very much, it worked fine as a craft. But just look around. We're being phased out!

The old economic model of advertiser-supported editorial products is falling apart and being replaced by forces that put advertising, spin and entertainment ahead of truth and public service. It's time to circle the wagons, redefine ourselves as a profession, and start protecting our values in an organized way.

The craft model ruled when President James B. Conant rejected the idea of using the Nieman bequest to start a Harvard journalism school. He decided that whatever knowledge base existed was insufficient to compose an undergraduate major or graduate degree. Now there is a knowledge base. And the disruptive effects of new communication technologies are forcing it to expand, whether we like it or not.

When the Nieman Foundation was established in 1938, journalists were basically finders and transporters of information. Now the balance of our effort has shifted away from that hunter-gatherer model and toward processing. It used to be enough to get information into people's hands. Now we have to worry more about getting it into their heads.

This paradigm shift is comparable to the effect of technology on the development of the food business. In 1947, production was more than twice as important as processing. Farmers contributed 2.2 times as much to the gross domestic product as food manufacturers. That ratio evened out just 20 years ago. By 2000, farming's contribution to the gross domestic product was less than three-fifths that of food manufacturing.

Processing is similarly moving to the forefront in journalism. We live in the age of the editor. It is no coincidence that the most successful newspaper, USA Today, is also the one most carefully formatted, designed and edited for maximum ease of information retrieval.

There was always a body of knowledge in journalism, of course. The newspaper industry recognized this when it began taking the majority of its new hires from journalism schools. Its elements include the history and values of the craft, media law, the skills of reporting, writing, editing and critical thinking and, with luck, enough about the economics of the media to convince young journalists that their paychecks do not come from the stork.

Transforming Journalism Into a Profession

A professional school teaches from first principles: not just how to write a lede, but the theory behind a particular way of writing one. Courses in the process and effects of mass communication and in the science of collecting, analyzing and drawing inferences from data are leading us toward the sort of esoteric knowledge base that defines professionalism. At the same time, the demand for pure craft courses is increasing as students realize that they might be asked to produce content for print, broadcast and the Internet all on the same assignment.

The other distinguishing feature of a profession is the adoption and enforcement of professional standards—both of competence and of morality. Journalism education is a form of certification. A baccalaureate degree from an accrediting institution implies competence, not just in the field in general, but in specific courses successfully completed. (Grade inflation has obscured that function somewhat, but here is a tip: Students in the best journalism schools have grade-point averages in their majors that are *below* their overall averages. It's a sign that the faculty is aware of its certifying role.)

On the moral side, some chapters of the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) are starting to speak out on specific cases and draw a visible line between certain specific behaviors and professional standards. SPJ is one of the places where educators and practitioners come together, and these efforts need to be encouraged.

Finally, there is the research function of a professional school. The more mature professions look to their professional schools to advance their knowledge base. If journalism has been an exception, it is because newspapers, for most of the 20th century, saw themselves in a steady state. They didn't have to innovate to survive, so long as they could dominate their markets.

Making money was so easy for monopoly newspapers that they neither invested in research and development on their own nor encouraged the research efforts of journalism schools. The only pressure to produce scholarship in journalism schools was internal, from the conventions of academe. And so it tended toward the trivial.

But now managers of even the old media are starting to realize that they need new theories and ways to test them. They still aren't funding basic research, but some of the fortunes created by the newspaper business have found their way into charitable foundations with an interest in professionalizing our trade. Methodological innovations such as civic journalism and precision journalism were born or nurtured in university environ-

ments and with foundation backing. And now some of us are turning our attention to ways to help the economic system recognize and reward quality in journalism.

We need journalism schools with faculties that can discover new ways of doing journalism as well as impart the old craft ways. We need certification programs for journalists who realize in mid-career that their skills need updating. Above all, we need institutions that can look at the long-term trends in journalism and ponder ways to keep First Amendment values alive. A risk-averse industry can't be relied upon to do it. Professional schools must be the keepers of the flame. ■

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What Journalism Schools Do Best

Important lessons are taught in the much-maligned 'skills courses.'

By Nancy Day

There isn't one definition of what "journalism school" is.

Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism built its reputation by focusing on brief, intense, high-feedback immersion in daily journalism, complemented by influential contacts in media-rich Manhattan. Like other Ivy League schools, Columbia undergraduates can't earn a journalism degree. Yet, the recruiting for Boston University, where I teach, is greaty helped by being in another major market and a mecca for students. We do have undergraduate majors and minors in various journalism specialities and also professional master's degree programs in journalism. Many other institutions such as the University of Illinois and Stanford University—where I earned degrees in journalism and communication, respectively—offer professional master's programs *and* scholarly doctoral degrees.

These doctoral programs already do what Columbia's president Lee C. Bollinger suggests by going deep into academic pursuits. Rarely do they produce reporters or editors, but instead feed schools of journalism or communications whose trustees require faculty to have doctorate degrees. When I attended the master's degree program at Stanford years ago, we became exasperated by the teaching of these Dr. So-and-So's who had seldom or never been in a newsroom. The esoteric things our professors were pondering did not appear to have any relationship to the exciting, important lives we wanted to soon lead as journalists.

Historically, the professional master's degree programs admit students who already have a solid liberal arts education from their undergraduate years. Many applicants have substantial work experience as well. What they want in a graduate program is an intense grounding in their new endeavor—its practices, skills, ethics and technology. And undergraduate programs—and there are many good ones ranging in price, not always correlated with quality—require a strong liberal arts curriculum as well as journalism courses.

People in the academy often scoff at this "trade school" approach and suggest it isn't worthy of a graduate degree, especially from an Ivy League school. But how many editors and news directors want to hire liberal arts majors straight out of college or even research-oriented Columbia master's degree holders with their page-long paragraphs, gratuitous opinions, and "Could I have an extension?" requests?

Of course, there is a bountiful history of bright young people who got on a newspaper by pluck or family connections and worked their way up. But those days and most of those newspapers are gone forever. With computers, there is little use for copy boys or girls, a traditional point of entry. Even big city newspapers with two-year internship programs, such as The Philadelphia Inquirer and the Los Angeles Times, rarely hire interns no matter how many of their bylined stories the newspapers had published. And in news studios with high-tech equipment and live broadcasts, anyone who doesn't understand the basic tinkering with the expensive toys isn't welcomed.

A few talented, motivated people will always become terrific journalists without journalism school. Many other walk-ons in newsrooms have gotten their journalism training in the newsrooms of independent, daily college newspapers.

No matter where or how entry-level reporters get it, what journalism needs are newsroom rookies with the ability to assess situations quickly, to figure out whom to contact and how and where to get information, and then be able to write what they learn accurately, fairly and clearly—and do all of this, usually, in one day. Not every story demands a tight deadline, of course, but the timeliness part, no matter what the medium, has always been a critical part of what we communicate. We are, after all, the town criers.

There is not one path that, if followed, transforms young people into quality journalists. Certain aspects of character—integrity, in particular, an inquisitive personality, a persistent tem-

perament—seem innate. But I've found in my teaching that these helpful attributes can also be encouraged.

Any academic program requires intellectual rigor and so does much of journalism. Even though it's hardly a contemplative calling, there are times and issues that seem to inspire our best thinking. There are, for example, those postmortems that occur when something seems terribly wrong about how a major story was covered. Sometimes, after we've had a chance to reflect, journalists *do* perform better when similar situations arise.

A strong curriculum should imbue students with the history and principles of journalism, legal precedents and pitfalls, ethical principles and dilemmas. Students should engage in reading about and intensely discussing newsroom issues before they are faced with split-second decisions on the job. By using adjunct professors—often current reporters or editors or producers—as many journalism schools do, faculty members' expertise is complemented with real-time, real-world experience. Good journalism teachers also help students become better, more sophisticated news consumers.

Some of the more important lessons are taught in the much-maligned "skills courses." Immediately, students write on deadline, covering fires, crashes and speeches. We mark up their copy and challenge their selection of words. We insist that they explain why they organized the story the way they did and help them see how their dependence on one or two sources can skew the coverage. We circle clichés and circumlocutions, showing students how such imprecision weakens their writing. We let them know how a poorly chosen adjective or descriptive phrase can stereotype a community or people who live in it. In more advanced courses, we get students to explore difficult topics in great depth, then we ask them to write about this topic compellingly in a 700-word column or editorial. In narrative journalism classes, some students write 5,000-word, professional-quality pieces. A few of them win awards, but seldom lead their authors directly to the Atlantic Monthly.

Most of us would like to take more time to study a subject in depth, and this is a desire that a university can fulfill. At Boston University, we offer students this option through Advanced Journalism Studies, a program I direct. Graduate students and professional journalists, working with faculty and professional mentors, develop their own specialized curricula and take advantage of academic riches in other schools and departments. These students' focus varies from studies about the Middle East to explorations of new technologies, and they devote considerable time to examining ways of reporting on specific beats such as education, religion or social issues. Others work to develop their voices in narrative journalism. We also have master's degree programs in business and economic journalism and in reporting on science and medicine.

Graduate school is very expensive, in time spent away from work and cost of the education. So we also provide an intensive, skills-based practical program for students who want to be general assignment and feature reporters for television, online and print news organizations, and want to get these new careers launched quickly. For them, specialization might come later.

There is nothing wrong with periodic reassessments of where journalism education is and in what direction it should be headed. But history also should be heeded. Columbia has a strong record of graduating students who know what good journalism is and how to do it. What shouldn't be allowed to happen is for a successful program like this one to join the ranks of the inchoate maw of mass communications. Agnes Wahl Nieman, in endowing the Nieman Foundation, charged it to "… promote and elevate the standards of journalism." As professors at journalism schools, that is our mission as well. ■

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Passing Along the Magic of Journalism

Journalism stands apart from other academic pursuits.

By Dale Maharidge

As New York City lay shrouded in a black cloud that afternoon following the World Trade Center attack, a student came into my office at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism and asked, "Does this mean we're not going to follow the syllabus?"

You can guess my answer. The careful plans of a writer, editor, or journalism professor change in a nanosecond with events. By its very nature, journalism defies rules that govern other disciplines, and this is why it's dangerous to change the fundamental way journalism is taught—lots of reporting and writing and honing of both abilities.

As a public debate emerges about reshaping Columbia's approach to teaching journalism, there is something of value that is getting lost—it's the *magic* of journalism. I recall the 1986 Argentinean film, "Man Facing Southeast," which is set in a psychiatric hos-

pital. A new patient, who claims to be an alien, faces southeast to communicate with a star. The psychiatrist thinks the man is simply crazy, but the patient has strange powers. One day, the alien plays a fugue on an organ and patients who normally are freaking out are calm. Dumbfounded, the doctor asks how he did it. The alien explains that it's the magic. But is the magic in the mind of the composer? In the organ? In this man's fingers as he plays? Or is it in the ears of his listeners?

The film's answer is that the magic is everywhere. And so it is with journalism. It's as much an art form as a profession or trade and, as such, it should be treated differently within a university. Journalism is intellectual—the part of the intellect in which intuition and people skills are just as critical to use as the knowledge one has about historic and social contexts. Journalism is raw and fast and wild, often coming as much from the reporter's gut as from the mind. It's art, too, and not just in the writing but in the approach and execution of journalists. It's also coal-shoveling hard work. It has a power that goes beyond the printed or spoken word. Some stories win prizes; others change the world. Some do both. Some run 12 inches, unread and forgotten. But among these stories might be one that forever changes the reporter and subject because of their human interaction.

[Journalism is] as much an art form as a profession or trade and, as such, it should be treated differently within a university.

In short, it's the collection of many skills that don't translate into the form, for example, of a program on Latin American studies or communication theory. We don't hear clamoring calls for revamping of music departments, film or fine arts programs. Most of us wouldn't presume to be experts in music, making a film, or writing a novel. But everyone, it seems, picture themselves as experts on journalism.

Like many who teach journalism, I have struggled with what journalism education should be. I'm an accidental professor. I don't even have a degree. My journalism education was school of life. Nor was it ever my intention, at the start of my career, to spend the past 11 years teaching journalism—at Columbia University a few times, but mostly at Stanford University. Before I joined the academy, I'd spent 15 years as a reporter in newspapers and published a few books. But I write in strong defense of the Columbia program, even as I have doubts about journalism and my role in the process.

A few years ago, I had the opportunity to act on these doubts. At Stanford, we set out to change our program after a review of our department raised questions similar to those now being debated at Columbia, albeit in a much smaller way. (There are never more than 16 students in the Stanford program.) For quite some time, we had offered a general journalism education. As part of our discussions about possible changes, we talked about the idea of opening up the university to our journalism students. They would select their own area of concentration, in addition to taking the classes taught in our department. But this would have lengthened the journalism program to two years, which meant students would spend over $80,000 for this education—for jobs that often start out paying less than $30,000. Only the very rich could come to such a program. We couldn't do that.

Even though we set out to reinvent the wheel, in the end, what we had was pretty much still a wheel. After much discussion and soul searching, we'd decided to specialize our teaching efforts on public issues reporting, but still I had to teach all the other areas of this "magic"—writing on deadline, slogging out stories, and being edited, edited, edited.

After more than a decade in the classroom, I now realize I made a mistake when I began teaching. My course readers were stouter than computer magazines at the height of the dot-com boom. When teaching about reporting on social ills, I assigned books by sociologists such as Charles Murray, William Julius Wilson and Christopher Jencks. The next week, I'd have these same students read multiple tomes on education or health care. It was just too much. They couldn't take it all in. What I learned is that sometimes less *is* more. Now my students read such works, albeit at a slower pace.

I don't think the answer is putting more emphasis on the study of such experts, or becoming a narrowly specialized reporter, adding a year or two to a program. Nor am I arguing for dumbing journalism down. Quite the contrary. Our job is to create journalists in whom inquisitiveness is their guide, including questioning what they do and how they do it. It's to create journalists who are hungry for engagement in ideas and for the pursuit of information which, in many cases, those who possess it don't want to give up.

We have to remember that no matter how many changes we put in place, we will never graduate students—except for the rare and gifted ones—who are ready to drop into a top reporter slot at The New York Times. After all, programs in music, film and fine arts don't churn out students who become instant Beethovens, Orson Wellses or Faulkners.

One, two or even three years is rarely enough to hone the variety of skills that good journalists require. Those who come to graduate school for training are there to be primed, not crammed. If we do our jobs well, in time, they will find their way. In time, too, they will discover the magic. ■

Dale Maharidge, a 1988 Nieman Fellow, was a journalism professor at Stanford University. He has published five books, and his current one is "Homeland," a work-in-progress about nationalism and McCarthyism in post-September 11 America. He is now a visiting professor at Columbia University.

Nieman Notes

Compiled by Lois Fiore

The Maynard Institute: 25 Years and 2,000 Journalists Later

Its innovative training programs shape the careers of many minority journalists.

By Bryan Monroe

As the crystal chandeliers began to dim on the elegant Grand Ballroom of the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City—a room that usually hosts heads of state, foreign diplomats, and the occasional wedding—the emcee had a difficult time hushing the crowd.

It wasn't because the nearly 400 journalists and media leaders dressed in semiformal evening attire were rude or inattentive. Rather it was that most of the distinguished crowd brought together this fall to honor the 25th anniversary of the nation's most influential diversity journalism training center were just as happy hanging out with their friends and colleagues, having another drink, and swapping stories. This was, after all, a family reunion.

This "family," and the thousands of journalists who have been touched by the Robert C. Maynard Institute for Journalism Education over the past quarter century, is made up of professionals of every color, gender and background. Many have had their careers shaped by the institute's summer editing program or their lives changed by one of the institute's mid-career management programs.

Family Members

From KNBC president and general manager Paula Madison to former Associated Press Managing Editors' president Caesar Andrews, from current Nieman Fellow Ronnie Ramos—managing editor of The Fort Meyers News-Press—to San Jose Mercury News senior columnist Lisa Chung, the Maynard Institute has a long list of prestigious alumni, instructors and mentors. Distinguished journalists of color have emerged from Maynard programs and have gone on to run newsrooms around the country. Then they hire, promote and mentor others, passing the torch.

As a mid-career journalist, I had the chance to teach several years at the institute's summer editing program during the early 90's—at the time based at the University of Arizona in Tuscon. Despite the unforgiving heat of the desert (they kept saying it was only a "dry heat," but I didn't buy it) I found myself getting as much from the young copyeditors and assigning editors of all colors and backgrounds than I could ever give as a teacher. We'd spend long days reworking copy and going over page proofs and late nights sharing life stories at the local watering hole. The friendships formed during that time—Lewis Diuguid, now vice president of The Kansas City Star, was my roommate one year—have lasted a decade.

The pioneering Bob Maynard, his wife, Nancy Hicks Maynard, and seven other journalists founded the Maynard Institute in 1977. Bob was a world-class reporter and editor at The Washington Post and a Nieman Fellow, who later went on to be the first African-American owner of the Pulitzer Prize-winning Oakland Tribune, before he died in 1993. Many contend the Maynards, who had left prestigious jobs at The Washington Post and The New York Times to start the institute, were personally responsible for the creation or ascension of hundreds of African Americans and others in journalism during the past several decades.

Today, the Institute for Journalism Education is run by Bob's daughter, Dori J. Maynard, who was named in October as the institute's new president and CEO. Dori has been a reporter for The Bakersfield Californian, The Patriot Ledger in Quincy, Massachusetts, and at the Detroit Free Press, and when she became a Nieman Fellow in the fall of 1992, she and her dad became the first father/daughter fellows in the foundation's history.

Maynard Programs

Nearly 2,000 journalists and media professionals have been through one of the institute's many programs, which focus on management, editing, newsroom dynamics, and diversity:

- **Management:** The Maynard Institute holds an aggressive management training program at Northwestern University's Kellogg Graduate School of Management in Evanston, Illinois. Business, strategy and cross-cultural techniques are used to shape new leaders from all areas of the media business.
- **Editing:** Its innovative summer editing workshop, usually held at UC-

Berkeley, lasts for six weeks and is an intensive boot camp designed for early-career copyeditors and new assigning editors. And next year it will be at the Freedom Forum Diversity Institute at Vanderbilt University in Tennessee.

- **Cross-Media:** During many of the major journalism conventions—such as the National Association of Hispanic Journalists' annual workshop—staff from Maynard stage week-long Cross-Media Journalism seminars. They offer this program, which helps traditional journalists adapt in the converged world of new media, broadcast and print, at universities such as USC's Annenberg School of Journalism.
- **Fault Lines:** And they have infiltrated dozens of American newsrooms and professional conferences with their "Fault Lines" training, taking Bob Maynard's original premise that much of today's racial and gender-based friction within the newsroom stems from a lack of understanding of each others' points of tension and stress.
- **History:** With its History Project, the Maynard Institute has documented and archived the work of African-American journalists who covered the turbulent civil rights era of the 50's, 60's and 70's. Their first component, "The Caldwell Journals," was launched in 1999 and is a personal account of Earl Caldwell, the legendary New York Times reporter who fought in court the government's attempts to seize his notes and reporting of the Black Panther Party. The case ultimately was argued in the U.S. Supreme Court and became the basis for many state "shield laws." Caldwell was also the only reporter present when Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in Memphis in 1968.

The Maynard Institute is also busy expanding its reach by transforming its Web site (www.maynardije.org) into a destination resource for information about journalism and diversity and hosting the nationally recognized Web guru Richard Prince's "Journal-isms" column (www.maynardije.org/columns/dickprince). And the staff is at work creating a way to provide newspapers around the country with an online interactive content audit. Editors will be able to use this to track ethnic, gender and age representation in the content of the newspapers and overlay relevant census information about the communities they serve.

But the lasting legacy of the Maynard Institute is in the thousands of journalists it has touched, the bonds that have been formed, and the multiplying effect it has had on journalism. And now that some of the original members of the "family" have grown up, started journalism families of their own in their newsrooms, the children and grandchildren of Bob Maynard's vision certainly have the training and inspiration to guide journalism to the highest of standards for generations to come. ■

Bryan Monroe is a 2003 Nieman Fellow. He was previously deputy managing editor for news, visuals and technology at the San Jose Mercury News and will become assistant vice president/news for Knight Ridder when he completes his fellowship in June. He also taught for several years at the Maynard summer Editing Program.

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—1939—

Irving L. Dilliard died on October 9 of complications of leukemia at the age of 97. He was the last surviving member of the first class of Nieman Fellows.

Dilliard was respected as a writer of great talent and moral conviction who was devoted to fighting and exposing injustice. He became a reporter at the St. Louis Post-Dispatch in the late 1920's. Then, after his Nieman year and a stint during World War II as a psychological warfare specialist and editorial adviser for Stars and Stripes in Europe, he returned to the Post-Dispatch as an editorial writer.

Dilliard proved himself to be an ardent believer in the institutions of government. At the Post-Dispatch, he specialized in the Constitution and the Supreme Court. Former editor of the Post-Dispatch **William Woo** (NF '67) said in the paper, "He would have Supreme Court justices in for lunch, and they would take a sandwich down to Lucas Park and discuss issues that, if you were a student at Harvard Law, you'd give a semester's tuition to merely sit and hear."

In 1949, Dilliard became editorial page editor, serving until his resignation in 1960. He chose the causes of unjustly treated individuals, then crusaded for them in type. In one such case, he wrote a slew of editorials, excerpts of which were then published in full-page ads bought by the Post-Dispatch in Washington papers, decrying the detainment of Ellen Knauff on Ellis Island based on secret "evidence." Public opinion eventually gave rise to a hearing, and Knauff was allowed entry.

After his retirement, Dilliard taught, first as a lecturing faculty member at the Salzburg Seminar for American Studies in Austria, then for 10 years at Princeton University.

Dilliard had arranged to have his body donated to a nearby medical school. His wife, **Dorothy Dorris Dilliard**, died in 1993. He is survived by two daughters, three grandchildren, and two great-grandsons.

—1961—

Aubrey Sussens, South African journalist, editor and corporate communications entrepreneur, died on November 2 at the farmhouse in Limpopo province that he built himself in the 1960's. He was 79.

Sussens was invited by the United States-South Africa Leadership Devel-

opment Program to fill the space the group had secured for a South African Nieman Fellow. Sussens recalled earlier this year that his employer at the time, the Rand Daily Mail, "never having heard of the Nieman Fellowship and, not very impressed, insisted that I take unpaid leave." He managed to borrow enough beyond his modest stipend for he and his wife to spend the year in Cambridge.

Shortly after his return to South Africa, Sussens began a career pioneering the corporate communications industry in South Africa. He founded Group Editors, which he ran until 1981, when he needed to have a pacemaker installed and moved to Britain for two "marvelous" years. After that short break, he returned to South Africa and continued in the public relations business until the age of 74, when he sold most of his interest and retired to his farmhouse.

An "indelible person," is how **Tony Heard** (NF '68) describes him. Sussens wrote for a conference of South African Niemans earlier this year that his time at Harvard "still remains a seminal point in my personal history, and I have watched with pride as year after year, and then decade after decade, the growth in numbers of the South African Nieman Fellows." **Tim du Plessis** (NF '93) writes, "His enthusiasm, his never-ending efforts to keep our family of South African Niemans together, is the reason why, for most of us, the Nieman experience is a lasting one."

Sussens is survived by his wife of 47 years, **Penny**, and three daughters and six grandchildren.

—1964—

Thomas B. Ross died on October 24 at the age of 73 of pancreatic cancer. At the Chicago Sun-Times, where he worked from 1954 to 1977, Ross collaborated with David Wise beginning in 1960 to investigate the downing of a U.S. spy plane over Soviet territory. Their 1962 book, "The U-2 Affair," was the first of three they cowrote investigating cold war intelligence.

Ross and Wise's second book, "The Invisible Government" (1964), brought much of the CIA's covert history and activities to public knowledge in such detail and scope that the CIA sought to limit its publication. The book spent weeks as a bestseller and was The New York Times' number-two to Ernest Hemingway's "A Moveable Feast" for 22 weeks. According to the Times, Wise said, "We were a bit disappointed, but I told him [Ross] that if we had to be second to someone, Hemingway was it." Their third book, "The Espionage Establishment" (1967), looked at the intelligence activities of other countries.

When Ross left the Sun-Times in 1977, he became the assistant secretary of defense for public affairs under the Carter administration. From 1981 on, he worked in the business world, first as communications director of the Celanese Corporation, then as senior vice president of RCA, NBC, and Hill & Knowlton. Until he died, he was vice president for government relations of Loral Space and Communications.

Ross is survived by his wife, **Gunilla**, and two daughters.

Jerrold Schecter and his wife, **Laura**, have written a book detailing how the work of Soviet secret agents profoundly influenced U.S. policy during World War II and through the cold war—and consequently the direction of 20th century history. "Sacred Secrets: How Soviet Intelligence Operations Changed American History," was published in May by Brassey's Inc. The Schecters write that three independently operating Soviet intelligence units in China, Japan and the United States were responsible for manipulating Japan to opt against attacking Siberia and to storm Pearl Harbor instead. One of those spies, Harry Dexter White, was director of monetary research at the U.S. Treasury and was in large part responsible for advocating U.S. economic policies that angered Japan.

—1966—

Robert A. Caro was awarded the National Book Award for nonfiction in November for the third volume of his biography, "Master of the Senate: The Years of Lyndon Johnson" (Alfred A. Knopf, 2002). On the evening his award was announced, Caro was at the Harvard Faculty Club speaking to the current class of Nieman Fellows and guests at a Nieman dinner.

"Master of the Senate," seven years in the making, covers Johnson's 12 years in the Senate, from 1949 to 1960, during which he built his political power base after becoming Senate majority leader just one year into his first term. The book follows "Means of Ascent," about Johnson's 1948 Senate race, and "The Path to Power," the first volume of Caro's four-part biography and a National Book Award finalist in 1983.

Caro was also a finalist for the award in 1975 for his biography of Robert Moses, "The Power Broker."

—1968—

Eduardo "Eddie" Lachica writes: "I remain a Washington, D.C. resident after retiring last year from being a 25-year 'lifer' at the The Asian Wall Street Journal and The Wall Street Journal. I'm working pro bono on conflict management studies involving a number of Southeast Asian countries. It's often a mind-numbing, time-consuming slog, but this is 'giveback time' for me to make up for more than three decades of self-indulgent journalism."

—1970—

John Ryan's book, "One Man's Africa," has been published in South Africa. He writes, "… I have covered events in Africa for more than 40 years. The book is a record of that time and is interlaced with many of my reports of the day. I was involved in five continental wars and detained four times. Naturally, 'One Man's Africa' also records the process of revolution in South Africa itself.

"When I was awarded the [Nieman] fellowship, I was a bureau chief for the now defunct Rand Daily Mail. I took early retirement three years ago, as managing editor of the Cape Argus, here in Cape Town. My wife, Sue, and I now operate a news feature service."

—1975—

John Maclean's book, "Fire on the Mountain: The True Story of the South Canyon Fire" (Washington Square Press, 2000), was the basis for a two-hour documentary by the same name that aired in October on The History Channel. The book and the documentary follow the footsteps of the 14 smoke jumpers who died in the 1994 Storm King Mountain fire in Colorado. Upon hearing that the official review of the tragedy determined that the firefighters were responsible for their own deaths, Maclean left his job to investigate the story and write his book.

—1981—

Peter Almond writes, "… Both Anna and I would like to say how sorry we were to hear of the death of Jim Thomson. Jim was always helpful to us and interested in my slightly curious status as an American Nieman (from Cleveland) who never quite gave up being British.…

"… with still another nine years to official retirement … the world of freelance writing continues to be highly recommendable. I have been away from the Daily Telegraph for over seven years and don't miss the daily grind of commuting across the increasingly fraught transportation of London to the Docklands one bit.

"Working for myself means I've been able to spread my wings, both beyond the relatively narrow world of defense and these shores. You might find some odd story showing up under my byline in various U.S. papers such as the Chicago Tribune or via UPI. However, I've maintained my defense specialization and continue to write occasionally for both the Daily and Sunday Telegraphs, plus a number of other national papers and magazines. And I still chair the U.K. Defence Correspondents Association, my contribution in a continuing battle to maintain defense as a specialization in the national media, particularly when there isn't a war on (I know—when *isn't* there a war on?). It is surprising how many journalists don't know one end of a smart bomb from the other.

"And I now have a second book coming out in November, ready for the 100th anniversary of the Wright Brothers' first flight. Four hundred pages, mostly from the Hulton Getty picture archive, but all shaped and written by me. In WH Smith in the U.K. it's called 'Century of Flight,' and in Barnes & Nobel in the United States it's called 'The Story of Flight.' There is a French edition, and it is currently being translated into Spanish, Italian and maybe other languages. It follows my first book with the Getty archive, 'Aviation: The Early Years,' published in 1997 by Konemann of Germany."

—1983—

Callie Crossley was selected as a 2002 Tribute to Outstanding Women Awardee by the board of directors of the YWCA of Cambridge, Massachusetts. She and eleven other women were given the award this year to recognize their exemplary work and service in the Cambridge community.

Crossley has now joined the Nieman Foundation staff as program manager, working with the Curator and the Nieman class in selecting and scheduling speakers and topics for seminars, shop talks, workshops, Nieman diners, and other events.

—1986—

Geneva Overholser has undertaken a new project, a Weblog column called "Journalism Junction" posted on the Poynter Institute's Web site. The column, Overholser writes, "is a Weblog about connections: connections between the business and the craft of journalism. Between the practice of journalism and the journalism academy. Connections among the people and organizations thinking and talking and working on the challenges journalism faces today. It will include articles and speeches and conference reports and research references, and it will be updated weekly (at a minimum)." Begun in November, it can be found at www.poynteronline.org/column.asp?id=54.

—1989—

Rick Tulsky won Hofstra University's Wood Award for Courage in Journalism this year for his series, "Uncertain Refuge," published in the San Jose Mercury News in 2000. Tulsky spent two years investigating the way people seeking asylum are dealt with by the U.S. judicial system (see his article on page 5), and reported on the pitfalls, inequities and suffering many of them experience.

To fund his project, Tulsky received a grant from the Alicia Patterson Foundation, continuing to work even after the money ran out. Being hired by the Mercury News in 2000 allowed him to complete the project.

The Wood award is named after deceased journalist and Newsday ombudsman Francis Frost Wood and is given by Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York, to a journalist "judged to best exemplify physical or moral courage in the practice of his or her craft." Tulsky was a 2001 Pulitzer Prize finalist and won several other awards for "Uncertain Refuge," including the 2001 Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award—his second.

—1991—

Kabral Blay-Amihere published an autobiography in August 2001 entitled "Fighting for Freedom: The Autobiography of an African Journalist" (Trans Afrika News Ltd., Accra). In his introduction, Blay-Amihere writes, "Biographies … enable readers to appreciate what really motivates people to do the kind of things they do or say. In journalistic parlance they provide the news behind the news, the real story and

Nieman Fellows who would like to have an item appear in Nieman Notes—a job change, the publication of a book, an unusual adventure—please e-mail the information to Lois Fiore at lfiore@harvard.edu.

background information from cradle to power and grave.... I thought there could be something in my story to inspire kids from similar backgrounds to excel in their chosen fields. In another vein, I believed that in telling my story I would be telling the wider story of Ghana since my story, like that of many generations, is woven into the very history of Ghana as we were born just on the eve of Ghana's independence and had lived through the chequered story of our country."

Blay-Amihere is Ghana's ambassador to Sierra Leone.

—1994—

Christina Lamb has a new book, "The Sewing Circles of Herat—My Afghan Years," published by HarperCollins in New York and London in December. Lamb was honored by the British Press Awards in 2002 and the Foreign Press Association in 2001 for her reporting from Afghanistan, a country she had reported from during the jihad in 1988-90 as a young graduate. Long haunted by her experiences there, she returned after September 11, 2001 to find out what had happened to the people she had known, such as her close friend Hamid Karzai and the motorcycling mullahs who became the Taliban, and discovers how their land had come to be used as a base for a brutal terrorist operation. This time, seeing the land through the eyes of a mother and experienced foreign correspondent, Lamb tells the stories of the abandoned victims of almost a quarter of a century of war and goes on a search for a brave woman who had smuggled letters out to her from the heart of Taliban Afghanistan.

—1996—

Joseph P. Williams, Jr. became Living editor of the Living/Arts department of The Boston Globe in November. He had been the paper's city editor.

Williams has been with the Globe since 1997, when he directed the police and courts reporting team. In 1998 he was named deputy city editor and has been city editor since February 1999. Williams came to the Globe from The Miami Herald. There, he covered the Broward County courts, edited the schools and police beats, and served as rewrite reporter and weekend assignment editor.

—1997—

Lori Cohen writes: "In early September, I joined FIRST as the director of marketing and communications. FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) is a nonprofit organization that was founded by inventor Dean Kamen. Its mission is to get kids interested in science and technology. One of Kamen's basic beliefs is that we get what we celebrate. So celebrate scientists, engineers and inventors, and more kids will grow up to become scientists, engineers and inventors.

"FIRST accomplishes this by running annual robot-building competitions for middle school (FIRST Lego League) and high-school students (FIRST Robotics Competition). But FIRST is about much more than building robots—it's a mentorship program that teaches life skills, an appreciation for science and math, teamwork and so much more. Check out our Web site www.usfirst.org to learn more.

"Please let me know if you would like additional information. As this is a volunteer-driven organization, there are lots of opportunities to get involved and help create FIRST teams in more and more schools. We're particularly trying to penetrate inner-city schools. And for those of you in the media—FIRST has a great story to tell."

Cohen can be reached at lcohen@usfirst.org.

—2001—

Ignacio "Nacho" Gómez is one of four journalists who were awarded the 2002 International Press Freedom Awards by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). The awards, presented at a dinner in New York on November 26, honor journalists who have endured great personal risk in

The Murrey and Frances Marder Fund

The Murrey and Frances Marder Fund, established in November 1996, has provided the Nieman Foundation with support for four Watchdog Journalism Conferences and has paid for the costs related to publishing excerpts of the conferences and articles on watchdog journalism in Nieman Reports and on the Nieman Web site. It also has provided funding for the filming and editing of an instructional video on questioning techniques. An accounting as of 11/30/01 appeared in the Winter 2001 issue of Nieman Reports. An accounting as of 10/31/02 follows:

Balance at 11/30/01:	**$212,980.30**	
Income:	**$96,526.14**	
	5,917.46	— Interest on balance at end of FY 2001-02 (at 6/30/02)
	90,608.68	— Income from endowment for FY 2002-03 (7/1/02-6/30/03)
Expense:	$23,706.30	
	$13,243.58	— Filming/editing of instructional video on questioning techniques
	2,696.50	— Nieman Reports/Winter 2001*
	6,249.17	— Nieman Reports/Summer 2002*
	1,033.95	— Additional costs of September 2001 Watchdog Conference
	483.10	— Miscellaneous
Balance at 10/31/02:	**$285,800.14**	

*The amounts listed represent the portion of the costs for each issue that were devoted to watchdog journalism.

pursuing their work.

In a country rated by CPJ as one of the most dangerous for journalists, Gómez has repeatedly risked his life to expose corruption, alliances and the perpetration of executions and massacres by the military, politicians, rebels and drug lords of Colombia. Shortly after his start in journalism in 1986 at Bogotá's El Espectador, the paper's editor Guillermo Cano was killed. The murder gave Gómez the resolve, he told CPJ, to take whatever risks necessary to uncover the truth and to defend Colombian journalists.

Since that time he has twice been forced into exile—in 1989 and again in 2000, when he spent his year as a Nieman Fellow. After his Nieman year, Gómez and a colleague's family received multiple death threats after exposing links between the Medellín drug cartel and Alvaro Uribe Vélez, who at the time was running for president.

Receiving the award with Gómez were Tipu Sultan, a freelance reporter from Bangladesh; Irina Pertushova, founder and editor in chief of a business weekly in Kazakhstan, and Fresshaye Yohannes, a writer and cofounder of a newspaper in Eritrea.

The 2002 Nieman Conference on Narrative Journalism

The 2002 Nieman Conference on Narrative Journalism was held on November 8-10 in Cambridge, Massachusetts. About 950 journalists came to exchange ideas and hear from writers, journalists, photojournalists and filmmakers about their work as narrative journalists.

Journalist and author Debra Dickerson. *Photo by Herb Swanson.*

Radio producers The Kitchen Sisters and Mark Kramer, director of the Nieman Program on Narrative Journalism. *Photo by Herb Swanson.*

—2002—

Rami Khouri has accepted a "dream job" as editor of The Daily Star newspaper based in Beirut, Lebanon. The paper, Khouri says, "is in the midst of a fascinating expansion project. It is being published jointly with the International Herald Tribune in Beirut and this will expand to cover the entire Arab Middle East (and Iran later). I plan to assume the post in January or February, when I finish several projects on my plate now. I'm very excited and look forward to it. I started my career at The Daily Star 31 years ago.... We want the paper to become a model of professional journalism in the Arab World and the leading cultural, political and intellectual interface between the Arabs and the West—honest, deep, reliable, lively, fun and useful. **Ellen** [Khouri's wife] and I will probably spend just a short period of time in Beirut (perhaps a few months) and then the plan is to move the editorial offices of the paper to the Gulf, probably Dubai or Doha. Ellen will seek new work wherever we are; she is now teaching a course on human rights and democracy at a private university in Jordan."

Khouri will join **Jamil Mroue** (NF '77), The Daily Star's publisher and editor and chief.

Barbara Serrano writes, "The official tenure of a Nieman Fellow is just nine fleeting months. So when I took a leave of absence from The Seattle Times last year to study at Harvard, I snatched a couple more to travel to Mexico.

"As the daughter of Mexican Americans, I was pretty comfortable with Spanish and had studied it in high school and college. But I had always regretted not growing up bilingual. So shortly after I left Cambridge in July, I enrolled in The Center for Bilingual Multicultural Studies in Cuernavaca, one of the best immersion programs in the country.

"What a great investment. For a month, I spent eight hours a day taking classes on Mexican history, literature and art.

"I lived with a host family—Isabel, Victor and their three grown children—and felt right at home. Isabel prepared amazing meals (even sending me off with some of her favorite recipes), and every afternoon during "La Comida," the most complete meal of the day, the entire family would sit around the table. And talk.

"After enjoying such a life-changing experience in Cambridge, nothing proved more valuable to me than putting myself in a place where I could live, eat and dream in Spanish.

"On weekends, I would often take the bus to nearby villages, such as Tepoztlan, a magical colony famous for its flea market and cobblestoned streets, and to Mexico City, where I saw the best collection of Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera's work (now handsomely displayed at the home of one of Rivera's former mistresses). I hiked up a 1,200-foot vertical hill to view an ancient Indian worship site to the God Tepoztecatl, and I took a bicycle tour of the lush green hills surrounding Oaxaca.

"It had been more than a decade since I had spent time in Mexico and, after five weeks, I had to leave just as I was getting reacquainted. Soon, I know, I need to go back and stay much longer." ■

Zimbabwe Journalist Mark Chavunduka, 1965-2002

By Bill Krueger

Mark Chavunduka was one of journalism's heroes. In 1999, Chavunduka and a colleague, Ray Choto, withstood repeated beatings and other forms of torture during nine days as military officials in Zimbabwe tried to force them to reveal the sources of a story they had published in The Standard. The story, relying on unnamed sources, said that 23 members of the Zimbabwe National Army had been arrested for plotting the overthrow of the government of President Robert Mugabe.

Chavunduka and Choto were beaten and kicked. Live electrical wires were placed on various parts of their bodies. A bag filled with water was tied around their heads. They were forced to roll naked on a hard tarmac while officers beat them with planks. But Chavunduka and Choto never revealed their sources. They never backed off of their story.

Mark was a member of my Nieman class, the class of 2000. Mark's case helped bring our Nieman class together at the beginning of the year. His story reminded those of us in the United States how easy we have it—and how difficult it is to practice journalism in much of the world. Early in our year—not long after he had been released—I asked Mark about doing investigative reporting in such a hostile environment. "We do it because it has to be done," he said. "It's our contribution in the fight against corruption and bad government. That is the correct thing to do."

Mark Chavunduka. *Photo by the Krueger family.*

In the fall of 1999, Mark told me that he was still hurting from a perforated eardrum and that he had eye problems from being forced by military officials to stare into a bright light during questioning. More troubling, he said, were the recurring nightmares he suffered. "There are times when you wake up in the middle of the night really sweating, almost as if you've been taking a shower," he said. "You can't think. You just start crying."

But Mark felt that something good came out of his case and the international attention it drew. It had emboldened the independent media in Zimbabwe. "It has made them stronger," he said. "It proved to the government that it can't just arrest folks. The public outcry, both locally and internationally, was so overwhelming."

Mark Chavunduka died November 11. He was 37 years old, and he left behind his wife, **Abigail**, and three young children. In April, he had taken over a controlling share in an independent magazine publishing business. The cause of Mark's death was not announced, but reports out of Harare indicated that it was not believed to be related to his torture. His father said Mark complained of pains in his side before he died at a Harare clinic. ■

Bill Krueger, a 2000 Nieman Fellow, is a staff writer for The News & Observer in Raleigh, North Carolina.

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