

NIEMAN REPORTS

THE NIEMAN FOUNDATION FOR JOURNALISM AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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Five Dollars

Can Newspapers Reach the Young?



Journalist's Trade: California Recall Coverage

Words and Reflections: Coverage of War and Terrorism

“... to promote and elevate the standards of journalism”

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

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The New Knight Center at Walter Lippmann House

'To the Niemans, there is no stationary state.'

By Bob Giles

John Kenneth Galbraith, the Paul M. Warburg Professor of Economics Emeritus at Harvard University and a friend to generations of Nieman Fellows, once observed that "There is nothing about this program that can be considered finished. Nothing that can be considered normal. To the Niemans, there is no stationary state." Galbraith brings a long perspective to this matter. He was a young economics instructor when the program began in 1938 and, through the years, has had more discussions with Nieman classes than anyone at the university.

This spirit of "no stationary state" is reflected in the recent addition to Walter Lippmann House, which was completed this fall and has quickly become the center of activities for the current class of Nieman Fellows.

The idea for expansion grew from the reality that Lippmann House simply didn't have enough room to accommodate a growing staff and the expanding activities of the Nieman program. As our thinking evolved, Charles Sullivan, executive director of the Cambridge Historical Commission, cautioned, "Don't attempt to replicate an 1836 house." The architects listened and proposed a garden room design, which has emerged as a graceful complement to the original Greek Revival building that became the home of the Nieman Foundation in 1978.

The new wing has created an improved learning environment for the Nieman Fellows. The seminar room, with high ceilings, wood paneling, comfortable seating and a multi-functional audio-visual center, is already demonstrating its versatility as a place for seminars, dinners, film and video showings, small conferences, and social gatherings. On the lower level, the Bill Kovach Library is now a quiet place for reading and talking that brings together in one place the books that have been scattered on shelves throughout Lippmann House. It also provides a place to display special collections, such as bound volumes of the newspaper PM and books that came as gifts from Nieman Fellows. Next to the library is the computer learning center, where fellows can check e-mail, work on the Internet, and participate in training programs such as the computer-assisted reporting class that is offered every January.

A new structure of this kind has to be paid for, of course, and the foundation has made a strong start toward this goal. The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation of Miami provided the lead gift for the Lippmann House project. To honor this generous gift, as well as recognize the Knight Foundation's long support of both the Nieman Foundation and Harvard University, the wing will be known as the Knight

Center. Hodding Carter III, president and CEO of the Knight Foundation, said: "Nothing could please us more than to be associated so closely with the Nieman program. Its objectives are ours and help further exactly the kind of journalism that the Knight brothers supported in their newspapers for so long." Carter was a Nieman Fellow in 1966 and his father, Hodding Carter, Jr., was in the second class of fellows in 1940.

The Knight Foundation's gift is particularly meaningful for its exemplary vision and support of education for journalists and the innovative programs that fulfill this mission.

John S. Knight was the editor of the Akron Beacon Journal and a powerful influence in my early days on the paper as a reporter and later as executive editor. J.S.K. was a plainspoken Ohio editor who became a national figure as chairman of Knight Newspapers. He was much admired for his virtue as an editorialist who spoke his mind with clarity and honesty and as a newspaper executive who put journalism ahead of the bottom line. The Nieman Foundation will formally dedicate the Knight Center on May 24, 2004. At that time, we expect to recognize other major contributors for whom rooms in Knight Center might be named.

Fundraising is a skill that does not come easily or naturally to journalists. Each of my predecessors has struggled with this reality as he tried to meet the obligation of adding to the Nieman endowment from time to time in the interest of enlarging the program and providing a richer experience for the fellows. The task before us now is to pay down a mortgage of four million dollars. At a university where the endowment exceeds \$19 billion and fundraising is an art, this amount might seem small. But for a journalist, raising that amount is a daunting goal.

The Nieman legacy and the opportunity it offers 24 journalists each year is now strengthened by the splendid new setting in the Knight Center at Walter Lippmann House. For many who remember the Nieman experience as a gift beyond measure, a donation is an opportunity to help extend this legacy for new generations of midcareer journalists who have demonstrated accomplishment, a deep commitment to excellence, and leadership potential. ■

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Young Readers

Newspaper reading isn't a daily habit for most young people. Instead they catch headlines on Web sites, share opinions on Weblogs, and see breaking news alerts along TV scroll bars. Nor do they think they should pay for news reporting. "Deliver the newspaper to me free, and I'll take a look," typical young readers tell focus groups as news organizations look for ways to unlock the mysteries of how to connect with these reluctant consumers.

At the Reading (Penn.) Eagle, **Lisa Scheid**, editor of Voices—the newspaper's weekly outreach to teen readers—explains that Voices "has built its reputation on showing teens as they really are, not how someone wants them to be or thinks they should be." Teens write for Voices about their lives and what interests them and, as Scheid says, Voices "needs to reflect their life, or they won't read it."

From Brazil, former magazine editor **Thomaz Souto Corrêa** reminds us of the international nature of this big gap that separates older generations from younger ones. "We are 'monomedia' when they are 'multimedia,'" Corrêa writes. "These kids want us to be multimedia, too, and to reach them we will need to stop thinking in ways that are 'monomedia.'" With his CD "Media Wars," Mediachannel.org founder **Danny Schechter** combines media criticism with music. This, he says, flows "out of the theory that believes that if the news business is to reach this audience, it will have to speak its language and echo its concerns."

John K. Hartman, a professor of journalism at Central Michigan University, has examined much of the research done on young adult newspaper readership. Among the myths he takes on is that "publishers used to cling to the notion that people acquired the newspaper habit as they got older: Just wait, they'd say, for the kids to grow up." **Tom Curley**, president and CEO of The Associated Press who worked for several decades at USA Today, turns to French editor Francois Dufour for guidance about how to attract younger readers. Make it quick, newsy and useful, is among the advice he passes on. Then Curley adds some of his own: "Make it free, or nearly so."

Steve Coll, managing editor of The Washington Post, talked with Nieman Reports about how and why his newspaper recently launched two publications—Express, a free daily newspaper created for commuters, and Sunday Source, a section designed with the sensibilities of younger readers—and about how the Internet fits into the paper's strategy. **Henry B. Haitz III**, president and publisher of the Centre Daily Times in State College, Pennsylvania, writes about connecting with Penn State students by hiring a young staff to publish Blue, a weekly youth-oriented wraparound section, and figuring out how to market this new product. When its consumers were asked, says Haitz, "[they] let us know that they didn't like being stereotyped as only caring about sex, drugs and rock'n roll."

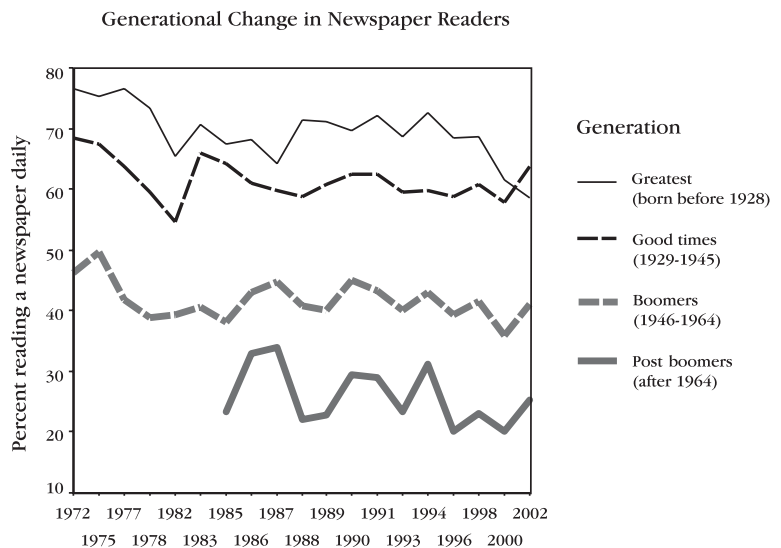
Colleen Pohlig edits Next, a youth publication at The Seattle Times. As she puts it, "To compete with the Internet and have a chance at attracting young people, newspapers must offer a combination of goods: authentic and edgy news coverage, more international news, stories with more young voices, fresh writing and designs, interactive options such as blogs and forums and, perhaps most importantly, flexibility." **Joe Knowles** coedits RedEye, the Chicago Tribune's weekday newspaper for young commuters. "The biggest challenge

remains getting people to simply make the effort to pick up a paper—any paper,” he writes. At the Tribune Company’s Orlando Sentinel, Managing Editor **Elaine Kramer** learned what younger people want from newspapers, then put some of those lessons to work. In time, she believes, newspapers “will have to figure out how to deliver a newspaper for free.”

Jennifer Carroll, who directs development at Gannett Company, Inc., highlights the extensive research her company has done and points to approaches some Gannett papers have taken to attract young readers. These newspapers are “revamping content and presentation, experimenting with new sections, launching free weeklies ... improving online content, and expanding delivery.” At Gannett’s Arizona Republic, Deputy Managing Editor **Nicole Carroll** writes about her newspaper’s challenge to create a product that would “move the needle” with a young female audience that wasn’t reading the paper. Yes—Your Essential Style, became the paper’s weekly vehicle. And at The Record in New Jersey, staff writer **Leslie Koren** had just turned 30 when she took on a new challenge of writing stories with people her age and younger in mind. “I want to speak to that part of the young readers that is still developing and coming into its own. I want to help them make sense of their world and encourage them to think for themselves.”

Journalist **Leah Kohlenberg** engages elementary school students in journalism as she teaches them how to report and write stories. “It was evident that if these students were going to write for a newspaper, they had to learn to read one,” she writes. Editor & Publisher managing editor **Shawn Moynihan’s** work as a substitute teacher taught him how kids look up to journalists. “. . . kids are not going to come to the newspapers—so newspapers must go to the kids,” he writes. In Los Angeles, **Donna C. Myrow**, founder of L.A. Youth, a newspaper written by teens for teens, writes about the paper’s important partnership with the Los Angeles Times. And **Ellin O’Leary**, president and executive producer of Youth Radio, describes how young people working in their newsroom with experienced journalists produce shows geared toward young audiences. ■

The belief that as young people grow older, they adopt the newspaper reading habits of their elders is a myth. As this chart shows, members of each generation tend to maintain their reading habits as they get older. *Data: General Social Survey of the National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago. Analysis: Phil Meyer, Knight Chair in Journalism, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.*



When Teens Own a Part of the Newspaper

By featuring teen voices and experiences, a newspaper gives younger readers a place to call their own.

By Lisa Scheid

“Convince me,” the editor said, while we waited for our dinner.

“Convince me I need to have a teen section, written by teens.” She was directing her challenge at a group of editors—all of us adults who oversee teenaged newspaper sections. We were gathered in Reading, Pennsylvania for the annual Youth Editorial Alliance’s (YEA) conference and sitting in a restaurant where peanuts are an appetizer and customers are expected to toss the shells on the floor. But this editor piled her used shells neatly on the table and told us she couldn’t bring herself to throw them on the floor.

“Does your teen section make money?” she wanted to know.

It depends. Some do. The one I edit—a 20-page tab called Voices that is published once a week in the 70,000 daily Reading (Penn.) Eagle—doesn’t pay for itself, at least in dollars. And I was having a hard time convincing her of its nontangible benefits.

Her questions kept coming. “Does it sell newspapers?”

Of this, none of us could be 100 percent certain. From where I sit, I can’t say circulation has skyrocketed during the eight years since we launched the section. I know that people tell me that they’ve held onto copies of the newspaper because of the teen section. And the Newspaper Association of America’s (NAA) most up-to-

date research brief says 64 percent of teens looked at a newspaper within the last week; a study done locally showed 66 percent of teens in our county had read the section in the last five days.

“Why not just have a youth reporter?” she suggested.

Not the same, we replied, because then there is no ownership by the teens. Without teens feeling that this section belongs to them, it becomes—in their mind—just another adult (and any college graduate is an adult to them) perpetuating stereotypes about them.

But as the evening’s conversation went on through dinner, I felt increasingly stymied in my attempts to convey the incredible value this section brings



Covers of the Reading (Penn.) Eagle teen publication, Voices.

to a newspaper. It probably didn't help when many of us talked about some problems we face in doing this. We shared stories about discovering factual errors just before a section was to be published. I talked about having to publish mediocre writing when it was needed to fill a page.

As this editor listened, she also kept asking us questions, and with each one she seemed to be challenging the very premise of what we were doing. Her questions lingered with me through the rest of the conference, creating more and more questions in my mind, until finally I saw an image that helped me to better understand this editor's resistance.

In my mind, I saw those peanuts, so neatly piled in front of this editor, as a

metaphor for the way journalists tend to stick to their ways, follow conventions, and adhere to their worldviews. Without being willing to change and explore ways of reaching out to new readers, I realized it was hard for this editor to see this step as positively as those of us who'd taken it do.

Letting Teens Tell Their Stories

It was writing for teenagers, not writing about teenagers, that really changed my views about journalism. It opened me to exploring different ways of telling stories. As I worked on connecting with teens as the editor of *Voices*, I rediscovered my sense of humor, my appreciation for irony and for the ab-

surd, my love of music, and my hunger to understand the world.

My greatest lesson occurred when I was about a year into *Voices*. At that time, at the age of 35, I was the adult reporter assigned to *Voices*. My responsibilities included coordinating photo shoots (often wacky and/or posed ordeals involving costumes), teen artwork, and the writing of stories. I had already written a narrative story about teens facing the end of high school and one about auditions for the school play. In the course of a year, I'd talked to lots of teenagers, some of whom were quite taciturn. Along the way, I'd discovered I was no longer terrified to walk into a room of 100 teens because I now knew I was *not* the focus of their attention, even when

Conventional Views a Teen Section Editor Must Break

1. Good journalists don't put their opinions in their writing. Instead of teaching teens to keep themselves out of articles, editors need to teach them when and how they should write first-person pieces. We should encourage them how to augment their opinions with reporting. Start with the assumption that teens can be experts in many things, especially with their peers, and that the teenage years are ones marked by many epiphanies and lessons, all of which is fodder for columns and first-person written and reported pieces.

2. You will pay your teen writers with experience. They will respect their work with your teen section if they are paid, and it doesn't have to be much. It shows respect for the time and effort they put into their journalism, and it puts less pressure on the editor to find other ways to compensate and motivate reporters. My experience is that teens appreciate the pay and stick around for the experience and through that they learn the important lesson that journalism is about more than a paycheck.

3. Scylla and Charybdis and Kierkegaard have no place in your

section. Don't write down to teens—or make teens write down to themselves. The Scylla and Charybdis reference comes from something written by an advice column writer at *Voices*.

4. Personal writing is a lower form of journalism. See Number One.

5. Nostalgia is for old people. Faced with growing up and responsibility, teens can have great nostalgia for their childhood. Television shows, music or toys popular just a few years ago seem to teenagers as if they were ancient history.

6. You need the best and brightest teens. GPA and excellent writing skills are no indication of passion for journalism. Some people don't know they have the passion until they experience it.

7. News happens, you can't plan for it. You can plan a section a month in advance and still be flexible and timely.

8. You have nothing to learn from teens about writing. If you can't handle the idea that a teenager could write better than you, consider that each question they pose, each critique you do, helps you hone your craft and makes you walk the walk because they

are watching you.

9. Metaphors are for poetry and novels. Good journalists use metaphors, but often adults don't expect that teens are capable of producing them or understanding them.

10. A diverse section has many teens of color. Look beyond color when thinking about diversity. Difference is found not just in skin color but in teens' economic backgrounds, their seen and unseen abilities, disabilities and interests, religion, politics, the makeup of their family, and the kind of school they go to. *Voices* has broad appeal because we cast a wide net through the community and because the students write so personally. A Jewish girl wrote about converting to Catholicism and a homeschooled boy, who is liberal, broke through the stereotypic assumption of homeschooled kids being conservative Christians. We've had articles written by gay students, jocks and artists and by jocks who are artists, by kids who can't afford to have e-mail and those who can afford to hire a personal college coach. To me, that's diversity. ■ —L.S.

they were listening to me.

Then I volunteered to do a story for the Reading Eagle; it was a Sunday piece about competition among the top students. I knew there was a story because I had listened to some of Voices' teen writers—all of whom are paid freelancers—talk about the stress of staying at the top of their class. And we'd done a Voices section—about eight articles each week are built around a theme to create a Voices section—about finding relief from stress.

For the Sunday story, I interviewed counselors and experts who were very concerned about the toll such competition was taking and what it said about our society. Fresh from these interviews with experts, I started to call teens who had been recommended by our Voices correspondents. (Our newspaper's policy bars adult reporters from interviewing our teen writers for articles.) And there I hit a brick wall: They wouldn't talk. Well, they talked but I knew what they were saying to me wasn't their real experience. Instead, they were telling me what they told most adults—all is well, not a big deal.

The Voices' editor, Wendy Zang, offered me a great suggestion. "Try asking them *how* they stay on top."

I followed her advice and set aside the experts' views. And I kept my mouth shut and just listened.

What I learned is that some teenagers go to school feeling physically sick because of the pressure. They track carefully what classes their peers take, and they quibble over grades just to raise their grade point average by hundredths of a point so they can get a ranking that will get them into an elite college or university. And as it gets harder to be admitted to these elite schools and pay the cost of going there, parents are putting more pressure on some students to do activities that might lead to scholarships.

This story has been told in many publications, but what made my story different was that it was largely told in

the voices and through the experiences of teenagers. Access didn't make the difference; rather, it was the questions asked and the willingness to listen to the teens and let go of adult bias. Teens are the experts in their own lives—which is why their first-person, reported essays that appear in Voices can be so compelling. I've met many teens who are experts in topics beyond fashion, sex and angst. I've met some who are experts in dog training, golf, ice hockey, losing weight, beating the system, and addiction recovery.

Teen Topics and Newspapers

Another lesson for me about journalism came shortly after I became editor of Voices last October. As part of my job, I met with the newspaper's advertising and promotions departments. As a reporter, I'd never talked with anyone from these departments. For me, the idea of having to also think

As I worked on connecting with teens as the editor of Voices, I rediscovered my sense of humor, my appreciation for irony and for the absurd, my love of music, and my hunger to understand the world.

about selling stuff seemed so disgusting; before I'd thought of my job as only pursuing "the truth." Yet I soon learned that convincing colleagues at the paper of the value of a teen section involves selling them on the idea that teens have buying power. (The NAA's recent research brief finds that teens spent \$172 billion on products and services in 2001.)

In January of this year, my awkward feeling of being a truth-seeker in an advertising land came to a head at a newspaper marketing conference in Florida where I went to talk about Voices. As I prepared to listen to the teen panel discussion, facilitated by a marketing expert, I was expecting that the discussion would make my stom-

ach turn. I pictured the marketing person weaseling out of these teens how to sell them the latest gadgets and stuff they liked to use. Instead, as I listened to the teens, I heard them articulate some of the same lessons I'd learned with Voices: Teens want to feel important. They want to be part of a group but also thought of as individuals. They want respect, and they want help.

These lessons were echoed again at the YEA conference in Reading in October. There we heard from Vivian Lin, president of 180 Enterprises, Inc., which specializes in marketing to teenagers. Her research tells her that teens are searching for significance. As I heard this, I hoped the editor who had been quizzing us about starting a teen section was listening.

My learning continues. In October, Voices published a photo of children and teens who benefited from the philanthropy of another group of teens. The photograph accompanied an

article written by one of our two Voices' interns. Three teens in the photo were making hand signs and, to me, the gestures appeared to signal West Coast, victory and peace. From where I sat, the photo was about rap and hip-hop, but some adult readers saw the hand gestures as signifying gang signs. They weren't gang signs, but that

didn't stop adults from calling and e-mailing. And I know these adults meant well in expressing their concern, but by jumping to conclusions they insulted those teenagers.

Some editors might have decided not to run the photograph, fearing just such a reaction from adult readers. But Voices has built its reputation on showing teens as they really are, not how someone wants them to be or thinks they should be. For us that means printing reviews of R-rated movies. (Our paper's policy states that it is the teen's responsibility to get parental permission to see the film.) It means running reviews of films such as "Jackass," despite having adults say that by doing so we are promoting that kind of behav-

ior, and referring to high school students who are in the marching band as “band geeks.” (One of the school’s principals told Voices assistant editor Stacie Jones that is a putdown he wouldn’t participate in.) While we don’t advocate illegal activities such as underage drinking or violence, we do show teen life from the inside.

I am not a teenager, nor do I pretend to be, but the section I edit needs to reflect their life, or they won’t read it. And so, as its editor, I walk a fine line: At what point does reporting aspects of the youth culture to teenagers become an endorsement of that culture? And what if I, as a parent, don’t like it? Each week, and with each issue, I try my best to answer such questions. I might prod a teen writer to do thorough and fair reporting, but I try not to impose my opinion.

Each week, adults involved with Voices (the editor, assistant editor, designer, graphic artist, and assistant design editor) get together to plan the look of a future issue. Often we grapple with stereotypes and the message of images and with the challenges of being diverse and being cool. We also consult with managing editors on subject matter; when we take on topics such as sexual issues or being gay, our work requires intense scrutiny from editors at the newspaper.

Working for a newspaper can be an uncomfortable place—even for teen writers. A girl who wrote a story about teens and sex was demoted from her leadership role in her church because she mentioned she might not wait until she was married. Perhaps this tension between the adult and teen worldviews is what keeps us fresh without resorting to reliance on clichéd lingo or celebrity interviews. It might also be what attracts readers—adults and teens—to the section. Or it may be that we have convinced everyone we’re totally cool. ■

Lisa Scheid, who is the editor of Voices, has worked with this teen section of the Reading Eagle since 2000.

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Seeing the Holocaust Through a Child’s Eyes

The following excerpt is from a longer piece, “Seeing Devastation Through a Child’s Eyes,” written by Kayla Conklin and published in Voices in April 2003. Conklin is a former Voices’ intern who is now in her first year at Temple University in Philadelphia.

By Kayla Conklin

Gia drew a picture in crayon. No smiling sun with sunglasses shone upon multicolored flowers and a village of little pink houses, all identical to one another. Gia didn’t see that very much. From the barracks where she spent her days, little light was visible, except through cracks in the poorly constructed cabin.

So Gia drew what she knew: open-top trains, carrying dead bodies with X’s for eyes away from a gas chamber. She was born more than 60 years ago, and she shares my birthday. She suffered through something I can’t begin to fathom, and that’s all I know about Gia, except that she had the amazing strength to survive. This faceless little girl has become my new hero.

On March 13, my Governor Mifflin High School class spent three hours in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., on its senior trip. We were free to wander the corridors and peruse the museum’s overload of information, both visual and emotional. ...

Finally, I proceeded to the children’s area. As a playground leader and aspiring teacher, I love children and admire their innocence and unaffectedness. A movie was playing in a small theater, in which a father was telling a story about his son. His father knew that his family would be taken, so he tried to leave his son where the son would be safe. The child steadfastly refused to comply with his father. As the father recalls, the child asked him later, “What does it mean to be Jewish? Why am I here?”

Such remarks, from a child yet unaware of the fact that anyone was different from anyone else, broke my

heart. An estimated 1.5 million children died in the Holocaust, their potentials unfulfilled. The next Einstein, Kafka or Wagner could have been among that group; when one considers all of the theories left unthought, the canvases left blank, the words never written and symphonies never composed, the weight of what was lost seems worse than what was done.

I walked to a wall, considering this, and stared at pictures: Stars of David, concentration camp barracks and other things that children, in an attempt at therapy, depicted on 8.5 inch by 11 inch paper with colored pencils, markers and watercolors. I scanned over names and birthdays and paused at a picture of a crayon train, carrying bodies away, and underneath it, only Gia’s name, and August 27, the day I was born.

Two short lines of text and her crayon picture are all I know of Gia, but the entity of her existence and the gravity of her experience will stay with me forever. I’ve never seen the horror that Gia had, and most haven’t, but there’s truth in the statement that history must be understood and remembered, lest it repeat itself. If we reject silence in favor of speaking up, if we refuse to hate even in the face of evil, and if we remember that every person born in the world is equal and that nothing can alter this fact, we can honor the victims’ memories daily by never allowing hate to foster and manifest itself in the complete destruction of human life that was the Holocaust. In short, if adults can manage to view the world as children do, history surely can never repeat itself. ■

Approaching the End of the 'Monomedia' Era

Why do young people insist in not understanding what we, the press, do for them?

By Thomaz Souto Corrêa

This scene happened recently in São Paulo, Brazil, where I live. As I approached a young man typing in front of a computer, he was writing: blz, bró, vamo tcl? If anything, I can guarantee that those words are not Portuguese, the language we speak in my country.

"What is that?," I asked, showing what I discovered later to be a sign of unrecoverable ignorance. This is Portuguese, I was assured, and this is how we write to each other—we have no time for spelling the words, so we contract them. Translation of the message: "How is it going, brother, everything nice? Do you have any time to exchange a few words with me now?"

It came to me as a vision: If these kids are communicating in that language, it is no wonder that they don't read what we write for them. Have I seen a text written like that in a teen magazine? No. Have I seen a text written like that in a newspaper supplement for young readers? No. Have I seen it in a book? No.

The general idea—research shows it, friends and colleagues share their stories, and we all have our own—is that kids don't read. (Let's not mention Harry Potter, please. J.K. Rowling has written many books, and kids love them all. And no one has been able to write the way she does. She is unique. I don't accept her books as a generalizing evidence that kids read. They don't. They read her Harry Potter books.)

Young People and Print

I am forcing an argument here, but let's accept it, to make it easier to understand my point: We, the print media in general, are not communicating with the young audiences. Period.

Let's begin by defining a young au-

dience. My young reader is 15 years old, but could be 12 or 18. But let's stay with the 15-year-old boy. He does not read. Now, why is that? Let's have a look at this problem, step by step. I divide humankind into two main groups of people: the "paper readers" and the "electronic readers." There are lots of people in between those two groups, but they don't need our help: they read papers and magazines and books, they navigate the big net, etc.

Each day we lose an important number of "paper readers": When people who are more than 60 years of age die, they've spent two-thirds of their lives reading books, newspapers and magazines. And each day we gain what I call "electronic readers": Kids coming to this world will read much more through electronic devices than from paper. Computers in the house and at the school, electronic games and cellular phones—those will be the primary communication vehicles in their lives. Even before the time they enter school, these kids are already multimedia people.

Will they read books, newspapers and magazines? Probably, but as a complement to the electronic media. The difference is that today we complement the print media with the electronic media. This generation (and subsequent ones) will do the opposite.

Why don't we in print media attract these young kids? Because we don't understand the simple truth that young kids are multimedia people, and that's why they don't read the supplements we publish for young people. A supplement is an anachronous device and to them a newspaper is an odd object. They relate better to a magazine because it's a friendlier object, smaller and colorful. But magazines they read talk about issues they are interested in: fashion, beauty, stars and gossip for

girls; rock music, sports and beautiful, provocative young ladies for the boys.

There is already a new factor in their reading experience that makes all the difference: They go online because their magazines invite them to. A bridge has already been built between the magazine and the Web site. Under the same brand, they read (or watch) in paper and play online. Girls can try online the same dress they see in the pages of the magazine. They build their virtual body on the screen and try as many jeans or skirts or colors as they want. Sometimes they buy the clothes online, instantly.

There are not many magazines doing that in the world, and they are already late. But most publications allow readers to create communities around their own interests, hosted on their site, and in these virtual communities they chat and chat. Some magazines put the fashion editor online to answer questions. The online publication is the extension of the publication in paper. They coexist.

But these magazines are publishing kids' stuff. They give them what the young want to see and read. Meanwhile, no newspaper and no magazine is reaching this audience in ways that discuss with them issues they'll be facing in their adult lives: social, political, economic and cultural issues.

Bridging Gaps Between Us

As these younger readers age, more and more electronic readers will reach the age when usually they would turn to newspapers and magazines. But will today's 10-year-old boy read a newspaper when he gets to be 18? Or a magazine? In his cellular phone, today, this 10-year-old has fun exchanging messages with friends. On this phone, he

also gets and sends e-mails, takes pictures and sends them immediately, listens to music, watches videos, and checks his schedule as if it was a palm-top. If he wants to, he can watch the news. He can even use it as a telephone.

How much more multimedia can a person be? And in a multimedia world such as this, with gadgets that are also fun to use, what becomes of the role of print media? In this boy's life, paper has become almost nonexistent. Why? In part, it's because young people don't like the way we write, and they don't like the look of our pages. In print, we've been doing basically the same thing for decades, and this generation is letting us know it will not accept the way we do our job.

We are "monomedia" when they are "multimedia." These kids want us to be multimedia, too, and to reach them we will need to stop thinking in ways that are monomedia.

Prestigious brands and credible publications have to engage young readers both in print and on the Web, using different media to offer what they expect from us. Young people should be able to get whatever information, analysis, or opinion they need or want from their favorite paper/electronic publication as part of a large multimedia system. The paper and electronic publications must complement each other, but doing this can prove difficult since younger brains do not tend to relate to words and images in the same way older brains do. While we tend to separate out the ways in which information is delivered, younger brains tend to blend these various components—paper, online, news, messages—together with less effort than we do.

With kids' minds and experiences being so different from ours, we'll never succeed without inviting them to join us in figuring out ways to bridge the gap between the paper generation and

the electronic one. To try to understand the way they think, we ought to watch them as they write, "uozzzup, bro?" and read their Weblogs. We'll need to follow their discussions about issues that concern them as we try to capture a sense of their needs and interests, and many times they do this online. Then we can produce vehicles for them, done in ways they understand and not in the way we think they should understand.

It is important to remember that differences between paper readers and



An image from the Colorado Kids Web site.

electronic readers are much more than about how they read. There is a cultural gap between us that is perhaps larger than the technological gap that separates us. Technology is available to all of us, but in the ways we relate to it we are very far apart. Nor will we attract younger people by using objects they are rejecting, mostly newspapers but magazines, too.

I see little experimentation being done with the younger crowd concerning journalism, but there are a few good examples. Though I've said that supplements for young readers don't usually work, what The Denver Post does is an exception. It publishes a supplement called Colorado Kids, done by a staff of kids seven to 13 years old. They do the interviews, asking questions adults would not. And they write the text. Other teens instantly recognize that these pieces were not written

by adults and that adds credibility to the stories.

Maybe we shouldn't care so much about paper. Is our real concern whether magazines and newspapers disappear, or is it that we want kids to read? Does it really matter if they read from a paper page or on a screen or behind a piece of plastic? To me, if they read, then the object in which they exercise their intellect is of no importance. As long as they read.

This will not be a simple challenge to solve, but it is not impossible, either.

An electronic newspaper and the electronic magazine targeted for a young audience are still waiting to be invented. As we older editors continue to try to attract younger people with our paper objects and Web sites, I suspect they are still waiting for an electronic publication that will combine newspapers, magazines and what we call "the rest" and will feel like it belongs, like it fits, in their lives.

Either we invent this publication, or they will do it without our help. And

this second option is what terrifies me. Are we, editors, condemned to a different mission? If so, what is going to happen to our role as the eyes and watchdog of the society? But this is another serious discussion.

Uó't'u tink, bro? ■

Thomaz Souto Corrêa, a Brazilian journalist, worked for 40 years as editor and editorial director for the largest magazine publishing company in Latin America, the Abril Group. He is an editorial consultant and member of the Management Board of the International Federation of the Periodical Press.

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Are We Reaching Da Youth?

Young adults' 'rejection of "the news" might be a reaction to big journalism's rejection of them.'

By Danny Schechter

First, a scene setter: Please don't call it a screed. Journalism tends to look up. Most news is about older people. It is about people in power. Presidents and potentates. Corporations. Celebrities. The Rich and Famous. It is about the people running things and the people who want to run things. And when it's not about their glories, it's about their darker sides, their scandals and deceptions. And when it's not about them—the Innies—it's about estranged outsiders, losers and the lost-lone gunmen, suicide desperados, corporate criminals, everyday crooks, and ordinary victims. Body counts galore.

Victims are roadkill on the electronic highway to ratings heaven.

On TV, there's a daily parade of sound bites and press conferences brought to us by news guys who look like jocks with great haircuts and perky blondes standing in front of buildings yakking through thick makeup like political science majors. Presidential candidates compete with movie stars. Madonna is writing children's books. Cookbook connoisseur Martha Stewart is arranging flowers in courtrooms. A rap mogul is now a black political leader. Howard Stern is the King of All Media. Don Imus has become a caricature of himself. Jay Leno offers a launching pad for candidates.

And Fox News is anything but news.

Even the dream machine on the small screen has been reduced to inspiring us to survive "Temptation Island," not get thrown out of the "Big Brother" House, win a rose and a rela-

tionship from the hunk-like Bachelor or, if you are a "Bad Boy," delight in those 15 seconds of fame outrunning "Cops."

Reality television is anything but reality.

This is the media environment all in

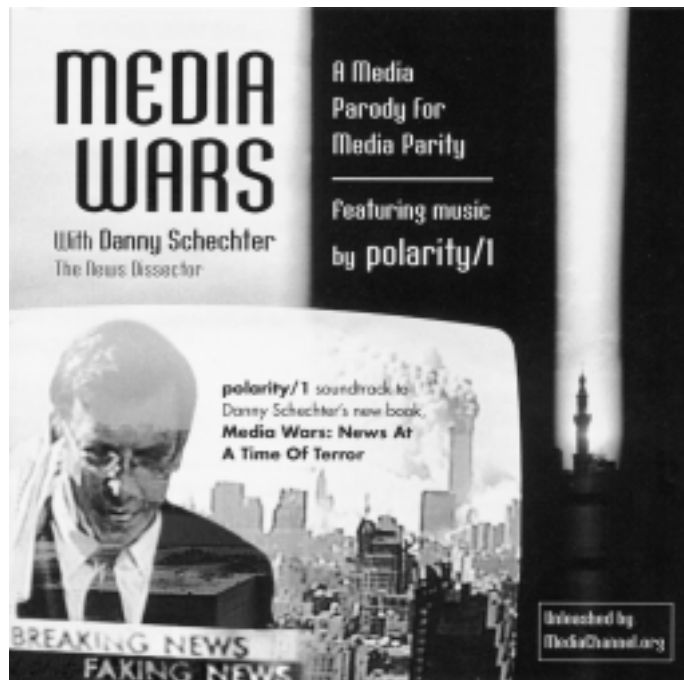
now get their "news" from late night TV, the Comedy Channel or "The Onion." Attitude is what excites them, not information. For most, it's not even cool to read newspapers or vote. The turnouts prove that.

There are so many distractions, so little time: DVD's video games, comic books and video games. The channels are many. The choices are full. The voices are few. They don't watch news. How do I know? Watch the ads. The advertisers, whose business it is to watch who is watching, know. That's why there are so many commercials for Viagra, stomach remedies, and arthritis medications. In TV jargon, news-casts "skew old."

That's why Al Gore, who started out wanting to launch a liberal TV alternative, has been persuaded that a youth-oriented channel is the way to go. His new TV venture will use stealth "lifestyle" programming to politicize by appearing not to. If Fox News is the stern, finger-wagging Archie Bunker-like, patriotically correct party-liner on the right, Gore, who has greened, pastel shirts and all, has become a permissive do-your-own-thinger. For him, depoliticizing politics is the only hope. He will learn that pandering won't work. Honesty and authenticity might.

Meshing News and Music

I've written books, such as "The More You Watch, the Less You Know," to explain what is going on with news these days. But I have also collaborated on some music projects hoping to zone



The cover of a CD about media coverage of terror.

the know concede has been dumbed down for years. Even serious people can't take it seriously. As news biz merges into show biz, Time magazine calls war "militainment" and politics "electotainment." Facts are what they say they are like WMD's in Iraq or a fair vote in Florida. News-lite does not make Americans very bright. A recent study took note of pervasive misperceptions among TV news viewers.

When younger people are not downloading libraries of recorded music from the Internet, or piercing their noses and tattooing their behinds, they

into this apolitical zeitgeist to try to reach younger people who seem to have tuned out on so many fronts. (This does not include a whole generation of young activists crusading on the environment, human rights, peace and global justice issues.)

As the father of a hip media-savvy 20-something, I have had an up-close and personal education about why my orientation towards big ideas and political engagement doesn't always connect. ("If it's too loud, dad, you're too old.") When I was her age, I believed with Abbie Hoffman that "you can't trust anyone over 30." Now it sometimes feels like you can't trust anyone under 50.

Over the years, from my days in rock 'n' roll broadcasting, I have seen the way popular culture leads politics. As a result, I've been involved with multiartist music benefits to promote awareness on important issues: from "No Nukes" in 1979 (about nuclear power) to "Sun City" in 1985 (against apartheid), from "Give Peace a Chance" in 1991 (trying to stop the first Gulf War) to "We Are Family" in the immediate aftermath of September 11th (an appeal for tolerance).

As the editor of Mediachannel.org, a global media Web site, I am now focusing on media issues by creating CDs with the musician/producer Polar Levine, who records as "polarity/1." Our first, in 1997, used hip-hop to take on what we call "News Goo." Here is a sample lyric:

Communication Breakdown! Pause for this message. Wake up!

Every station is identification

Global syndication is shaping the nation. ABC-Disney, NBC-GE.

Murdoch is Foxy and we're the hen, He owns the pen, the camera, the sword.

Buy a Coke, buy a Ford. Gettin broke? Getting bored?

Selling attitude like food for the masses. Junk consumption. We're lumpen

A bumpkin to the corporate state.

You cannot satiate what you can't negotiate

Your will's been snatched, The bill's attached

Flim-flam diagram, data-jam, handi-cam Caught it, Yo, ya bought it

A mind is a profitable thing to waste. Ya want another taste, baby? We got

CHORUS:

News Goo—What we need to know

News Goo—What we want to know

News Goo—What we think we know

Got remote control to choose the show.

But the more we watch, the less we know

Ignorance grows on the spirit like a tumor ... till freedom is a rumor¹

The song is provocative and hard charging, but getting it on the air in this

sound bites have—in no way—been manipulated to create a context different from that which was intended. The off-the-cuff remarks made by many of our leading, highly influential TV infotainers, who pass for presenters of news, reveal much about the current state of a once vigorous press. Fox News's 'fair, unbiased' commentary speaks for itself in the pride it takes in being 'unafraid' to serve as propagandists for Washington's right wing political establishment."²

Songs like these won't transform the media or "elevate" a generation of news rejectors. How many will even hear them? They are an expression of a dissenting point of view that tends to get marginalized anyway. But they do flow out of the theory that believes that if the news business is to reach this audience, it will have to speak its lan-

Younger people 'now get their "news" from late night TV, the Comedy Channel or "The Onion." Attitude is what excites them, not information. For most, it's not even cool to read newspapers or vote.'

age of hyper media consolidation in radio is, shall we say, problematic. It has been played on alternative radio and Internet radio stations worldwide. Boston's WBCN, the radio station where I spent a decade dissecting news that is now owned by Viacom, which is one of the companies crusading for larger media monopolies, won't play it. No surprise there.

In 2003, at the height of the Iraq War, we went another way, making "Media Wars," named after another of my books. This track is an audio collage to a funky electronica groove track that uses comments of mine and some "rapping" that is intercut with bits of TV news broadcasts and presidential pronouncements. Levine explains on his popCULTmedia Web site: "The TV

guage and echo its concerns. Far too much of our news ignores young people or puts them down. All too often they are stereotyped as troublemakers to fear, not learn from. Their rejection of "the news" might be a reaction to big journalism's rejection of them.

Ya dig? ■

Danny Schechter, a 1978 Nieman Fellow, writes daily on media issues for Mediachannel.org. His latest book is "Embedded: Weapons of Mass Deception" (Prometheus Books 2003) on the coverage of the war on Iraq. A new Web site featuring his body of work can be accessed at www.newsdissector.org.

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¹ From "News Goo" ("The More You Watch, the Less You Know") © 2000 Polar Levine-sine language music/BMI. You can download the song at: <http://www.polarity1.com/fcwd9.html>

² To download "Media Wars": <http://www.polarity1.com/mediawars.html>

Solving Some Mysteries About the Habits of the Young

The keys to turning young adults into newsreaders are out there.

By John K. Hartman

As newspapers work hard to figure out how to attract younger readers, there are some things we already know about why they aren't there already and what might need to change to lure them in. A lot of studies offer guidance and, though the news might seem disheartening at first glance, there are answers to be found.

Memos to the Newspaper Industry

The numbers are bad and getting worse. Daily newspaper readership among 18- to 29-year-olds slipped to 16 percent in 2000, according to a survey commissioned by American Journalism Review (AJR). This percentage was a new low, and the trend line heads to single digits by the end of the decade. The number had been in the 20-25 percent range a decade before. By contrast, the AJR survey showed that daily readership among 30- to 59-year-olds was 42 percent and, among 60 years and older, it was 69 percent.

Judging from students in my journalism classes at Central Michigan University, readership by young adults may be below 16 percent already. Most of them don't read a daily newspaper. I must order them to read one and test them on it and then they might take a look at a newspaper Web site just long enough to do a report or pass a quiz. In my advertising classes a decade ago, when I began offering my students a discount subscription to *The Wall Street Journal*, about 10 percent of them subscribed. Over the years, the number declined despite my impassioned plea that reading the business daily is good for future advertising professionals. In the spring 2002 semester, I had one taker out of 150 students: a nontraditional student, around age 30. In 2003 I quit offering the discount subscription. It was a hopeless cause.

Young adults hurry through your product. On the isolated occasions when young adults do read newspapers, they spend about the time it takes to listen to two songs on the radio or the CD player. According to a 2002 study by The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 18- to 24-year-olds averaged nine minutes reading newspapers out of the 48 they spent each day in "newsgathering." The 25- to 29-year-olds and 30- to 34-year-olds both spent 11 minutes with newspapers. The number went up to 16 minutes for those between the ages of 35 and 49, 21 minutes for those ages 50 to 64, and 33 minutes for the over-65 crowd.

The young will not age gracefully. Publishers used to cling to the notion that people acquired the newspaper habit as they got older: Just wait, they'd say, for the kids to grow up. Not true. Researcher John Bartolomeo wrote that a generation's newspaper consumption habits are established at age 30 and that the younger generation reads less. In other words, a decade from now 16 percent of people in their 30's will be newspaper readers every day. Two decades from now, the percentage of newspaper readers in their 40's might be counted in single digits.

The best effort to address the decline came from Gannett editors, who put together the *X Manual* in 2001. It is a 300-page compendium of how to draw young adults into the newspaper. [See Jennifer Carroll's story about Gannett's efforts to attract younger readers on page 32.] Among its suggestions: Beef up front page design and entertainment guides; increase business coverage; try new sections; boost outdoor coverage; improve Web sites, and promote more. Suggested areas for greater coverage included local, world and national news, positive hap-

penings in the community, education, environment, things to do, health and fitness, families and parenting. Gannett recently announced its "real life, real news" initiative, and this bears watching as well.

The young love the Web. Two California newspaper industry groups commissioned a survey by MTV Networks that showed a big gap between what teenagers and young adults looked for from newspapers and what newspapers gave them. The survey found that 14- to 24-year-olds wanted, first and foremost, news about music, then local news. Projecting a culture of diversity is important to the young, the survey found, along with more color, pictures and entertainment news. Ink rubbing off on hands and clothes was a turn-off. "Minimize the old, white dudes on the front page," MTV research executive Betsy Frank said. The young considered newspapers "important, but just don't read them." Frank said the development of Web sites was the most important thing newspapers could do to reach out to the young.

A survey done in 2000 by the Round Table Group echoed the importance of Web sites. It found that 18- to 24-year-olds preferred getting their news online rather than in print. Two-thirds liked the Internet for gathering information, and three-fifths said the Internet offered better information than print. Another study found that young people turned to the content-specific sites on the Web, such as those devoted to sports, music, fashion or dating. News-oriented sites operated by newspapers were at a disadvantage.

Yet general interest Web sites (so-called entry portals) such as Yahoo, AOL and MSN are thriving by providing access points to what the young adults are interested in. They establish brand loyalty that tethers young adults to the

sites for life while newspaper-operated sites were casting around unsuccessfully for young adult visitors, not unlike what was happening with their print products.

Charging for Web access is crazy. Despite the young's affection for the Web, increasing numbers of general interest daily newspapers are beginning to charge for Web access. The Wall Street Journal (1.8 million daily circulation), a business newspaper, has charged from the beginning. The Columbus (Ohio) Dispatch (250,000 daily, 370,000 Sunday) began charging in fall 2002, becoming the largest general interest newspaper to do so. Its editor, Ben Marrison, wrote that the "milk" would no longer be free. Dispatch.com lost a large chunk of its audience overnight. The approach is wrong because, as noted above, young adults like the Web as much as they disdain the print product. So much for newspapers reaching out to young adults via the Web and eventually winning them over to the print product. The Dispatch's action was more like a death wish than a marketing strategy. It seems unlikely that the rest of the newspaper industry will follow suit.

The USA Today approach works. USA Today has done the best job by a newspaper of reaching out to the young through its print and online products. The national newspaper's dailies-in-dorms program provides prepaid, discounted copies of newspapers available for first come, first served pick-up by students. It added 30,000 additional daily sales and two million dollars to the bottom line. The program, piloted at Pennsylvania State University in 1997, has gone nationwide. Other newspapers participate in the program depending on their proximity to the college and universities involved. Beyond providing a better-rounded education to students (its stated purpose at Penn State), the program encourages a life-long newspaper reading habit. The Penn State program expanded in 2000 to 20 of the 24 campuses of Penn State, reaching 70,000 students.

USA Today does very well on cam-

pus in single-copy sales, too. It often outsells local newspapers, regional newspapers, and even national competitors from two-to-one to 10-to-one. Its handlers understand, like the major Web sites, that media consumption habits developed while young last a lifetime. Surveys of Penn State also showed that USA Today's program increased readership of daily newspapers in dormitories as much as sevenfold without affecting materially the readership of the campus newspaper. Yet student newspaper publishers, advisers and student journalists continue to fear incursions by daily newspapers onto their campuses. Many—including my employer, Central Michigan University—are successful in defeating efforts to offer the dailies-in-dorms program on their campuses.

Follow the Reds. The Chicago Tribune took seriously the research by the Media Management Center's Readership Institute about disaffected young adults and in October 2002 started a Monday-through-Friday newspaper for young adults called RedEye. [See RedEye story on page 27.] The rival Chicago Sun-Times followed suit with the Red Streak. Both papers deserve credit for "trying something" in the wake of young adults rejecting their core products, though the Sun-Times does better with the young than the Tribune. Part of the Tribune's motivation was to keep out the Metro, a foreign-owned commuter tabloid that has invaded the major East Coast markets of Boston and Philadelphia. Another Tribune motivation was to try to drive the Sun-Times out of business since the paper is experiencing severe financial difficulties.

For a while, the Reds were given away. Now the attempt is to charge 25 cents for the purchase by their target audience—young adult professionals who commute. So far the watered down, tarted up, things-to-do laden Reds have failed to achieve critical mass. Readership figures are kept under wraps, which is an indication that their audiences are blip-sized. The Washington Post copied the Reds and launched its Express in spring 2003. [See inter-

view with Washington Post managing editor Steve Coll on page 17.] No readership data there, either. The Tribune's parent company started a mini-daily in New York City called amNewYork in conjunction with its Newsday. Other metropolitan newspapers have started weekly, young-adult oriented, free tabloid-sized newspapers with limited success. The Centre Daily Times in State College, Pennsylvania, has begun a young-themed section that wraps around the traditional daily, having tried and failed with a weekly free product six years ago. [See story by Center Daily Times publisher Henry B. Hartz III on page 21.] More attempts by the newspaper industry to woo the young are on the drawing board, including new weeklies in Cincinnati, Ohio and Louisville, Kentucky.

Newspaper companies deserve an A for trying, as well as an A for admitting, through their somewhat desperate actions, that they lack the affection of the young. At long last they are trying individually and collectively to do something. The owners of the Reds have been savaged by critics over the content and format of their publications. But so were the founders of USA Today 21 years ago. It took USA Today 11 years and more than one billion dollars in losses to achieve profitability and the better part of 15 years to be accepted as a respectable journalistic product. Give the Reds, the Express, amNew York, and other new daily, weekly and wrap-around products comparable time and money before pulling the plug.

The magic key is out there. Somewhere out there is the key to unlocking the young adult market. The key appears to be based on free (no cost) products and easy access. College students read campus newspapers because they are free and easy to obtain anywhere on campus. Young adults read alternative weeklies because they are free and easy to obtain around town. Both groups eschew traditional dailies.

Therefore, I suggest that daily newspapers create a free weekly product aimed at young adults in their circula-

tion area. This new weekly product should be twinned with the newspaper's free Web access, perhaps under a different, hipper name than *The Daily Bugle*. Young adults like the Web because it is virtually free and easy to navigate. Newspapers can use the weekly readership and Web site visits to sell the merits of the daily print publications. Some young people might grow into users of the Web, the weekly, and the daily. If not, two out of three ain't bad.

Newspapers can still do journalism. Washington Post executive editor Leonard Downie, Jr. and Associate Editor Robert Kaiser wrote a well-meaning book in 2002 about the deterioration

of journalism in the United States. "The News About the News: American Journalism in Peril" detailed the public's diminishing appetite for hard-hitting journalism. Other recent books have echoed the same theme that entertainment values are pushing journalism aside in many mainstream media. This is awful. Yet unless the most mainstream medium of them all—newspapers—can find a way to attract the young to their print and online sites, Pulitzer Prize-worthy journalism is going to go unnoticed and unheeded, and the mainstream press eventually will lack the resources to do good journalism because advertising support will have gone elsewhere.

There is not a bigger challenge for

the newspaper industry to confront in the early 21st century than winning over the young. Think Red. Think Web. ■

John K. Hartman is a professor of journalism at Central Michigan University in Mount Pleasant, Michigan. He is the author of two books, "The USA Today Way 2: The Future" (2000) and "The USA Today Way" (1992). He has examined much of the research done on young adult newspaper readership and is a widely quoted source on the topic. Jacqueline Hartman provided editing assistance to the author.

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Lessons Worth Learning About Young Readers

Young people will read newspapers and creative minds are figuring out how to reach them.

By Tom Curley

I really like something that the French editor Francois Dufour said about getting young people interested in the news. Dufour is pioneering the development of successful newspapers aimed at particular age groups, and he made an important observation about teenaged readers: "Sports and music news are very difficult to cover because the audience is split among many different passions. You can't say 'I'm doing a newspaper for teenagers.' You have to remember you're writing for a segmented audience."

That's excellent advice. It wasn't so long ago that most newspapers had "women's" sections, until it dawned on editors that the label stereotyped, patronized and risked alienating half their readership. We shouldn't have to learn that lesson all over again with young readers.

But having said that, there are some general things that can be said about the kind of news publications that will

draw readers of high school and college age. Again I turn to Dufour. I'm familiar with Dufour because at USA Today we made a careful study of what he was doing as we looked for ways to make our own publications more appealing to younger audiences. Here are some of his prescriptions that I consider right on target:

- Make it quick. Teenaged readers will give you 10 minutes if you're lucky, so your paper better offer fast-paced writing and easy layouts to navigate.
- Make it newsy. Of course sports and entertainment are important. But your target is young readers who might pick up a newspaper, and those are most likely to be readers who have a genuine interest in world news.
- Make it useful. Information that helps them succeed at school, in or out of class, will bring these readers back for more.

I have a fourth nugget of wisdom, gleaned from The Collegiate Readership Program that USA Today undertook in partnership with community newspapers and nearly 200 U.S. colleges and universities: Make it easily accessible and cheap. In fact, make it free, or nearly so. A small surcharge on tuition and fees subsidizes the program, and the papers are stacked near dormitories or wherever they're easy to pick up.

The results are encouraging. Newspaper readership on these campuses grows by multiples, and many students start reading more than one. An independent study shows that the newspaper habit leads to greater interest in public affairs, which in turn spurs further growth in newspaper reading. That might be a good reason to hope for the success of the free commuter tabloids that are now showing up in train and subway systems of U.S. and European cities. These publications might kick-

start reading habits where none existed and perhaps whet the appetite for more.

Another observation from the collegiate program is that male college students read more than their female classmates, mainly because of higher interest in sports news among young men. But Dufour's work with younger readers shows that school-age girls and boys are equally interested in newspapers. So there's a fifth recommendation: Start working on enticing women readers to

your paper while they're still in grade school.

There's plenty for the news business to cheer about in all this. Despite all you might have heard about the indifference of young people to news and public affairs, the facts show that they will read newspapers and that creative people in our industry are figuring out how to turn that basic fact into future subscriptions. Some of that important work is now under way at The Associated Press, and we will be

expanding the services and features we offer that will help our members attract young audiences. ■

Tom Curley is the president and CEO of The Associated Press. Prior to this, Curley was president and publisher of USA Today. In 1982, he became the original news staffer of USA Today after being asked in 1979 to study the feasibility of a national newspaper.

The Washington Post Reaches Out to Young Readers

'Put the journalism first, put the readers first, put the reporters first.

And start to move.'

In September Melissa Ludtke, editor of Nieman Reports, talked by phone with Steve Coll, managing editor of The Washington Post, about his experiences in trying to interest younger people in his newspaper's work. Excerpts from this interview follow.

Melissa Ludtke (editor, Nieman Reports): As managing editor of The Washington Post, what have you been most interested in learning about younger audiences and how their lives intersect or don't intersect with what newspapers do?

Steve Coll (managing editor, The Washington Post): The first and most important question is media use. And clearly, there are generations rising whose patterns of media use and information retrieval are really quite different from generations who have gone before them. And it's not just the young adults that the newspaper industry understandably concentrates on, but the generations coming immediately behind them, whose use of instant messaging and search technology is altering in profound ways their relationship with information and media. That younger generation is crucially important to newspapers in part be-

cause it is so large. It's larger than the baby boom generation.

And so, the first thing I struggle to understand is how these changing media use habits connect to the kind of journalism we produce, not just in the newspaper, but also on the Web. And then, as this generation ages, how can we capture them across all of our platforms while sustaining the business model that makes the journalism we do possible in the first place? It's not enough to just find an audience as all of the dot-com venture capital investors discovered. We have to find an audience from which we can sustain journalism that matters and that involves resources.

M.L.: Are there distinct fundamentally different challenges now?

Coll: Yes. And most of those involve the breakout of the Web as the ubiquitous medium. But I think it's important to see these challenges as a kind of synthesis, that is to say you have to conquer the new while you manage the inheritance in a successful and rational way. If you think about it in generational terms, it is a duty and a need of newspapers to serve the baby boom generation effectively until they

pass, and we know for a fact that the baby boom generation is going to read newspapers well into its 80's and do so loyally, and that's very important for the future of newspaper-based companies. And the generation that comes after them, the evidence suggests they are going to have a less deep and less loyal relationship with newspapers. But they're going to have some relationship as they age as well. So that platform and the journalism, and the newsroom culture, and the resources, and the organizational charts that serve it must continue even while you construct the transition. That's what makes it so interesting.

It's not a radical break. It's a really energetic and creative evolution that tries to hold both fronts together—the defensive and the offensive front—and really pull them together, so they're not fighting with each other but you are really just moving in the right pattern in both of these directions.

M.L.: Both directions at the same time. Is that physically possible?

Coll: This is a big advantage of the Web. In comparison to previous revolutions in media technology, the Web is much friendlier to newspapers than

the last couple of media.

M.L.: Do you mean broadcast media and cable?

Coll: You start with radio, then television, then cable television, and each of those media changed the way Americans and the world interacted with news and media. And they certainly undermined the previous primacy of newspapers. But each of those media was narrower and much less compatible with what newspapers do journalistically. Broadcast news across television, it's about the pictures first of all. Secondly, the delivery system of television news is really quite narrow. It's a small pipe to pour information into; it's what you can fit onto a screen over time. Thus even the best of the network news programs at the height of the networks' power in the mid-60's were pretty limited as sources of information about what happened in the world yesterday; only 27 minutes of what a newsreader or scattered correspondents could voice in that period of time.

By contrast, the Web is infinite in its spatial characteristics. It much more resembles the supermarket that a newspaper is. It has no constraints on time or space, yet it has many of the properties that make a newspaper attractive as a source of news. It's continuously available, it's easy to update, and so forth. And the Web is not that expensive to operate in comparison to a television network. So in some sort of big picture sense, I think the Web and newspapers are more compatible than some other technologies trying to partner and win allegiances of audiences.

M.L.: That brings me back to the conundrum you face in terms of retaining the business model that allows you to be a generator of news reporting in a way that you want to be for your



The Washington Post Sunday section for young readers.

current audience.

Coll: Right, and that's at the heart of the matter in a sort of medium-run sense because part of the problem when you think about the synthesis we've been discussing is what is the scale ultimately of the Web business? Nobody knows. How much revenue ultimately will it generate, and how effective will it be in supporting the newsgathering resources that we've inherited?

We know that the newspaper platform, while eroding in some long-term structural sense, is very supportive of the newsgathering resources and cul-

ture that we've built up. So it's more important in that sense than the unproven model of the Web. On the other hand, if you don't invest in the Web and discover what its potential is, then you are absolutely foreclosing the possibility of making this transition successfully.

In a historical sense, we're really very early in this story. It's only five years since the Web broke out, and here's what we know: The Web has become ubiquitous in American society. The rate of take-up is just astonishing in comparison to other technologies of its kind. The rate of penetration is just huge, and the pace at which that take-up has occurred is mind-boggling. There is no way that's going to reverse. Secondly, we know that the audiences that have participated in this revolution want to use this medium for news. And so they are turning to Web news sources in very large numbers. At The Washington Post, the total audience across all platforms that consumes our journalism has roughly quintupled in four years. That accounts for an enormous new Web audience that we've attracted. So that's another lesson we've now learned: There is a large audience that wants to consume

journalism on the Web, the kind of journalism we and other newspapers produce.

Now there's one other big piece of this that we don't know: What kind of business model is the Web piece going to produce by way of scale, and what is the pace at which that business model will emerge? And what are going to be the limits? Is this going to scale to basically the size of a radio station, in which case over 30 or 40 years it's going to be difficult to support the newsroom outside my glass window? Or is it going to be the first in a series of ways in which news organizations like ours deliver quality journalism of a

traditional type across multiple platforms to large audiences and in doing so are rewarded by the marketplace amply to continue with that kind of journalism? I don't know. I don't know what will happen over the next 20 years, but I think that's the question.

M.L.: Can you take one news product and successfully put it across these different platforms?

Coll: Well, you have to evolve. You have to continue to operate in ways that serve the next day's newspaper without yielding an inch. That is still the first priority. But in doing so you have to change to deliver simultaneously to this new and crucially important medium. This is where management comes in—figuring out how to do both of those things best not by operating from some theoretical manual, but by using common sense and a close adherence to the journalism. Put the journalism first, put the readers first, put the reporters first. And start to move. You have to insist on change because if you don't you won't evolve, and you'll miss this opportunity. But you also have to work from the ground up.

One of the problems with the Web is that it's always on, and a newspaper is used to operating once a day. So in starting to produce journalism for a Web site, you need to move across the clock in ways that you didn't before and initially in doing that it can be disruptive and cause anxiety in the newsroom. But once you get your feet under you, you realize that in many respects, but not all, it's quite compatible with what you would wish to do to make a great newspaper the next day. You end up having colleagues who are paying attention to the news earlier in the day than anyone else at the newspaper used to be. You have cycles of coverage that push you towards the edge of the story earlier in the day than you might have if you were only going to write once at six o'clock.

Anyway you have this enormous audience on the Web that is just very exciting to be in touch with, and when you start to engage with them they stimulate you as a journalist. They push you, they give you feedback, they respond to your work, they consume what you do with real relish, and that energizes the newsroom.

It's not easy. I don't mean to sound

Coll: To see how it fits in you kind of have to start where it began and then follow its evolution. About five or six years ago a Swedish company called Metro rolled out the model that Express represents. They began publishing in Europe a commuter-oriented free sheet that is now given away on subways in some American cities. And these papers have certain characteristics, a kind of structure of circulation and advertising and a business model in which you could produce a quick read newspaper that was not tabloid in its journalistic sensibility and yet would appeal, by its brevity and its graphic design and other characteristics, to public transportation riders who were nonreaders of newspapers.

The key facet of the Express model, from my point of view, in terms of readership, is that every free sheet of this kind—in the United States and in Europe—has succeeded because it appeals to nonreaders of newspapers who are nonetheless attractive to advertisers. These tend to be younger males commuting on public transportation to jobs early in their careers. Sometimes it appeals to immigrants and others who rely on public transportation in

big metropolitan areas like ours. But when we looked at the available research across a variety of companies and models, we concluded that even though there is an overlap around the edges, these papers succeed without cannibalizing in a serious way the readership of existing broadsheet quality newspapers.

Overall these are not readers of newspapers. Now why does that fit into our earlier conversation? In part, it's an attempt to capture generations and just find different platforms to deliver to different audiences, but we think there's maybe more of an opportunity than just that. Perhaps by operating intelligently, Express can cross-promote the Post's Web site and the news-



The Washington Post's free newspaper for young commuters.

Pollyannaish about it, and I know there are tensions between the two missions, but most of the time those tensions are minor in comparison to the sense of energy and excitement that this kind of journalism injects into the newsroom.

M.L.: This past August The Washington Post launched Express. It is a newspaper created with younger readers in mind. It's not a Web-based experience, but readers hold it in their hands, and it reads like a tabloid. It's a quick news read, particularly appealing to those who are maybe college age up to probably mid-30's. Can you explain the editorial thinking behind Express and how it fits into this kind of discussion we've been having?

paper, and over time we can migrate some meaningful minority from the nonreader status on the subway to habitual users of the Web site and perhaps, even over more time, subscribers to the newspaper. I don't know how many nonreaders of newspapers will ultimately migrate to The Washington Post through an Express strategy, but it can't hurt. We certainly won't lose anyone by trying, and I do think that in the research there is evidence that audiences that connect to Express are likely to be Web users for news and information. At a minimum we can migrate a significant number of people from Express towards washingtonpost.com and towards its search functions. And once they become part of our community on the Web, then that's good. From there they may deepen their relationship with the newspaper in some respects.

M.L.: With some of these subway publications, there has been criticism that they are dumbing down the news to appeal to these younger audiences and thereby not upholding the standards of journalism. Is there a concern that you are introducing a different kind of news reporting to a younger generation, somehow diluting what journalism is?

Coll: In the case of Express, this doesn't worry me. I think it's a legitimate question, but it doesn't worry me because what's in Express are wire service stories. It does not have a tabloid sensibility. The content in Express is quite hard news driven and derived from The Associated Press primarily, from the Los Angeles Times, and off of the wire service secondarily. It's not a different kind of journalism. It's very solid journalism. I think of it more as headline news. It's just a sense of scale and brevity and graphic design. There's no question that time use is changing in our culture and the need that everyone feels, even people who are very seriously interested in news, for efficiency and speed is greater than it was a couple of generations ago.

M.L.: The Washington Post has launched a Sunday section with lots of

graphics and charts that you were quoted as calling "webby and experimental."

Coll: We launched a section called Sunday Source. It is a straightforward newspaper section. In content terms, in many respects, it is derived from the mainstream of service journalism that we and other newspapers do. It was developed in part to address a structural problem in our Sunday newspaper, which was kind of a historical accident. Monday through Saturday we have all of these vertical sections that provide really rich lifestyle and service journalism: We have a broadsheet health section on Tuesday, a food section on Wednesday, a home section on Thursday, a very robust entertainment section called Weekend on Friday, and we do real estate on Saturdays.

On Sundays, we have a travel section, but these resources we'd built up in the newsroom that produced all of this exciting service journalism were underrepresented in the Sunday paper. So part of what we were trying to do was to pull them together into a news section in a Sunday paper that could draw on all of this expertise and staff that we've built up over the years to deliver something extra on Sundays.

So that was step one. Then step two was, okay, let's execute this in a way that is designed to try to include, if not directly target, younger readers. Let's not execute it in a way so that it is designed and presented with sort of baby boomer design and journalism sensibilities only in mind. Let's try to think about presentation, format, look and feel that tries to go down a generation or two. And what would that mean, and how do you connect it to the sensibilities that seem to attract large young audiences on the Web?

And so we ended up with a section that in design and presentation terms is closer to the Web than anything else we publish or design. It's more graphic-driven. There is less pure text, more stories broken down into component parts and presented through graphics and captions and boxes and such. Obviously, this look and feel is derived in substantial part from design innova-

tion pioneered by USA Today and others. And also fundamental to this section, in a more traditional way, are pages of listings and sort of calendar and entertainment functions that we thought were missing in our paper on Sunday.

M.L.: What mechanisms have you put in place at the Post to assess and measure ways that these approaches are working or not working?

Coll: We've got a terrific research department and we do quite a lot of research both on a sort of project basis and on a continuing basis to measure perceptions of the paper and the Web site.

M.L.: Is this done through focus groups?

Coll: No. We do scientifically grounded quantified research of the sort where you need a pretty large sample size to get to some level of validity.

M.L.: Have you gotten any feedback from this yet?

Coll: Yes, we've gotten some feedback, which is very positive. We did research before we launched Sunday Source to make sure we weren't delivering "new Coke" in some way that we couldn't perceive. It's sort of not surprising that an organization of this size with all the talent can get something out the door that people would generally like.

The more important question is over time, where does it lead us? How does it help us, or to what degree does it help us? Because of the ownership we have and the resources we have the Post is very much of a long-run place. This section's place in the Sunday paper is something that we will all measure more in the long run.

M.L.: As these younger generations get older, can you envision 20 years from now how they're going to look at the newspaper as part of the way they will take in news?

Coll: I wouldn't pretend to see the future in 20 years out, but I think you can start to sketch it. Some of this is just my hope, but I think that if you look backward 200 years and ask what values and needs of an open society like ours are likely to endure, then you would say that the American people are always going to want to be well-informed by independent journalists who hold government accountable and who report on the exercise of power and the world we live in. And they will support organizations that deliver the news they need in attractive and accurate and reliable formats.

And what's the delivery system? And where do newspapers fit in that? The baby boomer generation is going to

live until 2020, so newspapers are going to be a part of the delivery system for at least 20 years. Can you connect the community of readers and the journalism and resources that produce it over those 20 years to other platforms that are equally ubiquitous and exciting and attractive—the always-on Web delivery, mobile Web delivery, news and information that arrives in your car without causing you to drive into a tree, and news and information that arrives across your cell phone? Or will news and information be customized for you in an intelligent way so you can take advantage of the Post's independent reporting about your school district to go deep on the subjects that matter to you and your neighbors?

When your local government interacts with you, what role does The Washington Post play in helping you to evaluate your government's performance? Is it only going to be the story that we write in the newspaper the next day, or will our journalism across other platforms including the Web also be a part of the way you live as a citizen and as a curious American?

Journalism is going to survive. The trick for people who have jobs like mine is to muster it and manage it so that we can preserve the quality and traditions we've inherited, and they're certainly under pressure. And I don't know that we'll succeed, but I certainly don't take failure for granted, either. ■

Retaining the Core While Reaching Out to the Young

What is needed is a talented young staff, fresh ideas, and a solid business plan.

By Henry B. Haitz III

The numbers speak for themselves. During the past 20 years, total newspaper readership has declined, and the younger the reader, the faster the decline. At newspapers, executives are working to keep their products relevant and meaningful to their potential audiences. But even though newspapers provide a huge variety of news, advertising and information, often they do so while speaking relatively the same way to all readers. To increase our value to young adults—for purposes of this article, those between the ages of 18 and 24—we will need to speak to them differently. By speak, I am talking about finding different ways to present our news, advertising and information to them. Spend time with young people today and you'll know what I mean.

In cities and communities across this country, new approaches are being tried to attract young adults to newspapers. In Chicago, each of the major papers now publishes a subway tabloid: RedEye from the Tribune, Red Streak, the product of the Sun-Times.

There is Trib pm in Pittsburgh, Express in D.C., and other serious efforts. ESPN, The Magazine has a median reader age of 30.7, while at Sports Illustrated (SI) the comparable figure is 38.1. Realizing this, in the fall SI began the weekly SI on Campus that has become part of college student newspapers throughout the country. And ESPN2 is joining the weekday morning show competition with Cold Pizza, aimed at young male sports fans.

University Readership Program

Six years ago Graham Spanier, president of Pennsylvania State University, pioneered what has become the model university newspaper readership program. In dorms and from racks around the campus, students can pick up The New York Times, USA Today, and the Centre (Penn.) Daily Times every weekday. The cost to students is discounted by the newspapers and paid for as a part of every student's tuition. Independent research (available at psu.edu/

ur/newspaper—see Pulse) has shown that students find the program valuable and, not surprisingly, it turns out that accessibility, proximity and a low price are the major factors affecting readership.

On an average weekday, students usually pick up 2,300 copies of the Centre Daily Times, 2,400 copies of The New York Times, and 3,300 copies of USA Today. And this reading has not stopped them from also reading their college newspaper, The Daily Collegian, which has a press run of about 18,000 copies. So much for young adults not reading newspapers!

It is important to place this effort in the context of our region's demographics and our newspaper's history and mission. Centre County has a population of 140,000; 32 percent of the county's adults and 44 percent of State College's 42,000 adults are 18 to 24, compared with the national average of 13 percent. We know that about 55 percent of adults in the county read our newspaper each weekday, while just 21 percent of those between the

ages of 18 and 24 do.

These young non-newspaper readers present us with a great challenge and opportunity. The Centre Daily Times has a 25,000 daily readership (34,000 on Sunday) and has been named the best of the state's newspaper of its size for six consecutive years. Last year it was named Newspaper of the Year by the Pennsylvania Newspaper Association Foundation. At about this same time, we engaged Urban & Associates to help us do some strategic planning. Our key initiative: to create content tailored to the 18 to 34 age group, primarily at those between the ages of 18 to 24, and improve our paper's accessibility to that age group as well. Dan Cotter, Urban's COO, provided strong guidance to us during our exploration.

The university readership program had shown us that this age group had an interest in our newspaper. Then, using our own independent research, we learned that students regarded our paper as the best source for finding a job, a place to live, and buying a car. No other publication came close on those measures, and we were rated number one in other key areas as well. Learning this made us feel it was important that we continue to reach them through our newspaper, but we thought it was also important not to make changes to our core product and possibly endanger our strong existing relationship with current readers.

The Newspaper's New Approach

What had brought us success was wrapping our newspaper with a section about football content on Penn State game days. We also had wrapped wel-

coming content around newspapers for those staying at participating hotels. Both were traditional broadsheet wraps. And we'd had success with a weekly entertainment tabloid called Weekender and More. So as we considered what we'd do next, the idea surfaced of combining the best of each of these in a colorful tabloid section that we would wrap around the core newspaper.

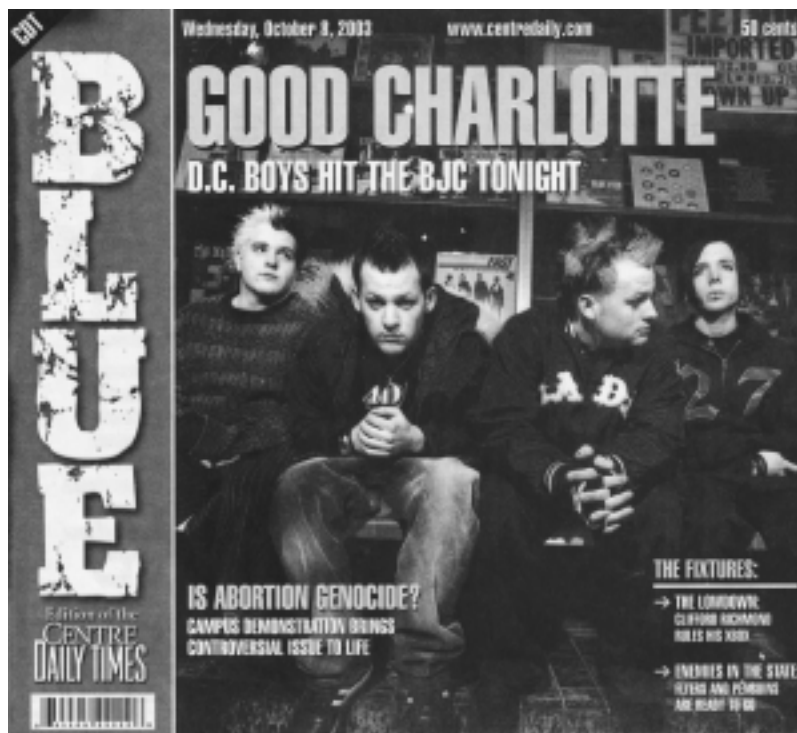
We also appreciated that this new section had to be available to our target audience at all the places they were—which meant providing it off-campus, too. Initially we decided on selling the

tells us that entertainment and sports are related to high readership among this age group, and we knew their interest in local news. Our newspaper's vice president and executive editor, Bob Heisse, has been instrumental in making this a reality. Because we knew involvement of young people is critical to its success, Heisse hired very talented staff members in their 20's to produce content for what would be called Blue (Penn State's color). The editor of Blue is in her mid-20's and most of the other staff members are in their early 20's. Heisse continues to be the seasoned top editor who these young people need, as he provides leadership and guidance required to publish a daily section. And he does this while still overseeing the rest of the newspaper.

In our planning process, we envisioned that out of our newspaper's local news coverage would emerge the top local issue of the day, as seen from young adults' perspectives, with reference made to other local coverage inside the Centre Daily Times. A standard feature of our prototype wrap-around was that it referred readers inside to our core product. On the entertainment beat, we planned on featuring an "around town guide" to let students know what's going on that night and the next, as well as other related features.

Sports was designed to include information about Penn State athletes and athletics. And we developed partnerships with The Philadelphia Inquirer and Pittsburgh Post-Gazette to get daily sports commentary from them. This served to link students to hometown news; the majority of Penn State students are from Pennsylvania and follow their hometown sports, especially pro sports.

Once a prototype was developed, we held a series of focus groups. We were somewhat surprised. Practically



A cover of Blue, the Centre (Penn.) Daily Times's wraparound.

papers (with the wrap-around section) at single copy locations located downtown, across the street from campus, in and near apartment complexes, and along bus routes. While geographic zoning happens routinely in larger markets, our strategy involved creating a combined geo-demographic prod-

To develop ideas for the wrap-around's news and information, a task force was created and then, a while later, a new staff was brought together to make these ideas happen. Research

every young adult was enthusiastic about Blue and its tabloid size. They were most interested in the “around town guide” and the hometown news features, which includes two pages of short articles from towns around the state. These focus group participants also let us know that they didn’t like being stereotyped as only caring about sex, drugs and rock ‘n’ roll. Though interested in those things, that didn’t define all of their interests. For us to do so felt patronizing to them.

Comments made during the focus groups also revealed that they liked coupons and any information that would help them to identify where good deals could be found. They also said that information about jobs was important to them, not just jobs for careers but also jobs to earn money while they were in school. Because of our research, we knew that more than half of Penn State’s students are employed, so hearing these comments, as well, made us decide to have a job page theme two times each week.

They also told us they didn’t want the tabloid cover to appear in the vertical “portrait” format because that’s not the way it sat in the rack. They preferred a horizontal “landscape” format, so that is what we use. They also said they wouldn’t read the student newspaper any less if Blue was published. They felt that the two products were different enough—and each of value to them—that they’d still want to get their campus news.

Lessons Learned

Once Blue got going, we learned quickly how good its cover needs to be. Along with how our inside references are presented and if they adequately

portray the benefits for readers to move inside, Blue’s cover is a critical piece. We received some helpful tutoring from a designer for the Philadelphia Daily News. But we also learned that our cover’s look needs a different feel from the tone of most newspaper pages. We’re now getting feedback from publications like Maxim so that we can better understand the formula they use to attract readers.

Another big lesson is in marketing and awareness. It’s not enough to put Blue on the street and expect the audience to know what’s inside and pick it up. The marketing of something new

in almost all single copy locations in the two zip codes closest to campus. We’re not sure what is going to happen, but we believe it’s worth a solid try.

Challenges Ahead

While I believe our news staff will continue to provide strong content, and our covers are improving, my biggest concern remains our ability to generate greater awareness for this venture’s benefits. It’s an expensive enterprise that requires a business plan in which the revenues exceed its costs. Another

important consideration with our younger readers is the transient nature of their lives. This means that we continuously need to find ways to remind our potential audience about the value of our product and this section and do so more than needs to be done in an average, less transient, market.

Despite the challenges we face, I’m quite optimistic. So far this semester the pickup rate for the Centre Daily Times is up 10 percent from before Blue was with our newspaper. The New York Times is up slightly and USA Today is now down in double digits. Young adults who read Blue offer positive feedback and advertisers are starting to catch on. It’s also been invigorating to see a young,

talented news staff that is so enthusiastic about its work. It will require that kind of sustained passion if we’re going to succeed. That is just one of the things that can make newspapers such fun and fulfilling places to work. ■

Henry B. Haitz III, president and publisher of the Centre (Penn.) Daily Times, is to become president and publisher of the Bradenton (Fla.) Herald in January 2004.

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A Blue cover image.

or different is expensive and time consuming. I won’t venture too far astray into the business side, including advertising, but without a solid business plan a newspaper is not going to make something like this work in the long run. We’ve spent as much time on all of these marketing issues as we have on developing its content. Along the way we discovered, for example, that some home delivery customers were upset that they couldn’t get it. And our downtown single copy sales have gone so well that we plan to distribute the sec-

How a Newspaper Becomes 'H.I.P.'

To attract younger readers, a newspaper needs to be 'human, interactive and personal.'

By Colleen Pohlig

Move over, boomers. At 78 million between the ages of 39 and 57, you used to be the most coveted population in America. Until Generation Y, that is, who have you beat by about 10 million. At 16 to 24 years old, the older part of the Gen-Y's are a powerful, cash-wielding, get-it-while-it's-hot group of 32 million young adults, who spend about \$200 billion annually and influence another \$300-400 billion in spending.

While the 2003 Scarborough Report tells us that a healthy number of 18 to 24-year-olds regularly read a newspaper—38 percent nationally—there is no guarantee this will continue or the percentage will increase as they get older. In fact, there's plenty to suggest it won't. Newspapers are up against a behemoth we all know about, the Internet. There is also a potentially ruinous trend that most of us are just waking up to: This generation uses news differently than their parents and grandparents. If they can't interact with it, they will go—and are going—elsewhere.

Searching for Solutions

What, then, will attract them to newspapers? What is the future of newspapers if they don't start subscribing? Why are this generation's newspaper reading habits so different from previous genera-

tions? In the newspaper business, all of us are asking these questions and scrambling to implement different solutions, usually partial ones—a teen page here, a tabloid section there, an entertainment spread somewhere else.

I don't think anyone has yet found

what we'd call "the solution." This is perhaps because I don't believe there is one, in the sense that a newspaper can do any one thing to capture young readers' attention. What connects this generation to information and news is too complex to fit into our formulas.

They are too savvy about marketing and too sophisticated to fall for a moderate tweak of the passive service most of us provide in our print product. It's no longer enough to offer news and expect people to accept what we offer as the last word. Nor is it enough to allow the usual politicians and loudest voices to dominate the ink. Or to believe that "connecting to the community" only means printing a dozen letters to the editor each day.

This generation craves—no, demands—debate and participation in the news. Instead of waiting for news to reach them, often they determine what "news" is in their own blogs, in chat rooms, and in online forums. How they use news is all about hands-on debate and involvement in a continuous and evolving marketplace of ideas. By becoming pundits about issues affecting them and their peers, by being observers and commentators, they are breaking down what they perceive to be the elitist attitude of too many newsrooms. And they're doing it all with the click of a mouse or the tap of a stylus and with a steady discourse about political and social issues and trends in their daily lives—trends most newspa-



Next appears every Sunday in The Seattle Times.

pers show no indication of knowing anything about.

An unmistakable example of this new communication tool is Weblogs. Most blogs are written by your average Jane or Joe who take on a pundit's role by reading and thinking in a way that newspaper "experts" or usual sources rarely do. The few newspaper blogs that exist are hugely popular, largely because they allow the reader to see the journalist as a human being, connecting with them without the stiff, imperial we voice that turns so many younger people off. And most blogs allow—indeed, thrive on—reader interaction.

What Can Be Done?

To compete with the Internet and have a chance at attracting young people, newspapers must offer them a combination of goods: authentic and edgy news coverage, more international news, stories with more young voices, fresh writing and designs, interactive options such as blogs and forums and, perhaps most importantly, flexibility.

Letters to the editor? Lose 'em—unless you print almost all of them online, allowing the collection of comments to morph into a marketplace of ideas instead of today's typical practice of selecting a few letters worthy enough to make the one page allotted daily to community dialogue.

Young reporters in the newsroom? Stop shunting them off to school board meetings and teaching them to write to the same 50-year-old white homeowner whom newspapers have always written to. Encourage them to weave whimsy into their news stories along with the facts, to write something they would enjoy reading. Instill in all reporters the need to consider different generations when reporting and writing, breaking

down for young, old and in-between what the latest news means for them.

Write shorter but with substance and authority. This generation is all about quick-hit information gathering—not dumbed-down news, mind you, just shorter, smarter news stories. Many in this crowd stick to opinion pages where they can get both a sense of what happened and a point of view, so they can form their opinions and debate with peers, on and offline.

This crowd also craves more international news. It is the most ethnically diverse generation of any—6.8 million people in the United States describe themselves as being more than one

race; of those, 42 percent are under 18, according to the Yankelovich's summary of 2000 Census data. They realize they are part of the global system and, as such, want to know how they fit into it. Since the September 11th terrorist attacks, a majority in every generation indicate they are more interested in international news than two years ago, but it is members of Gen-Y who show the highest jump: 74 percent of them say "it is important to me to keep up with international news," up from 65 percent prior to the attacks, according to Yankelovich.

Young people care about social issues and politics and want to know in particular how events in these realms relate to them. This is a smart bunch; they know the world is full of war and crime and injustice, but they also want to read about real people—locally and internationally—who are trying to make a difference.

As newspaper editors and managers, make some or all of these changes. But don't expect newspapers to ever be able to cultivate the same loyal readers who turn only to your paper as the day begins. And this is a good thing. The world is too complex for anyone to read one paper, or look at one Web site, or listen to one news program.

The Seattle Times's Approach

At The Seattle Times, we're trying to attract and serve more young readers in a variety of ways. One piece of our strategy is Next, a fresh new opinion page written by and for young readers every Sunday in The Seattle Times's op-ed section. On the Next Web site, readers find an expanded—and interactive—version of what appears in the newspaper. We are also starting a blog



Next features opinion pieces by young writers.

on the Next site called Nextopia. I am the editor of Next and, at 31, am close enough in age to the Next writers that we agree on much of what we'd like to see in Next and in newspapers in general.

Another piece is a companywide group of young people who examine the paper and look for ways to make it more appealing to youth, whether through specific story ideas, design suggestions, or bringing in young people to give us their opinions. Once the newspaper's budget picture brightens a bit, we plan to conduct more research on local young people's reading habits and desires.

Next is not the entire answer, but it's one approach. And we're seeing some good results. Close to 400 young people applied for 25 paid freelance positions. Healthy numbers of visitors check out the Next Web site and interact in online polls. Dozens of people send e-mails each week responding to Next stories and/or they submit guest columns for consideration. Nearly 300 high school and college educators use Next in the classroom each week through our Newspapers in Education program.

Once a month, over greasy pizza and cold pop, I meet with the Next team of freelance writers, all of whom are between 17 and 25 years old. These writers come armed with well-researched column ideas to present and debate with their peers and with several young Seattle Times's staffers. We help them to focus their topics and steer them to sources. They have about three weeks to research and write each opinion column. I edit them and typically offer suggestions for revisions. Each Sunday, we print two to three columns on the page and run up to eight more a week online. We run nearly every letter on the Next Web site.

What sets Next apart from the rest of the paper are the personal perspectives of this diverse group of young writers. Readers don't come to this page or the Web site for the freelancers' writing or expertise; they come to hear from peers about issues that matter. Others come to these pages so they can connect with this younger generation.

The writers aren't afraid to get personal about everything from the struggles of living in a ghetto to being a young gay male and a practicing Catholic to one young minority's fear of becoming "whitewashed" at a mostly white college.

Interestingly, Next freelancers often write about many of the same issues that members of older generations are concerned about. The main difference for our mostly young readers is not what they want to read about but how they want the story told: They want stories that help them understand what a particular issue means to them.

Social Security is a good example.

We believe the stories need to be edgier and more locally focused

Normally this topic seems incredibly remote to these younger readers, largely because much of the coverage is written with those 50 years old and older in mind. But here are some lines from a November story in Next about Social Security: "Generation Y has a problem—a voting problem. And this is troublesome when politicians' decisions today greatly influence whether Gen-Y will be able to rely on having Social Security pensions." The writer goes on to explain how few young people vote, which allows politicians to make Social Security promises to boomers, who do vote. The writer goes on to break down the declining funding picture of this entitlement program. "This means," she writes, "that Generation Y is paying into the system now, but won't receive its fair share of benefits."

This is a good example of what Next tries to accomplish: writers breaking down complex political and social issues that matter to young people without losing substance or dumbing them down. Even as they include personal perspectives, opinions are always backed up by credible sources and

relevant information.

In January 2004, Next will celebrate its one-year anniversary. We recently took a hard look at what works and, more importantly, what doesn't and are implementing some changes this winter. We believe the stories need to be edgier and more locally focused, and we're tweaking the page design and pushing more flexible layouts.

Next is a work in progress. And if progress means transforming valuable space in the paper one day each week and everyday online to create a place for young people to communicate with each other and the world, then we're succeeding. After all, how many 22-year-olds' opinions are respected—and printed—in a major metro paper? And how many older readers have a chance to understand and connect with the ideas and opinions of Gen-Y, told by members of Gen-Y themselves?

However, yes, Next is merely one page, one day a week dedicated to youth issues and opinions (though a few Next columns have appeared in the rest of the op-ed section). And it is on, as some of our writers lovingly refer to it, the "ghetto page," the back page of the Sunday op-ed section.

Next is one piece of the puzzle. It's a start to seeking out and including youth voices and issues throughout the paper, to creating a more interactive experience for readers, and to connecting on a human level with a huge sector of the community that otherwise might not pick up *The Seattle Times*.

To borrow a phrase from one of our Next writers, newspapers need to be "H.I.P."—human, interactive and personal. We will never be able to compete with the Internet on a level playing field. But we can—and must—become H.I.P. if we want to continue to serve and cultivate readers. ■

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Drawing Young Urban Commuters to a New Tabloid

‘Even the name had to say, “Look at me. I’m not like the other papers.”’

By Joe Knowles

Youth is not the only thing wasted on the young. Newspapers have squandered mountains of resources in attempts to capture the attention of young adults, but so far most of the effort has been in vain. Readership statistics among this coveted demographic group haven’t budged—except to move further downward.

This is troublesome to all of us ink-on-paper people, who don’t have to look far to see a future where the only people reading newspapers will be retirees. Rather than give up the fight, however, the Chicago Tribune decided to engage it head-on. The result, introduced in October 2002, is the RedEye, a tabloid edition aimed at young, urban commuters in Chicago. After learning of the Tribune’s decision to launch RedEye, the Chicago Sun-Times began working on a youth oriented paper of its own called Red Streak.

Thankfully there is still a robust market full of readers who want a full-service, full-size paper, and they are well served by world-class newsgathering organizations such as the Tribune. RedEye’s mission was not to give those readers a “Trib Lite” or a “Tribune on Training Wheels,” but rather to rethink the traditional newspaper and edit it in a way that it would be more attractive and compelling for these young nonnewspaper readers. There were some concerns that a new paper might cannibalize existing Tribune readers, but we were confident we could keep these losses small by making RedEye a

much different publication than its older, more established sibling.

From these ideas, RedEye began to take shape: a smartly edited, general-interest newspaper that would be easy to consume on mass transit, a new breed of newspaper with its own distinct identity. Even the name had to say, “Look at me. I’m not like the other papers.”

RedEye’s Look and Feel

RedEye’s visuals are bold, its stories are quick and to the point. There are no “Continued on page ...” lines. In

study after study, focus group after focus group, readers kept telling us they hated turning pages in midstory, especially while on a bus or train. Why not listen to them? If people have 20 minutes at most to spend with a paper on their way to or from work, why do so many papers still write and edit the news as if everyone is leisurely reading it in an easy chair?

To get attention in an increasingly cluttered landscape of media options, RedEye’s cover has a billboard format, designed for maximum impact in a street-sales environment. The back

page isn’t sports, as it is in many tabloids, but instead is a destination space for the most buzz-worthy stories we can find. This way, you have something to read on the train even if you don’t have enough elbowroom to actually open the paper. Sports takes its place inside the book, serving as the bridge from the news to the features section. That feels natural. Sports, by definition, fall somewhere between reality and entertainment.

Celebrity and people news compete with “important” stories for prime display space in RedEye. Stories are judged on their relevance and the level of interest they are likely to create. If everyone is talking about Britney Spears kissing Madonna at the MTV Video Music Awards, the RedEye should be talking about it, too. Newspapers that ignore these types of stories are looking down upon their read-



A cover from the Chicago Tribune’s RedEye.

ers from a very shaky perch.

The stars of RedEye's universe tend to be younger and more diverse—a reflection of our readers. In RedEye's world, Jam Master Jay's passing trumps Bob Hope's. John Ritter vs. Johnny Cash? That turned out to be a decision we didn't have to make because the two celebrities died on a day outside of our weekday publishing cycle. If we had to make the call, we'd have played the sitcom star over the music icon. Why? Ritter's death was more unexpected, he was the star of a current show, and he meant more to a greater number of our readers, many of whom only knew Cash from his recent remake of a Nine Inch Nails song.

Challenges Ahead for RedEye

Our approach to RedEye put off a lot of media critics, who quickly dismissed RedEye and said it was just “dumbing down” the news. They probably said much the same about USA Today or CNN's Headline News, two other vehicles—and successful ones, I might add—for delivering information to people in a different format. It's nice to know that as times and habits change at a frenetic rate, we can count on media criticism to be a dependable source of inertia and traditionalism.

The critics also chided RedEye for recycling Tribune content. Maybe they would have been happier if we used The Associated Press like most other papers like ours do. In any case, RedEye's reliance on nonunique content has diminished as we've grown. No, we don't have a Baghdad bureau yet, but we are producing a substantial amount of original local stories and features. RedEye has three—soon to be four—reporters covering the city,

not to mention its own cadre of columnists, a fashion writer, a TV critic, and a movie critic who goes by the name of Mr. Cranky.

Still, it remains to be seen whether RedEye or any of its numerous imitators will win this campaign. Perhaps young people who have never been exposed to a daily newspaper habit within their households will never develop one on their own. I asked a young journalism student if she felt newspapers were an essential part of her daily routine, and her answer was telling. “I feel the need for information,” she said, “but I don't feel the need for a newspaper.”

The biggest challenge remains getting people to simply make the effort to pick up a paper—any paper. When a RedEye lands in their lap, they're happy enough to read it, even downright enthusiastic about it, but if they have to cross the street to find an honor box

and then fumble for a quarter—well, that's too much trouble, they tell us. They want the news, but they want it when they want it, where they want it, and how they want it.

RedEye wrestled with this dilemma when it came to defining what role our Web site (www.redeyechicago.com) should play. We knew young people had an affinity for electronically delivered news, but if we followed the dominant newspaper model and put all of our content online, how would that help us build a daily newspaper habit? We chose to make the site a “teaser,” with just a reproduction of the day's cover and a few summaries of our best stories. This might not be the ultimate solution, but giving away valuable content for free in one format and asking people to pay for it in another didn't seem like a viable long-term strategy, either. Most newspapers, the Tribune included, have adopted a free access

model for reading the newspaper on its Web site, but if news organizations were to begin anew—as we were doing—I'm not sure they would make the same choice now that they did then.

This nexus of news delivery, in my opinion, is where the battle for future readers will be won or lost. Perhaps the newspaper subscription of the future is a bundled product: print, Internet and customized e-mail, to fit the changing needs and preferences of this new breed of consumer. This notion of “my news, my way” is why RedEye initiated a home delivery program last summer, even though it wasn't part of the original business plan. We'd thought of street sales, but when some readers told us “just put it on our doorstep, and I'll write you a check. Don't ask me to make a decision everyday. Let me make one decision and be



RedEye finds most of its readers on the subway.

done,” we offered home delivery. The cost for five days delivery is a dollar each week (a 20 percent discount), and the Sunday Tribune can be included for another dollar (it normally costs \$1.79 for home delivery). So far about 600 people have signed up for home delivery of RedEye.

Young people are also accustomed to getting much of their news free, or for next to nothing. RedEye’s circulation model is an adjustable mix of free and paid; currently the mix is about 90 percent free, 10 percent paid. Retail outlets and honor boxes are gradually being converted to paid-only, but we will continue to offer free papers indefinitely at certain transit stops and in places like college campuses where transactions can be difficult to conduct

and where we want to be sure we reach our desired audience. The idea of an all-free paper was seriously considered in the beginning, but the company decided that the news and information we were providing had value and readers would recognize this and pay for it.

Surprisingly, or maybe not surprisingly, advertisers have embraced RedEye more readily than readers. RedEye has picked up 250 new advertising accounts from clients who had never before been in a Tribune product. I’d like to think the ad folks are ahead of the curve, but more likely they’re just as desperate as newspapers are to reach new customers. Circulation numbers are inching upward, though not as quickly as we had hoped. We are, however, reaching our target

audience effectively, based on Gallup Poll figures. And so far the only measurable cannibalizing of existing readers has come at the expense of our competition.

RedEye’s success won’t really be measurable for years. We won’t know for sure if this experiment worked until another upstart publication comes along to attract the next generation, the one that no longer finds the tired old RedEye relevant. ■

Joe Knowles is coeditor of RedEye. Before his work on RedEye, he was the Chicago Tribune’s design and graphics editor for two years and associate sports editor for 10 years.

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Meshing Young Ideas With Older Sensibilities

At the Orlando Sentinel, reaching a younger audience is happening without alienating their older one.

By Elaine Kramer

The young woman sat, chin resting in both hands, at a focus group session for 18- to 24-year-olds from Central Florida. The moderator had asked whether the panel members typically get their news from TV, the Internet, radio or the newspaper, in this case the Orlando Sentinel. “The newspaper is almost, like, *outdated*,” the woman said, “because there are more *entertaining* ways to get the same information.”

It was a discouraging and ironic moment, as the journalists watching the focus group recognized the unwanted truth before them: This group of long-shot potential readers generally felt it managed just fine without the paper. Read it online? A slightly better possibility but still a slim one. The panel members said they want their news provided to them while they do other things: multitasking is important. They want their news to

reflect their lives more than it does now. They hate the idea of having papers stack up unread. And they want—and expect—their news to be free.

The observing journalists grumbled at the focus group from the other side of the one-way glass, as their reaction moved from resentment to resolve: We have to figure this out. The job of turning the 18 to 34 age group into regular newspaper readers is complex and confounding. But it is in the hands of newspaper people, who are creative, competitive and not easily dissuaded from a task they believe in.

Reaching the 18 to 34 demographic group is a strategic priority for the Sentinel and its corporate parent, The Tribune Co., as circulation numbers at papers nationwide continue to slide. In Orlando, the percentage of people 18 to 24 who read the weekday paper fell 10 percentage points over the past five years and of people 25 to 34 it fell

two points. Sunday readership in these age groups showed an even bigger drop over the same period. Yet this age group represents—for newspapers just as for all consumer products—our long-term future. We need them to be customers for what we produce.

The solutions are out there, and I believe they include:

- New publications, sections or features that address increasingly niche interests
- Adding to staff diversity by hiring younger journalists and doing more to incorporate their ideas into our coverage
- New pricing strategies recognizing that, increasingly, people think news should be free
- New delivery methods or formats.

We need to make these kinds of changes while not alienating our ha-

bitual readers, who become incensed and vocal when we tamper with the way things are. And we must maintain our standards and integrity to remain the most credible, reliable news source.

Something for Everyone

Attracting younger readers in itself is a challenge: They don't have the newspaper habit, are more comfortable with other media, and have interests and priorities that newspapers tend to under-cover, possibly because most newspaper decision-makers belong to an older age group.

And what kinds of content do young adult readers want? They tell us through readership surveys and just for the asking that they like writing that has personality and voice. They also want to see their lives reflected in our pages. In fact, they don't want content targeted to them as a single, like-thinking group, and they don't want their diversity masked by a label such as Generation Y or Z. They get annoyed if we pigeon-hole them as wanting only short and simple stories, emphasizing that they appreciate complex issues, too.

Many of their statements are compatible with what older readers say. Both groups want lively writing and a broad range of topics. They like to be surprised, informed and entertained. Young adult readers as well as older ones count on the newspaper as the most credible source, considering it more thorough than TV or radio and more accurate and reliable than online. As one 18- to 24-year-old focus group participant said, the paper may not have a youthful image, but it has a credible one: "I have an image of a professor. You have a high opinion of him; you know he's smart—but he kind of dresses funny."

Newspapers can and should feel safe developing sections or features they know will appeal to young adult readers. Content that generally "skews younger" will also attract older readers. This is simply because older readers have children or grandchildren who are younger or at least because they used to be young themselves and want

to keep up with what's relevant in a changing world. They continue to count on newspapers for this information, as they always have. This wouldn't necessarily work in reverse—young readers with less life experience are unlikely to have interest in niche content for older readers.

An example at the Sentinel of older reader interest in niche youth content is a weekly page in sports called Rush, which covers extreme or "action" sports. We added the page early this year because of the subject's growing popularity nationwide and because of its appeal to younger readers. A new feature, its readership probably hasn't settled yet, however early results show it is doing fine with young readers—but it is most popular with readers ages 55 and older.

Papers should change their content—create new publications, sections or features—to attract younger readers. In fact, we must do this and fast. However, the task only appears to be complicated by a fear of alienating our traditional readers. The opposite is true: They're counting on us.

A Seat at the Table

Newsrooms sometimes get fat and stodgy about what is news; we cover things we've always covered, with many of the same beats and priorities we've had for years. Yet as the Readership Institute's data from a couple years ago told us, readers want to see their lives—regular people's lives—better reflected in the newspaper. This is true for all readers, including those in the 18 to 34 age group.

An important step toward greater relevance is a more diverse staff of journalists. Most U.S. newsrooms have worked hard to improve their cultural and ethnic diversity to enable us to cover our communities better. The next important step is to include fully our increasingly diverse newsroom staffs in story idea generation and news decision-making. One group that needs to be heard is young journalists.

The Sentinel has tried a couple things to encourage participation.

- All staff members were invited earlier this year to a half-day informational and brainstorming session on attracting younger readers, and approximately 60 people from a staff of 340 showed up, most of them under 35. The group's most resilient ideas were to write stories with more voice and personality—in other words, narrative accounts and vivid stories told through the experiences of real people. Participants also felt the paper's front page choices and design should be more vibrant.
- Out of that exercise we created a Young Readers Task Force, which observed focus groups, did reporting in the community, and collected best practices from newspapers and other media around the country. This group's most influential ideas were to add a beat specifically for this age group's interests, to cover our colleges better, and to revamp our weekend Calendar section. They said we should write more stories that reflect the lives of younger adults, such as practical information for first-time experiences (apartments, cars, marriages, children, home-ownership). These sections and features are in the works. A yet-to-be-completed recommendation is to add a younger metro columnist. The task force also recommended adding at least one younger journalist at each morning's news meeting to contribute ideas for coverage or specific stories. That participation was begun in November.
- This follows a guest editor program we initiated in 2002 to rotate staff members into the afternoon Page One news meeting for two-week periods. The guest editor contributed ideas for the Page One story list and led a daily critique of the paper. About one-third of the participants in the first year of the program were between 18 and 34 years old. Their specific interests were as diverse as the participants, but generally they thought our front page should be less predictable and our writing much more lively.

Those main points are consistent with what readers of all ages have been telling us. Again, we can take these steps recommended by and for younger people without fearing an exodus by older ones. This younger age group has the capacity and capability of enhancing our coverage, and it is in the staff and readers' best interest for editors to tap this expertise.

Can News Be Free?

Content ideas that are purely newsroom-based are easiest for editors to nurture or implement. Grander ideas come to fruition through collaboration with other newspaper departments. One idea that would require newspaperwide—or industrywide—exploration is an analysis of papers' pricing structures: Can we give readers the paper for free? Should we return to that newspaper financial model with which we began in the 1700's?

I heard this expectation loudest and clearest from those 18- to 24-year-old focus group participants, but it was consistent with the informal reporting by the Sentinel's Young Readers Task Force. I wonder if it's an expectation that will take hold in other age groups or if it will spread, over time, as these younger readers age. The Tribune Company's new paper aimed at young commuters in New York City, *amNewYork*, is free, as is The Washington Post's *Express* [see *Express* article on page 17], called a paper for "local residents on the go." *RedEye* [see *RedEye* article on page 27], published in Chicago by the Chicago Tribune and designed for younger adult readers, costs 25 cents, as does the competing *Red Streak*, published by the Chicago Sun-Times.

People in this age group most frequently get their news and information from electronic media. They tune in radio while they're driving or getting ready in the morning, or they watch TV while they're folding wash or catching dinner. They consider this news to be free—they don't factor in monthly cable

bills or the cost of a new TV. They also get their news and information online, at home or at work, and they also consider that free, without counting the cost of Internet service providers or a computer. Then there's the Sentinel, which costs 50 cents daily or \$1.50 on Sunday. This feels like real money, particularly to people ages 18 to 24. That's the cost of a few beers a week.

This group is happy to read the paper when they can find one sitting around, and they like feeling informed. As one focus group participant said: "It gives you something to talk about. Then things that are related to it, you start talking about. You start talking about one thing and then it changes."

Can we give readers the paper for free? Should we return to that newspaper financial model with which we began in the 1700's?

But they don't want to buy the paper, so they read pass-along copies at work, at school, or at the coffee shop. "I've never *bought* the Orlando Sentinel or any other paper," a focus group participant said, "unless I needed it for a school project."

The cost isn't that high, they acknowledge, but if they can get it free, why bother paying for it? "You can generally hear information from somebody else. If it's really important, you will find out," a woman in an 18 to 24 focus group said. The paper's Web site, www.orlandosentinel.com, now requires registration, but is free and offers nearly all the newspaper's coverage. Use of the Internet site is growing rapidly.

Newspapers, I suspect, will have to figure out how to deliver a newspaper for free but also will have to get a lot better with other delivery channels as they become more portable and affordable.

First, people want to multitask. One man between 25 and 34 said he likes

listening to news on the radio. "I can't lay sod and read the newspaper while I'm laying sod." A younger woman said, "A daily Sentinel TV show would be good." Guess she hasn't seen the 24-hour local news station the paper owns.

Second, people are really irritated about all the paper going into the trash. Of course they recycle, but the whole idea of papers piling up bugs them. They feel particularly bad if they paid for the newspaper, didn't have much time and then had to toss it away, unread. "Every day would just be too much," a young male reader said. "It would just be piling up."

This sense of overload and waste is something we've heard from readers of other ages as well, particularly from the groups who have children, aging parents, two jobs, and a house. Once again, what the younger readers are saying is in sync with what we have heard from their older compatriots. But the younger readers don't have the habit of newspaper readership and will need a lot of targeted content to attract them.

The additional news and information designed for the niche interests of diverse readers is the first step and in some ways will be the easy part, particularly if we successfully tap the thinking of younger reporters and editors. The harder parts will be new delivery methods that fit into readers' lives and a cost structure these readers can accept. But it all starts with reliable, credible, engaging stories, photographs and graphics. Without the content, the rest won't matter. ■

Elaine Kramer is managing editor of the Orlando Sentinel. During 2003, she headed up the paper's Young Readers Task Force, whose mission was to make recommendations to help improve the Sentinel's readership among young adults.

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Connecting What Is Learned With What Is Done

At Gannett, different strategies aim at the same goal of attracting younger readers.

By Jennifer Carroll

From: Gen-X reader

To: Boomer journalist

Subject: Why should I read your newspaper anyway?

Date: Not too late to change.

So I guess my question is this. Why is your newspaper so boring? You've got tons of info that I really like when I actually have time to sit and wade through it all. And your local news and sports are great. But you've got no style. You've got no edge. You certainly aren't much fun to read.

Such. So began a Gannett task force report, culminating months of review, discussion and introspection by a 19-member group of 25- to 34-year-olds. Task force members dissected newspapers, read magazines, watched broadcasts, shared ideas, pored over research, and shared their views with journalists throughout the company. At issue: Young adults are reading fewer newspapers, less often. Adults 25 to 34 years old are less likely to subscribe seven days a week and are more likely to use multiple forums of media for news, including the Internet, radio and television.

Issued in June 2000, this report was one of Gannett's initiatives to give new urgency to understanding and attracting young readers. During the past four years, we've spent countless hours reviewing the data on young adults' reading habits, especially those between the ages of 25 and 34. We've listened to focus groups, studied newspapers in print and online, evaluated available research, and tried out new gadgets including personal digital assistants with text messaging, e-books and more. When we asked whether adults were really interested in news—especially local news—we confirmed they are avid consumers of informa-

tion. Young adults are Internet-savvy, multitasking and a headline-scanning crowd, accustomed to getting free information where they want, how they want, and when they want.

It is imperative that our newspapers keep and grow these young adults as readers, if not in daily print then online, in free niche weeklies targeted at these young adults, and with other forms of delivery.

This younger generation's willingness to alter the ways they approach work, play and use of media is significant when we think about how to reach them. This tells us that we need to offer both the right content and presentation, including advertising. And the content needs to be available in the way they want to receive it and when they want to have it, whether in print, on the Web, or broadcast. And newspapers need to promote their content across print, online and broadcast better so young adults know that the coverage and information is there.

Brad Robertson, a Gen-X Task Force member who is now director of business development for The Des Moines Register, observes that "a black-and-white headline with a long story is not enough anymore. Media habits taught us we need poignant photos, art, breakout boxes, charts, strong headlines, full color, Web links, cool ads, organization and attitude."

In summer 2003, Gannett researcher Anne Suh conducted in-depth interviews with 30 young adults from different communities about their lifestyles and media habits. She also asked them to take photos of the places and people relevant to their lives. Pictures they took were revealing, offering a valuable window into the very customized and constant way young adults get information and news. One young man took a picture of his favorite place—his

family room where a 50-inch TV screen is center stage in front of a comfortable chair and computer. The man enjoys watching ESPN while surfing the Web for other scores and sports updates.

A young woman took a picture of the magazines to which she subscribes. She also goes to several Web sites daily, including the online local Gannett newspaper. She has two children and a full-time job. There is scarce time in her daily routine to read a newspaper, though she makes time to look through her magazines. Her photos were of her children, her favorite restaurants, and neighborhood. Friends call her "the Internet Queen." She is a typical young adult in her ability to get information instantly and share it just as quickly.

Suh told us that these young adults "have a strong interest in hearing from their peers or other 'real people' voices, shaped by the availability of voices on the Internet." As Suh observes, "Because they are accustomed to navigating through so many media messages, questioning the source is a reflex response."

Confronting the Challenge

David Daugherty, Gannett's vice president of research, describes the industry challenge as transitioning from a daily newspaper-driven business to a multiple-media news and information delivery business. "Our most daunting challenge is producing a newspaper every day that appeals to a general audience. If we intend to remain a mass medium—and into the foreseeable future we do need to remain a mass medium—we have to cast a wide enough net to draw in a large and diverse audience. Our readers and, as important, our potential readers, are changing faster than we are. We need to be quicker in adjusting to their news

and information needs, and we need to be more innovative with our products, including how we deliver news and information to them,” says Daugherty.

Who are these potential readers? This year about 45 million Gen-Xer's are turning 27 to 38 years old. The bulk of them are in their early to mid-30's and more likely than ever to be entering a time in their lives when news events usually matter more and information newspapers provide can be seen as useful. But research shows they won't simply pick up a daily newspaper and read. Then there is the huge Gen-Y group, numbering some 77 million. Born between 1977 and 1994, the oldest among them turned 26 years old in 2003, based on American Demographics research.

Throughout Gannett, we're working to understand and respond to the significant changes in the way members of these younger generations use media. As part of our response to what we're learning, newspapers are revamping content and presentation, experimenting with new sections, launching free weeklies geared toward the interests and sensibilities of young adults, improving online content, and expanding delivery.

The Detroit News, for example, targets young adults with an array of special sections covering such topics as health and fitness, eating and drinking, and personal finance. Its Money & Life section includes among its mix of stories the concerns and interests of young readers. A recent section featured Money Makeover, in which a local financial planner offered advice to a 27-year-old engineer; 10 tips for smart shopping were given, showing how families can trim \$100 a month from their grocery bills, and Nine to Five featured workplace issues that included advice on “real life resumé mistakes to avoid.”

The News also has a deep local Web site with extensive coverage and information on where to go and what to do throughout the area and in Michigan.

Jill Fredel, assistant managing editor at The News Journal in Wilmington, believes strongly in the need for a hard

news approach on Page One and the first page of local news. But she emphasizes that: “trend stories and sophisticated news features improve our mix and also help us appeal to readers of all age groups, including 25 to 34's. On Page One, that can mean a look at Sixers' fever during the NBA finals. Or it can be a story about the growing number of single homeowners, referring back to a package in Life & Leisure.”

In The Idaho Statesman newsroom, editors have a new term—alternative presentation—for incorporating compelling design techniques into routine coverage. This is shorthand for breaking large passages of text into readable blocks. The emphasis on interesting, lively pages is a priority for a newsroom group of 25- to 34-year-olds who meet regularly to discuss coverage. Young adult readers “want deep local news, and they expect hard-hitting investigative coverage, but they say the more serious and complex stories get, the harder we should work to break them up,” notes Executive Editor Carolyn Washburn. “We're aggressively turning sidebars into graphics,” she said. For example, a recent front-page breaking news story on a local Boise business was augmented by a package of shorter breakouts with clear labels, color screens, photos and bar charts.

Learning Never Stops

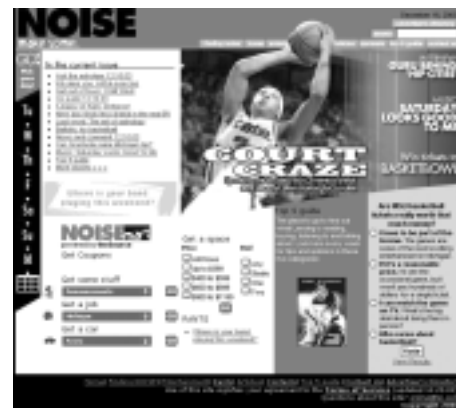
Our ability to continue to attract younger audiences means we cannot stop learning about them and their media preferences. That is why our 25 to 34 task force report was soon followed, in December 2001, by The X Manual. This 300-page manual highlighted research on young adult readers and displayed extensive examples from every section of Gannett newspapers. A recurring theme was that young adults expect relevant, hard-hitting local coverage from newspapers, including sophisticated coverage of their lives and lifestyles. The manual went to all Gannett newsrooms and was posted on a special company Web site.

Within a year after The X Manual was issued, Gannett conducted a company-

wide, in-depth review of print and online coverage appealing to 25- to 34-year-olds. Young adult editors joined others in examining content and presentation. Particular focus was given to the question of whether newspapers include coverage of issues of interest to young readers in their pages and on their Web sites. Five newspapers were given cash awards, and examples of their work were distributed throughout the company. [See an article about the award-winning work of The Arizona Republic on page 34.] Editors from these papers led companywide online training sessions to share best practices in print and online. Similar online training sessions also targeted young readers.

Since the fall of 2002, free weeklies aimed at young adults have been launched in several Gannett newspapers, with prototypes of others in the works. The key to these launches has been more research into the needs, wants, interests and lifestyles of young adults. In focus group comments, 25- to 34-year-olds reminded editors that most of them were beyond college and that many had started families and careers. What they want: Lively presentation, irreverence, photos and perspectives of people their age, information about places to go and things to do. They also said they wanted authoritative content and depth.

Rich Ramhoff, the 36-year-old editor and general manager of Noise, a free lifestyle and entertainment weekly



The accompanying Web site to a free weekly in Lansing, Michigan.

in Lansing, Michigan, offers readers relevant content by ensuring that his young staff (aged 23 to 29 years old) stays tuned into what young people are doing in that city. “Creating a magazine that caters to people in their 20’s and 30’s, who are diverse in everything but geography, is a hard mission,” Ramhoff said. Noise is produced separately from the Lansing State Journal newsroom, and it maintains a separate Web site (www.lansingnoise.com) with a colorful magazine-like feel. Noise has done stories on how to undo tattoos and about bands with ties to a famous local guitar store, as well as regional travel and music profiles. Each edition contains ratings for best videos, books, music, DVD’s, trends and new products, and invites readers to weigh in with their choices. An election-week edition included an in-depth look at young reader views on local and state issues. “Our greatest challenge has been to balance the interests of readers who want a quick, fun publication with those who want a more in-depth look at issues,” Ramhoff said.

Bridget Lux is the 30-year-old editor of the free weekly THR!VE in Boise, Idaho, and her experiences echo many of those in Lansing. “While short sto-

ries, briefs and at-a-glance information are all great, some stories need more depth,” Lux said. THR!VE has published stories about environmental issues, such as fallout from chemicals used to kill mosquitoes and a clash over snowmobile rules in Yellowstone National Park. But it also has plenty of stories about places for young people to go and things to do. It is written in a conversational style and is presented with colorful, high-impact layouts. It is intensely local and packed with names and faces of young residents. “We con-

tinually discuss readers’ suggestions and have implemented standing features—such as a bar review and movie picks and pans, because of their suggestions.”

The ongoing challenge for the publications is to continue to evolve. In Boise and in Lansing, staff constantly brainstorm and seek improvements. Said Lux: “The challenge now is to keep innovating, keep challenging ourselves and keep listening, so we can evolve to keep up with what young readers want.” ■



A free weekly in Boise, Idaho.

Jennifer Carroll is the director of news development at Gannett Co., Inc. She served as mentor on Gannett’s Gen X Task Force, directed the publication of The X Manual, conducted the 25- to 34-year-old Reader Review, and is a consultant for Gannett’s free weeklies targeted at young adults. Previously, she was managing editor of The Detroit News from 1997-1999, executive editor of the Burlington (Vermont) Free Press from 1994-1997, and managing editor of the Lansing (Michigan) State Journal from 1990-1994.

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Targeting Young Women as Newspaper Readers

The Arizona Republic uses a magazine-style tabloid focused on fashion to bring younger women to the paper.

By Nicole Carroll

Last year we began to ask young adult women, “Why don’t you read the paper?” Here’s some of what we heard:

“I don’t have time to focus, I browse.”

“I want to read about new things ... hints on how to do things.”

“I read magazines, but usually I’m just looking at the pictures.”

“I’ll read a magazine if it has celebrities.”

Clearly, our traditional newspaper content was not going to get these

young women in the door. However, the sheer size of the 18- to 34-year-old female age group in the Phoenix, Arizona market was huge—400,000 plus and growing—and meant we could not ignore them without putting at risk our paper’s future. Deciding what stories to cover and what information to convey to win them over as readers was only part of our challenge. Even if we created the right kind of publication, how could we get it into the hands of people who tell us they aren’t inclined

to read a newspaper? To meet these challenges, we knew we’d have to move beyond traditional newspaper insertion and promotion, and to do that meant using every asset our company had.

What Young Women Want

Republic publisher Sue Clark-Johnson challenged us to come up with a breakthrough product that would truly resonate with these potential readers, a

product that would, in her words, “move the needle.” One clue was that magazines like *Lucky*, *In Style*, and *Real Simple* were doing great with this age group. After learning what we could from their approaches, we decided to appeal to our region’s young women with a weekly local magazine-style tabloid with the credibility and flavor of these magazines.

To do this, we began talking to young women—at parties, at the gym, while they were dropping off kids at preschool. They told us they are interested in national and local news, but we knew the paper was working to present that news in useful, relevant and lively ways. That wasn’t enough. As we thought more about this challenge, what became clear was that something bold had to be done to attract this segment of the population to the paper. So we listened more and, over time, we realized they were telling us exactly what they want—something easy to read; something they could browse; something with photos and visuals to tell the story; something that is helpful and relevant; something that helps them look good, feel good, and

stay on top of trends and fashions. Most importantly, they wanted something that’s worth their time to read. They wanted a payoff.

While these desires don’t necessarily add up to what we think of as serious journalism, women in this target audience were saying they would devote the time to reading if what they were reading was authoritative, credible and relevant. Some magazines do this well, but they also write about products from boutiques in Los Angeles, Chicago and New York. A focus on lifestyles and styles that aren’t relevant to young women who live in Phoenix doesn’t do us a lot of good; even the fashion seasons in these national magazines are wrong for us. Here we wear sandals in February and shorts into November. What this told us is there was a need for local fashion news.

We decided that our new publication, called *Yes—Your Essential Style*, would be all about our local style: our style of fashion, shopping, beauty, decorating, entertaining, relationships, fitness and parenting. It would also have a healthy dose of celebrities and the local young stylish scene. We would be

what young women love most about national fashion magazines in one fast-paced, easy-to-read, local weekly edition.

The 10 Rules of Yes

We knew what we wanted; now we had to produce it. We gathered young women from around the newsroom and asked them to envision the product. In true magazine style, they came up with 10 things a reader must know about *Yes*:

1. Reading it is like talking to your best friend. *Yes* must act and feel like someone who shares your secrets, revels in your finds, and shares your passions.

2. Everything in it will be quick and to the point. No story would be more than 10 inches long and no story would jump. This product would be driven by quick bits of information and strong visuals.

3. *Yes* doesn’t talk to young women but *with* them. Often we write about Gen-X and Y like they are something different than “us.” This section



Published by The Arizona Republic, *Yes—Your Essential Style* attracts young female readers.

would be written from the perspective of a young woman. Headlines would be full of “you” and “how,” “our” and “we”: “Five sandals you must have for spring.” “Throw a shower for under \$75.”

4. Every story must have a payoff. Our time is precious, we demand a payoff such as: learning about a new product or trend (“the one skirt you must have for fall”); picking up a new skill (“how to make handmade paper”); getting useful, real-life information (“five questions you must ask at your next annual exam”); getting in on a secret (“how the experts throw dinner parties”), or getting research done for us (“10 romantic day trips”).

5. It will offer instant gratification. Yes wouldn’t just tell you that coral is *the* new color for jewelry. It would show you three cool coral pieces we found locally, tell you exactly where we got them, and provide Web links, if available. On our Web site, hot links would take you right to the product you were reading about.

6. It can’t contain “old” news. Just like your best friend, we must be the first one to tell you something. News is never so exciting the second or third time you hear it. So we’d be quick. Real quick. If we printed something out of style, out of fashion or out of touch, we’d do more than print a bad story. We’d weaken the credibility of the entire section. And credibility is everything.

7. It will be local. We’d run celebrity pictures, but then we’d tell you where you could get their look locally. We would take fashions from New York and show you how to wear them in Phoenix.

8. We can’t be snarky. We would be hip, but not exclusive. We would advise, not lecture.

9. We will be trustworthy. If we said something would be all over the clubs, it had to be. When we said pink was the new white, readers had to trust us. To help us in this mission, we would form a “Style Council.” This group would include “official” people, like department store buyers. But it also would include “real” people, like the woman at the Nordstrom’s cos-

metic counter who picks your perfect lipstick on the first try.

10. Advertising is content. We know young readers buy magazines as much for the advertising as the editorial. We recognized that the ads in this section must match the tone of the stories. In addition to the right ads, sales reps must get the right advertisers.

Yes Is Launched

Yes launched on November 15, 2002. Readers can get the magazine either in the newspaper, at one of 1,200 free rack locations around the city, or online at yes.azcentral.com. Twice a week, we send Yes e-mail newsletters to online subscribers, and our partner NBC television station, KPNX-Channel 12, produces weekly Yes segments for its morning news show. In April, we also broadcast a prime-time television special, Yes Next, that ran after “Friends” and before “Will & Grace.”

What has been the reaction? We’re bolstered by what we’re hearing from young women now, which is much different than we heard just over a year ago:

- “I love this new section of the newspaper. I look forward to reading it each week.”
- “I am a self-professed magazine junkie and fashion-aholic ... and I really enjoy your publication. The identification of the challenge of making the fashion of L.A. and N.Y. available and accessible to Arizona and even So Cal fashionistas was dead-on.”
- “I love reading Yes. I never looked in the paper until my mom showed me the fashion section. Now I actually look forward to seeing The Republic on Fridays.”

And our quantitative measures are showing positive responses, too. Week after week, virtually all of our 1,200 free rack locations are emptied of copies. Our Web site has had tremendous traffic, and each week Yes slideshows draw more than 200,000 page views. It takes some time to grow an audience

in a market of this size. But research tells us that young women who see Yes like it and that they say they’d buy the paper just to get it. And women of all ages have told us how much they like this new approach, even though it’s clearly targeted at younger readers.

Nearly a year into Yes, this magazine-style tabloid is still evolving, and so are we. It hasn’t been all easy going. To make this work, a newspaper staff had to learn how to do magazine-style writing and design. And some staffers questioned whether this type of product belonged in the newspaper at all. But as we’ve grown more accustomed to our mission, lessons from Yes have begun to be applied to other parts of the newspaper. New education pages are consumer driven with narrowly focused stories and lists and charts that provide easily accessible and helpful information. A new Sports page called Quick Hits—with an ESPN The Magazine kind of attitude—is layered with bits of news and talk from and about sports personalities.

Targeting young readers isn’t a one-time push. As the current group ages and the next generation emerges, their needs and wants will change, as well. The only way to stay relevant is to change with them. This is exhausting for some, invigorating for others. For me, it’s a great challenge—one we all need to find ways to meet. ■

Nicole Carroll is deputy managing editor/features of The Arizona Republic, which won first place in Gannett’s 25 to 34 Review for outstanding achievement in targeting younger readers. Carroll was the key editor in the Yes—Your Essential Style section’s development and continues to supervise the publication.

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Writing Stories to Reach Young Adults

‘I put more of myself in stories by integrating my experiences and my thoughts and preferences in what I write.’

By Leslie Koren

I devoured Anna Quindlen’s New York Times’s columns as a teenager. I knew which days they appeared and ran to get the paper. I read about AIDS, motherhood, politics and feminism—definitely not light topics. I don’t suspect they were written specifically for suburban high school students, but they helped me make sense of a world that seemed terribly confusing.

I am now a journalist working at the heart of my New Jersey newspaper’s effort to reach young readers. Last December I moved from The Record’s crime beat to its features section with the nebulous charge of writing for people in their 20’s and early 30’s. I often reflect back on what lessons I can learn from that young reader sitting at the kitchen table reading Quindlen’s words.

I wanted this assignment because, having just turned 30, I knew what an interesting and complex time this can be, especially with so many in my generation delaying marriage and families. We are searching in different ways for our right career path, our great love, and for a more complete understanding about ourselves. Along the way, we are creating new types of relationships with friends and parents, within communities, and in our homes.

Writing for Young Adults

As a reader and staff reporter, I didn’t see these issues reflected in our pages and, in the spring of 2002, I wanted a new challenge. So I proposed writing a column, profiles or features directed at my peers. Eventually our editor, Frank Scandale, combined all three and offered me a shot. Almost a year later, I am still trying to figure out how best to hone such a broad idea into specific

stories and how to incorporate these stories into a daily newspaper.

There are many days when I wonder what young readers want to hear from me and my paper, if anything.

Though I hear of many new publications offering short snippets to younger readers, my gut and some reader response instruct me to move in a different direction. So I try to craft well written, informative pieces in a com-

fortable and friendly voice. To do this, I address the reader directly. I put more of myself in stories by integrating my experiences and my thoughts and preferences in what I write. In my role as a feature writer, I want to speak to that part of the young reader that is still developing and coming into its own. I want to help them make sense of their world and encourage them to think for themselves.

Excerpts From Leslie Koren’s Stories

My editors told me I’d need to lose the formal newspaper tone and spice up my stories when I took on this assignment. Now I write using the first person, directly address the reader, and just try to have fun. Some excerpts from my stories:

- I don’t even remember exactly what my boyfriend had done wrong, only that it made me very unhappy. Now I can see that the relationship was regrettable from the start. But at the time, I was new to the area and desperate to be anything but single. And so I did as generations of females, faced with similar and not-so-similar quandaries, have often done—I asked a girlfriend what to do. A week later, after following her guidance and giving him the silent treatment, we officially broke up. Another girlfriend told me never to seek that friend’s advice again.

Women, it seems, are programmed to solicit counsel. Nature or nurture, I can’t say, but I’ve spent enough hours on both ends of the telephone to qualify as an expert on the issue. Apparently, so have doz-

ens of other women, many of whom also had the forethought to put their so-called expertise into a book proposal, land an agent, and get it published.

- More than 40 years later, the book, including [Helen] Gurley Brown’s advice on finding, attracting and enjoying men, is going back on the market. In a new introduction, she writes about the great strides all women, including those without a husband, have made since her tell-all was first published, particularly in the career world. It’s perfect timing. We modern single girls could use a dollop of this 81-year-old’s feistiness. We may have come a long way—and there may be a lot more of us out there—but being solo, especially in your 30’s, still means sloughing off friends, family and coworkers who pity you for the lack of a ring on your finger and self-help gurus proffering the quickest way to get one. In Gurley Brown’s world—where pink colors the walls and a needlepoint pillow proclaims,
Continued on page 38.

Some of my first stories were about notable young people—the 25-year-old photographer who'd become the star of the New York art world, a marketing guru who was Sean "P. Diddy" Combs's right-hand man, a young magazine publisher and a novelist who had struggled for 10 years to finish a short-story collection. I also wrote about more challenging and serious aspects of dating and sex and about books meant to help young women sort it all out.

Amid this kind of coverage, I also found myself veering towards lighter "fun" topics such as fake tans (probably the story that garnered the most response), style and shopping. I love fashion and think it's important to write about it—getting dressed is a big part of our lives—but I still struggle with

citing such stories among the main topics I use to connect with younger readers. They are a far cry from Quindlen's columns.

In late spring, top editors at The Record established a young readership committee to examine what additional steps the newsroom could take to reverse the ebb of young readers. A group of about 10 young reporters, myself included, along with one of our Internet content providers and three editors have met almost weekly to decide on our recommendations. In our initial meetings, as my colleagues talked about what young readers want, hard news was rarely included. Stories about state and federal budgets and school boards were shunned in favor of celebrity profiles and news about local bands.

So noticeable was the absence of

important issues that one of our editors asked if we had given up trying to make serious news appeal to young readers. Few were willing to accept this premise and, in fact, the paper is going to start publishing a weekly op-ed column in November, written by a rotating group of young staffers, about topics ranging from the high cost of housing to the future of altar girls in the Catholic Church.

Will this op-ed column—written in a young voice—appeal to young readers? I hope so, but then, I love news, and I like being informed. Newspapers didn't have to force news on me when I was younger because my parents read two newspapers, and social and political issues of the day were common dinner conversation. To take part, I had to be informed.

"Good girls go to heaven, bad girls go everywhere"—there is glory for the bachelorette.

- According to the literature, the spray-on tan lasts for about five days, though mine faded significantly after three. But boy, were they three glorious days. "Did you go on vacation or something, you look nice and tan," said the first colleague I saw upon returning to the office post-tanning. "You're tan. What did you do to yourself?" asked my boyfriend as soon as I walked into our apartment that night. "You are sooooo tan. Where did you go?" asked my yoga teacher as she adjusted my triangle pose two days later. My response—"A new tropical island called Paramus"—was not entirely convincing. But the tan was. No one could believe it was fake. "You definitely have that glow," said another coworker.
- Near the end of the 25-foot catwalk, past the dancers in white hot pants and under the neon pink lights, Jameel Spencer clinks shot glasses with Sean "P. Diddy" Combs and

downs his tequila. Two large bodyguards flank the table. Hip-hop pulses in the Chelsea club. The time is 4 a.m., and Spencer's work is finally done.

It began at 8 a.m., 20 hours earlier, and in another four hours, he will wake again and drive his two children to school. But sleep doesn't concern this man. He'll do that when he dies, he says. Being well rested is not what got him where he is today—right-hand man to the former Puff Daddy, head of a lifestyle and marketing company, and ushered through velvet ropes from New York to St. Tropez. If he is tired, he doesn't show it. He follows his boss out of the keyhole-shaped door, onto a well lit Manhattan street, and into his sporty silver Mercedes, which he will steer across the George Washington Bridge and into his two-car garage in Closter. This is living life in the hottest part of the flame. Speak no excuses, offer no doubts, and show no fear.

- Well, fellow suburbanites, take heart. There's always Denny's. Otherwise, I'm afraid, our collective hipster in-

dex is—frankly, it doesn't exist. But there is hope. "I grew up in the suburbs," said hipster aficionado Robert Lanham. My, how far he has come. The 31-year-old Virginia native is now ensconced in a hipster's haven, Williamsburg, New York. He wears long sideburns, old-school mustard and burgundy Adidas (with a gray suit, no less), and suggests meeting at a café that offers free Buddhism classes. And he has come to the service of hipster wannabes everywhere. His new treatise, "The Hipster Handbook," is an unauthorized, tell-all ethnography of those stylishly evasive and elusive followers of indie rock bands. More than an anthropological study, Lanham's book offers vital information for the hipster in training. Besides eating at Denny's (it has enough kitsch appeal to qualify, says Lanham, who especially likes the menus), you have to be up on styles and then you have to pretend you aren't. No self-respecting hipster would ever admit he or she is a hipster. ■ —L.K.

What stunned me about our paper, once I started to pay particular attention to these issues, was how often we missed opportunities to connect with young readers. School-related stories are written for parents, not students, yet we write about teenagers in relation to school and to little else. Many of our stories are “traditional” newspaper stories, and those do not seem to acknowledge the needs, interests and concerns of a younger reader.

My editor, Barbara Jaeger, has been very supportive of my attempts to write less traditionally and with a different voice. But at times, these efforts came up against our style and standards. [See Koren’s sidebar on page 37 for examples of her style of writing.] I wanted to use the word “ladies,” for example, but our stylebook dictates we

use “women.” In the profile of a photographer, I described one of his more risqué photographs: semen splattered on a man’s pants. My editor deferred to the higher ups. I argued that it was a telling and important detail about his work and his willingness to push the limits. I also thought young readers want frankness. The editors heard my argument and respected it, but left out the line.

In the recent meetings of our young readership committee, we have been trying to come up with a more concrete definition of what we think young readers want. To help us, each of us was assigned a specific date of the paper to review for articles that might and might not be of interest. I was eager and nervous to hear what others thought concerning my work.

On the day when we shared our reviews, Tara Kane, my 24-year-old colleague, held up the front of our paper’s entertainment section. I saw the headline for a Q & A that I had written about Patricia Field, the costume designer for HBO’s “Sex and the City,” and my heartbeat quickened noticeably. When you are talking about younger readers, “Sex and the City” is a pretty safe bet. But Field is an older woman. Would Tara connect with her? She did, and I relaxed. She’s just one young reader, and it’s just one story, but at least it’s a start. ■

Leslie Koren, formerly a crime reporter, now writes features for The Record in North Jersey.

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Practicing Journalism in Elementary Classrooms

‘Could eight-, nine- and 10-year-olds, who had trouble sitting still for more than 10 minutes at a time, develop the skills to become reporters?’

By Leah Kohlenberg

“I’d like to speak to a doctor,” the young reporter said, biting his lip and rolling his eyes skyward as he listened to someone on the phone from the county public health department.

“What, you don’t have doctors there?” the reporter asked. Another pause.

“You’ve got what? Epi-what? Look,” explained the reporter, a little impatiently, “I just need someone who can give me a quote about the new flu going around.”

Welcome to the North Beach Chronicle, a monthly student newspaper not unlike other student publications around the country, with two exceptions: North Beach is an elementary school, and all the third, fourth and fifth graders—not a select journalism class—write, illustrate, photograph and sell advertising for the paper.

The all-inclusive newspaper program is the brainchild of Nakonia (Niki)

Hayes, a veteran administrator hired as principal three years ago at North Beach Elementary School, a small public school located in an affluent Seattle neighborhood with an active Parent Teacher Association. Despite strong financial support and parental involvement, Hayes was surprised to discover the school’s test scores were faltering, especially in writing: Only 36 percent of North Beach’s fourth graders had passed the writing section of the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) the previous year, a test soon to become a requirement for students to graduate in Washington State.

Hayes, a former journalist, took a gamble that newspapering skills would boost the test scores and reinvigorate the school’s writing program. To get it done, she hired me, a former Time reporter/writer, as the school’s journalist-in-residence—a task I entered with trepidation and enthusiasm.

Could eight-, nine- and 10-year-olds, who had trouble sitting still for more than 10 minutes at a time, develop the skills to become reporters? And even more importantly, would those skills make them better learners and more likely to become sophisticated news consumers—or news consumers, period?

We had no idea, then, what was possible.

The Experiment Begins

September 12, 2001: I was in a North Beach classroom and had asked fourth graders to open The Seattle Times and point out anything they found interesting about the previous day’s devastating news that featured the terrorists’ destruction of the World Trade Center. The kids gravitated, naturally, towards photos, in particular, two that were on opposite but facing pages inside the A-

section:

“This,” said one of them, pointing to a picture, “is Osama bin Laden.” Then he pointed to the second picture, Palestinians waving their arms. “And these,” he continued, “are his men.”

When I first started teaching, I found that though the students could read the words of news stories, they weren’t always comprehending what they were reading and seeing. This is probably connected to the fact that the United States is one of the few countries that does not require teachers to offer media literacy to their students.

This absence of media literacy was a problem vividly illustrated in virtually all the current events presentations I witnessed at North Beach that year and at others I’ve seen at dozens of schools since. Typically, students would stand in the front of the room reading fractured versions of the “five Ws and one H” of a news story. At the end of the presentation, listeners often still had no idea what the story was about.

It was evident that if these students were going to write for a newspaper, they had to learn to read one. I started by putting transparencies of news stories on overhead projectors and reviewing the different elements of a news story. Before they could go past the first sentence, they had to identify the five Ws and one H answered in the headline and the lead. That’s actually quite a lot of information, by the way, and required repeated group story assessments before students were ready to identify those elements in the stories by themselves.

We did other assignments in the classroom to get children accustomed to reading and scanning the news. We analyzed what we could factually surmise, and what we could assume, about news photos. We held weekly news quizzes, where students had to find the answers to questions in news stories. And though the first time students struggled through the exercises, by the second, third and fourth times around they’d made quantum leaps.

Reading and comprehending the news, by the way, is an often missed concept in junior and senior high school journalism classes. I’ve had more



This photograph of a salmon—taken by a fifth grade student—was used in a classroom exercise to help children determine the difference between facts and assumptions. Students were asked to list what they knew as facts from looking at the photo and also list assumptions they might make. The only verifiable fact was that a man was holding a fish. Assumptions included that the person was a fisherman, the fish was dead, that the fish was scared. At the end of the lesson, students learned that the man who was holding the fish is a wildlife biologist, and he was showing fifth graders how he harvests eggs from a dead salmon, like the one he is holding. *Photo by B. McFarlane.*

than one journalism teacher sigh with frustration over trying to teach kids how to write a good news lead. I always tell them to start at the beginning: “Make sure they know how to read one before asking them to write one.”

The Chronicle Comes to Life

Fourth grader Matt P¹ had a plum assignment: North Beach’s person-on-the-street column, in which students in every grade and one adult are asked the same question and direct quotes are put under their pictures. But his question “What do you like best about school?” offered up only lackluster answers at best. And when I sent him back to reinterview a fellow fourth grader in his classroom for the third time, he put his head in his hands and burst into tears.

Actually this assignment, and any news story, was much harder than it

appeared. Students must be able to introduce themselves fully, state their intention, ask the right question, identify a good direct quote, and write it down. No wonder Matt started crying.

Matt’s teacher looked over from where she was helping another student type in a story. “Are you having self-esteem problems, Matt?” she asked gently. He nodded, lifted his head up, and took a few gasping breaths to compose himself. She then led him over to another journalism assistant, who wrote a script for him, took him out to recess, stood over him as he got his quotes, and jumped in with helping questions when he needed them.

In 10 minutes, Matt had four great quotes written down, was high-fiving his adult helper, and had totally forgotten his tears. “I’m doing person-on-the street, and you wouldn’t believe the great quotes I have,” I overheard him telling a friend as they toted their

¹ The students are identified in the newspaper by their first name and last initial due to a ruling by the Seattle school board that last names could not be used in the paper.

lunchboxes towards the cafeteria.

Part of what teaching journalism to young students taught me is to recognize that there are a multitude of skills coming into play and that people will get stuck at predictable places. At the elementary level, particularly, a teacher can assume nothing. Most students forget to bring their notebooks, paper and questions to their first scheduled interviews. They have trouble introducing themselves and what they are doing. They can't talk and write at the same time. Their note-taking skills are slow and painful—as they try at first to take down every word. They are afraid to ask if they don't understand something. Phone messages will often leave them tongue-tied.

And that's all before they start writing.

What we found at North Beach is that it's important for them to hit the wall and equally important for an adult to expect this and be prepared to prop them up and move them forward. That's when the learning takes place.

Take the following example: Three fifth graders were conducting a phone interview with a children's theater artistic director by speaker phone for the *Chronicle*. The call was monitored by a journalism intern from the local university, but still, one girl looked up at me in the middle of the interview and mouthed frantically "she's talking too fast" and quit writing.

At the end of the interview, the intern sat them down. "What do you remember about what she said?" she asked the girls. As the ideas came out, the girls could write them down without the pressure of having to ask the interview subject to wait. They got their story and even some accurately spoken direct quotes.

Showing vs. Telling: An Adaptable Writing Mantra

When fourth grader Kyle W. brought a movie review he'd written for me to review, it started predictably like most book or movie reports throughout history: "'Monsters, Inc.' is a great movie with something fun for everyone."

"Hey Kyle," I asked. "Why did you

like the movie?"

He thought about it for a second. "Because usually it's kids who are afraid of monsters," he said. "But in 'Monsters Inc.,' the monsters are afraid of a baby."

"That's your lead, Kyle," I explained. "You tell us why you like it, not that you like it."

Showing your story's importance vs. telling it is a mantra in most newsrooms. It's also a powerful writing tool in the classroom. Asking students to offer details to buttress their observations and opinions does two things: It forces them to evaluate whether those opinions and statements are true, but it also offers them the chance to find their voice as a writer because the details they might choose are different than someone else's, but equally valid.

Before each newspaper comes out, teachers walk their students silently around the school. At the end of the trip, they list what they've noticed that's interesting or different. Often, those observations can be turned into news stories. It encourages kids not only to notice what is around them, but also to find out what is happening and why it's happening. "It's kind of like a detective mystery," one teacher told me, the first time we let 150 kids loose on the school to start their reporting.

These writing skills don't need to be confined to newspaper articles. They apply to virtually every school writing assignment and can boost a student's writing abilities. Once in a third grade classroom, I was scheduled to teach a journalism lesson just after the students had returned from a field trip to a local park. "We wrote little stories about our field trip, would you like to hear them?" the teacher asked me.

"Not yet," I said. "First, kids, tell me the most interesting things you learned on the field trip."

I wrote their observations on the board: We learned about nurse trees, and different kinds of snakes, and that some frogs look like they are dead, but they aren't; they are just catching flies. Other ideas flew out, with some excellent detailed descriptions.

"Now read me the stories," I asked.

Did any of these details make it into

the stories? Predictably, not one. Nearly everyone started the same, with a chronological summation of the event: "We got on the school bus and went to the park."

That assignment would have produced more diverse and interesting results if the teacher had first led students through the exercise of identifying exciting details, then instructed them to write about the most exciting thing they saw on the field trip. That would bring out both individual student voice and offer more structure to stories that would otherwise never break out of the chronologically told story mold.

Journalism and Writing

Niki Hayes's gamble ultimately paid off: The WASL scores have climbed dramatically, from 36 percent of fourth graders passing the WASL the year before we started the program to 58 percent the next year, to 72 percent the next year, and to 79 percent last year.

We've also found that the different jobs of the newspaper can engage students who otherwise wouldn't want to write: An Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder student turned out to be a brilliant photographer; a highly functioning Asperger's syndrome child helped seal envelopes and file contracts, and our first-year advertising team of fifth graders hit the pavement nearly every day after school, earning an average of \$500-\$800 per issue. At year four, advertisers contact North Beach in the fall, eager to get into the newspaper.

More importantly, though, I've had some great reporters and writers. There's Andrew F., a gifted fifth grader and avid skateboarder, who became the school's skateboard correspondent. His first story, on skateboard tricks, fell apart, but his next three stories worked: a news story about new skateboarding rules; a story on skateboard fashion, and a review of Seattle's skateboarding parks. "He didn't like writing last year, but he can't stop this year," his mother confided to me. That's probably because he's writing about what he likes to do, rather than some random as-

signment.

And there's Luke M., a fifth grader who decided to find out why "guys were on ladders and wires were hanging out of the ceiling." It turned out to be a great story, as the classrooms were all getting phones to call outside the building and computers were being networked together.

"I'm doing OK," he told me, after presenting a surprisingly well researched draft, "but I'm having trouble thinking of a good lead." As we pon-

dered that question, I said "How about this one: Phones and networked computers will be added to classrooms soon."

Luke looked at me with disdain. "That's the same news lead you suggested last month, when we wrote about new playground equipment," he said. "Let's keep thinking." ■

Leah Kohlenberg is the founder of Specialized Education Training Company (SETC), which offers con-

tinuing education training and writing/journalism lesson plans for K-12 teachers. For 13 years, she worked as a reporter for Time in Hong Kong, ABCNews.com and several daily newspapers across the country. She has trained and coached journalists in Mongolia, Slovakia, Armenia and the Republic of Georgia.

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Opening Up to Kids

Working to close the generation and credibility gap, post-Jayson Blair.

By Shawn Moynihan

Prior to accepting the position of managing editor at Editor & Publisher, I worked as a substitute teacher in Collingswood, New Jersey and in my hometown of Staten Island, New York. Working in the classrooms made me realize how much kids still believe in newspapers—and that now, more than ever, it is crucial for reporters and editors to make their presence felt in the classroom and not just through Newspapers in Education (NIE) programs.

I'm no expert on the world of education, but once I stepped into the public school system, albeit briefly, I quickly discovered that a great many students are learning much less than we think they are. It was shocking.

Many of my days were largely spent trying to discipline students who were pleased to see someone other than their usual teacher at the front of the room—and equally eager to make my life miserable. But no matter how badly behaved or disaffected the students seemed, every time I mentioned that I had spent years as a writer and editor at the Staten Island Advance—the popular local paper of the “forgotten borough”—the chaos subsided, and I had the students' attention, if only for a few minutes.

It was as though I had suddenly

become cool, that because I was associated with “the paper,” they grew interested. The things I had to say carried a new weight. It was then that I realized how important, and powerful, newspapers are to kids. I had thought they had little regard for newspapers and anything that we had to say, particularly in this Internet and video game age. Attention spans are shorter than ever, making it increasingly hard for teachers—and print journalists—to reach youngsters.

It's not much of a stretch to believe that teens will always think of newspapers—despite current efforts to court younger readers—as little more than a forum in which grown-ups regularly provide disinformation to each other and to young people, especially in light of the Jayson Blair scandal and other well-known episodes of journalistic wrongdoing.

But after the umpteenth episode of getting a wide-eyed look from kids when I told them I'd written for the Advance, I found out just how wrong that assumption might be. What became clear to me is that newspapers have both a responsibility and an opportunity. We have a responsibility to improve education and awareness of current events by remaining dedicated to NIE programs. But we also have an

opportunity to reach young people by showing them (at an impressionable age) not just what newspapers produce, but how they work.

In articles urging the press to reform newsroom policies and our public image in the wake of the Blair scandal, many former editors and media critics have advised newspapers to offer readers a clear view of how they operate—to become “transparent,” as the saying goes. In an Editor & Publisher article, for example, [former Nieman Curator] Bill Kovach advised that there was “only one way to fix” our current credibility problem: “Be open, be transparent and explain all of the time what we do. We are in a world of interaction right now. I don't know why news organizations don't set up more mechanisms for the public to come into the organization.”

Obviously, kids are not going to come to the newspapers—so newspapers must go to the kids. If we do, the payoff could be big. Contrary to our self-image, journalists are often viewed by kids as just one step removed from the pop-culture media they really love: rock and hip-hop music, movies and television. After all, we write about all those things, sometimes even meet a star or two, and that rubs off on us, positively.

Scheduling visits to schools would not be easily accomplished at a time when resources are stretched thin at papers across the country. Some can barely afford to send a bunch of reporters out into the field, while holding others back to answer those nagging newsroom phones. It's far too easy for us to get caught up in the next deadline than it is to give this "transparency" idea some honest consideration.

But the potential benefits of person-

ally interacting with younger readers—of responding to their questions, helping them understand what journalists do—are real. If young people grow up believing they can't trust reporters and editors to tell the truth and respect their audience, will they turn to these newspapers when they are older? Taking time to reach out to young people and showing them, in person, that we're not all a bunch of grinning liars is an investment in our future as a medium.

Who knows? Given the opportunity, we and the kids just might learn something, too. ■

Shawn Moynihan, managing editor of Editor & Publisher, worked at the Staten Island Advance from 1989 to 2001. A version of this article first appeared in Editor & Publisher on June 16, 2003.

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L.A. Youth Partners With the Los Angeles Times

Its experiences offer valuable guidance for attracting younger readers.

By Donna C. Myrow

There aren't many cities where teenagers have their own newspaper to write and read, but in Los Angeles they do. It's called L.A. Youth and, since 1988, it has given teens more than a voice. With it, they have had a megaphone.

I made my decision to publish a newspaper for teenagers in Los Angeles on the morning of January 13, 1988, the day when the United States Supreme Court struck down student press rights in *Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier*. That decision gave school officials broad powers to censor student newspapers. That afternoon a dozen teenagers sat around my kitchen table talking about issues that affected their lives. Together we wondered how we would publish our own newspaper with no money. We didn't even have a computer.

But we found some resources in the community—grants from The James Irvine Foundation and Bank of America Foundation, a few old typewriters from the Los Angeles Times, and a meeting place in a senior citizen center. These were enough to launch the first issue. Starting small with 2,500 copies published twice a year for two years, then growing year by year, we now publish six times each year, with 105,000 copies each issue. L.A. Youth has a readership of more than 300,000 in Los Angeles County. Our newspaper is read by

students in public and private schools, by those who attend nearly 400 community-based youth programs, and can be found at most libraries. Every issue is posted on our Web site (www.layouth.com), and a Teacher's Guide is mailed to 1,200 teachers who use L.A. Youth in their classrooms.

The Role of the Los Angeles Times

By 1994, L.A. Youth was publishing six times each year and, though the newspaper was well received, the costs of producing it were escalating. We had a full-time staff of four and 200 teens eager to join the staff. So I went looking for support from the newspaper industry. I approached then-Los Angeles Times publisher, David Laventhol, and asked if the Times would contribute newsprint and printing. I explained how our young reporters were helping their peers have a better understanding of the society they live in and the forces that act on them and showing them ways to gain more control over their lives. I described ways in which we do this, through news stories, self-help articles and in personal accounts, and talked about how our stories are written in an authentic teen voice and how this gives L.A. Youth its street credibility with readers.

Laventhol listened. When the meeting ended, he offered the Times's support. He asked me how many copies we print. I picked a nice round number, 100,000, when we actually could only afford to print 35,000. He agreed to help us.

Printing our newspaper was just the beginning. Soon, former Los Angeles Times senior editor Noel Greenwood joined our nonprofit organization's board of directors. Then came the Times's donation of computers, cameras, scanners and other equipment to assist our struggling newspaper. Today, the Times's newsroom operations editor, Dave Rickley, serves on our board, and he encourages colleagues from the Times to work with our newspaper. People who work in the pre-press department, production and photo lab, the art director, and other folks involved with operations have volunteered. And as our teens report stories, they have received mentoring from Times's editorial staff, too.

Putting Out the Paper

The teenagers who write for L.A. Youth gather after school and on Saturdays in our mid-Wilshire newsroom for editorial meetings. There they work with adult editors one-on-one to rewrite their stories; some articles take up to



Teenagers create L.A. Youth, which reaches 300,000 young readers.

six months of reporting and rewriting before they are ready to be published.

L.A. Youth articles are often about traditional teen interests, such as summer jobs, getting into college, educational issues, and getting a date for the prom. But there is room for controversy in the paper, too. When our teenagers set out to explore such topics as teen pregnancy, substance abuse, AIDS, race relations, homelessness, gangs and other difficult topics, Los Angeles Times's reporters, editors and lawyers share their expertise. An article we published in the summer of 1990 about alleged police abuse of local teens drew recognition from national media, including *Time* and "60 Minutes." The Times Sunday opinion editor, Sue Horton, mentored teen reporter Josie Valderrama through the maze of internal affairs police documents while she worked on this year-long investigative project.

There are no requirements to join our staff. Teens bring friends, teachers refer students, and even parents call us looking for a summer workshop or a place for their son/daughter to improve his/her writing skills. On Newcomer's Day, every other month, prospective writers, illustrators and photographers meet the adult staff. A give-and-take follows—about meeting deadlines; how we put together a newspaper; who our readers are; how many rewrites, etc. Some find it a challenge, and we never see them again. Others

see it as an opportunity to voice their uncensored opinions and read their names in print. Alum keep in touch and return as mentors to the younger staff.

The teenagers' personal stories are often touching. One of our teen reporters sleeps in a shelter and sometimes on the streets, yet he/she manages to work on a story. Students who attend private schools gather in our midcity office with teens whose lives are very different than theirs, and together they exchange story ideas with one another. Most of the time, these young writers meet the L.A. Youth deadlines while also coping with homework, family responsibilities, and personal relationships.

A few years ago, when I wanted to expand the youth voice to a wider audience, I spoke with several Los Angeles Times's editors to ask if they'd consider reprinting our articles. Former Metro Editor Bill Boyarsky took the idea seriously and reprinted Gohar Galyan's riveting article on life inside a year-round, overcrowded school. And one of our cover stories, written by a homeless youth sleeping behind a Hollywood Boulevard theater, made the front page of the Times's Metro section.

Newspapers Learn From Us

The headline on June 17, 2000 screamed, "Tribune Co. acquires the

Los Angeles Times." I took a deep breath, answered the dozens of calls from friends inquiring about this merger and hoped nothing would change. In fact, since that day the relationship between our two newspapers has grown stronger. Publisher John Puerner and Editor John Carroll have kept the presses rolling for L.A. Youth and assured us that the Times has a commitment to high school journalism. However, during the past two years I have missed seeing some of our best stories find a broader readership in the Times. As the war took place in Iraq, for example, I kept hoping the new editors would see the relevance of the teen perspective on the war. Who knows better how teens feel about not finding a summer job in order to pay for college than those facing this situation? Or who can speak better to the impact of the ever-increasing classroom size on student learning?

Each year newspapers spend lots of money and time on focus groups and readership surveys as they try to figure out how to attract younger readers. By looking closely at publications like ours—at our contributors and our readers—and supporting in various ways independent teen-written newspapers like ours, those who edit and publish newspapers could see how we're growing the next generation of critical thinkers, good citizens, and newspaper readers. ■

Donna C. Myrow is founder and executive director of L.A. Youth. Teen writers at the paper have gone on to have internships at National Public Radio, Sports Illustrated, Forbes, TeenPeople, the San Jose Mercury News, The Oakland Tribune and The Philadelphia Inquirer, and other print and broadcast news organizations.

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Mixing Young and Old to Create a New Approach

Youth Radio succeeds by ‘balancing young producers’ insights and new ideas about content with the professionalism and knowledge of their adult counterparts.’

By Ellin O’Leary

Youth Radio trains young people to become journalists and to produce content for a variety of audiences, in formats including newspapers, TV, radio and the Web. In our decade plus of operation, we have found that having young people as the voices and writers, as the producers and columnists of what is produced, might initially attract a young audience. But without something compelling to say, listeners won’t stick around. And to engage young audiences, we employ their vernacular and style.

In the Youth Radio newsroom, a frequent challenge—as adult mentors—is to follow the young producers’ advice, especially when we’re not sure they’re right. For example, for three years, Youth Radio produced a public affairs show on the largest commercial music station in San Francisco, KYLD. This was a great opportunity for our kids’ work to reach a young audience since this was the number one station in the Bay Area among 14- to 24-year-olds. Our young producers insisted music should play for the entire two-hour show, as a continuous sound under the features, interviews and even the call-ins. To the adult ear, the music was distracting; it made it difficult to listen to what was going on in the show. But the kids told us that “it’s the music that keeps young people listening to the talk, it makes the news and information painless.”

We deferred to the students since they were familiar with the station’s programming from the perspective of listeners. And it turns out they were right. For a public affairs show to last three years on commercial radio is the equivalent of three lifetimes elsewhere. KYLD’s program director, Michael Martin, credited Youth Radio’s highly pro-

duced style and “the use of music” for the show’s longevity. Martin commented that most public affairs shows jolt his station’s listeners with an immediate break in format, a mortal sin in commercial broadcasting.

Youth Plus Experience

Youth Radio students often remind us that teenagers and young adults don’t usually think of themselves as part of a particular audience. Rather they describe themselves as avid consumers or media surfers on an infinite ocean of content. For many, this expectation can be traced back to MTV, which began some 20 years ago. Having the ability to choose from an ever-expanding array of media content has defined this generation—just as “I Love Lucy”

including Youth Radio, were struggling with how to cover the record youth homicide rate, high in many urban areas, but particularly so in Oakland. Many of our Youth Radio students live in the affected neighborhoods; one of our own students was shot and killed, and others have relatives lost in the madness. Local news outlets were tired of covering the story; the deaths of young people became routine headlines along with increasing body counts. Our national editors weren’t sure we “had anything new to say” from the youths’ perspective.

In the Youth Radio newsroom our students were also hesitant to report on this very painful issue until one of our adult producers, Lissa Soep, added the element of poetry to the production. A poem written by 19-year-old Ice Life told the story of a modern day Romeo and Juliet caught in the cycle of poverty and violence that so often leads to incarceration and death. This poem inspired the students to produce a feature that integrated poetry with field recordings and interviews with young people living in these neighborhoods. The sound collage also included the perspective of youth who have escaped the cycle of violence by keeping a pathway to education and a career.

The Oakland violence feature these Youth Radio students produced was a hit locally with both adult and youth audiences. It also was broadcast on National Public Radio, after we “shopped it around” and found a producer, Charlie Mayer, who was as excited as we were about the artistic and journalistic merits of the piece. “Oakland Violence” won first prize in this year’s National Black Journalists Awards and was honored this year at the Third Coast Festival.



and “Leave It to Beaver” left their indelible mark with baby boomers.

Young writers and producers not only present the views of their generation, but they also identify stories and produce them with distinctive youth style. In the fall of 2002, for example, newsrooms throughout the Bay Area,

Why I Don't Like Mainstream News

Young people find a lot not to like about the way news is often presented.

Nieman Reports invited some of Youth Radio's student journalists—past and present—to tell us what they don't like about mainstream press.

"I don't watch mainstream news, but I do stay informed. Even if I didn't want to know what's in the news, friends or family would tell me. My parents have TV news chattering away while they're in the kitchen preparing dinner. When I check my e-mail, headlines pop up everywhere. But when I want to find out what's happening here and around the world, I turn to smaller, independent news sources. They don't have the kind of skewed priorities that mainstream news does, with so much of it being more entertainment than real news and stories reported over and over again." — Margarita Rossi, 20 years old

"There might be a difference in the details, but the stories are the same, and all the news anchors look like clones of each other. What they say is so predictable; they make a fake compassionate statement about a bad incident, a very stupid joke, and then sign off ... with voices that sound like they practice faking them all day. When a multimillion-dollar news company wastes money and airtime to talk about

Prince William's first girlfriend or Ben Affleck's birthday, it turns me off as a viewer. They really don't address or question the real problems that lead up to big stories, like the terrible job that Oakland mayor Jerry Brown is doing." — Josh Clemmons, 18 years old

"I still read the paper almost every day, but it's just to get the basics. I know there's a lot they're leaving out, printing only the news that is considered acceptable when it comes to issues like the Middle East or the realities of the juvenile justice system. All in all, I just try to look at any mainstream media with a critical eye because I know there's so much more than what we are presented." — Sophie Simon-Ortiz, 17 years old

"If I rely on the dominant news sources like NBC, CBS, Fox or ABC to give me all of my information, I won't learn about a lot of the issues that are relevant to my life. Mainstream news is just like another 'Friends' or 'Paradise Hotel': fun to watch, but nothing to learn from. I'd like to see an alternative that I can trust, but I don't know what it would look like, since it doesn't seem to exist." — Nora Harrington, 17 years old ■

Collaboration and Authenticity

Youth Radio's success with mainstream media outlets is built on this kind of collaboration. And to do this successfully requires balancing young producers' insights and new ideas about content with the professionalism and knowledge of their adult counterparts. At Youth Radio, youth and experienced staff producers work together throughout the editorial process. We set the

highest standards of quality, explaining to the students that programming by and about youth must be better than first-rate to compete in today's very competitive media markets. With this emphasis on journalistic quality and cutting-edge youth style, Youth Radio is in the fortunate position of receiving assignments from major news organizations including National Public Radio, the San Francisco Chronicle's opinion section, Public Radio International, Marketplace and CNN.com.

Because Youth Radio's goal is to bring diverse voices to the largest and most diverse audiences possible, we produce lots of different kinds of programming. Our presentations run from one minute to two hours; they involve music, commentary and features as well as talk shows; they appear mostly on radio (public and commercial), but also through the Web, TV and in print.

Youth Radio's senior producer, Rebecca Martin, believes audiences respond to our programs because of "the unique sensibility that young people bring to their reporting, giving audiences access to perspectives, truths and trends that adult reporters just can't reach." When a Youth Radio reporter did a bedside interview with a U.S. soldier who lost a leg in a battle in Iraq, the soldier's comments are revealing; what comes through is the sense that this soldier is especially at ease with the approach of a reporter who is just about his own age.

Youth Radio's production and editorial process becomes longer and a bit rockier (not to mention more fun!) because of the side-by-side work of the youth-adult team. If young people collected the tape, then handed it over to adult professionals to write and produce, getting the pieces broadcast would no doubt be easier. The "youth-only" and the "adult-only" producer models each have value and are critical models in expanding the involvement of youth voices. But we find that the collaboration brings excitement and authenticity to the work. For Youth Radio, collaboration is the way to go because of our commitment to training the next generation, who reflect a diversity of economic and ethnic backgrounds. ■

Ellin O'Leary is president and executive producer of Youth Radio, an award-winning youth media organization, founded in Northern California in 1990 and with bureaus in Los Angeles, Atlanta and Washington, D.C.

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Reporting California's Recall Election

With its unusual purpose and Hollywood celebrity, California's autumn recall election became an archetypal mix of entertainment and news reporting. Lessons from its reporters shed light on some of the changing realities of political coverage.

After a 13-year break from political reporting, former San Francisco Chronicle columnist **Mark Simon** was back on the campaign trail. He reflects on changes he observed, most strikingly the impact of the Internet and the self-absorbed way the political press perceive their role and work. We are, he writes, in "an era in which the reporter has become more important than readers or voters." **Jim Bettinger**, director of Stanford University's John S. Knight Fellowships for Professional Journalists, contends that political reporters—by savoring and relying on the established political process—risk becoming irrelevant "to a political process that may be undergoing fundamental change." The consequence: "the established media are seriously disconnected" from citizens, whose profound anger they failed to understand.

In nine weeks of campaign coverage, **Marjie Lundstrom**, a senior editor and columnist with The Sacramento Bee, never saw or spoke with a candidate. Her assignment was to "go find people" and learn from them what this election was about. With photographer **José Luis Villegas**, whose images appear with her words, Lundstrom's series illuminated "the essential truth about this election: Voters were steamed. The anger was palpable." Meanwhile, the Bee's veteran political columnist **Dan Walters** was seeing how Arnold Schwarzenegger's campaign capitalized "on his celebrity . . . to go around us scribblers" and "convey his message of saving California so effectively." Also at the Bee, **Daniel Weintraub**, the paper's Weblogging political columnist, was finding the fast-moving campaign to be "a perfect marriage of medium and message," as his blog continuously passed along "political scuttlebutt and speculation."

Cecilia Alvear, NBC News producer, and **George Lewis**, NBC News correspondent, who brought the campaign to a national TV audience, admit frustration at how "the image of the smiling superstar candidate was more powerful than the words." **Dan Morain**, who reports on the influence of money on politics for the Los Angeles Times, writes about the enduring value of this watchdog beat. "Tracking money was an essential part of covering the recall race or, indeed, any campaign," he writes. **Pilar Marrero**, political editor and columnist at La Opinión, reflects on how often journalists relied on her to report on what Latinos thought about the election, instead of reporting the story themselves. As she writes, "I've never seen a colleague of the mainstream media being asked, 'What do Anglos think about this?'" Photographers from La Opinión covered the campaign, and their images appear in this section.

And **Ellen Ciurczak**, a longtime radio reporter, describes her difficult transition to becoming a freelance political journalist during the recall. "I found myself watching some of the worst partisan politics, hypocrisy and grabs for power I'd ever seen while covering state politics in California," she writes. "This stirred strong feelings in me, feelings that caused me to lose faith in my news judgment." ■

The Campaigning of Political Reporters

This is 'an era in which the reporter has become more important than readers or voters.'

By Mark Simon

In early August, Arnold Schwarzenegger went to the offices of the Los Angeles County registrar of voters to file as a candidate for governor in California's recall election. He held a news conference the same day—what would prove to be one of only two free-for-all press events. A colleague covering the appearance for a San Francisco TV station counted more than 30 television cameras at the event.

After several minutes, a press aide announced, "One more question." Schwarzenegger, showing an understanding of his own campaign strategy that would dominate the recall campaign, called on a reporter from "Entertainment Tonight" (ET). The hard-hitting question: When will actor Rob Lowe be making an appearance on Schwarzenegger's behalf?

And so the news conference came to an end without any meaningful details from Schwarzenegger about how he would balance the state's deficit-ridden budget, protect spending on public schools, and reduce taxes. Instead, he managed to repeat what would be the only message of his campaign—he would be an upbeat agent of change from the state's do-nothing political status quo.

There's nothing new about candidates or officeholders calling on reporters who are likely to ask softball questions. There's nothing new about a candidate, or a President, holding a minimal number of news conferences. And there's certainly nothing new about a candidate figuring out a campaign strategy that essentially bypasses the political news media. What was unusual was to see a candidate who so completely understood the nature of modern political reporting and was so uniquely positioned to take advantage of a new era in campaign information.



Arnold Schwarzenegger campaigns at California State University in Long Beach. *Photo by Aurelia Ventura/La Opinión.*

Changes in Political Reporting

What was remarkable about the recall campaign had less to do with Schwarzenegger's barnstorming candidacy and more to do with how the political press corps has changed in a very short time from a small group of veteran reporters with an abiding interest in campaigns and issues to a massive multimedia experience in which huge and small information sources overlap and interconnect and spend as much time attending to each other as they do to the job of reporting on a campaign.

What this campaign illuminated for me were the sweeping changes in political reporting that have happened during the past decade or so. For more than 25 years, I have been involved in state and national political reporting at newspapers. During the past 13 years,

I took a break from political reporting to write a general interest column, first at a local newspaper in Palo Alto, then for the last 10 years at the San Francisco Chronicle. Then this spring, wearying of the sound of my own voice, I surrendered the column and began to cover politics for the paper, unaware that a historic recall election was in the offing.

What I found is that much had changed about how the political press corps perceives and pursues its job due to the increased importance of TV and radio talk shows and the rising impact of the Internet as a means of conveying information and as a vehicle for the public to observe and comment on political reporting. And while there had always been a notable self-awareness among political reporters—when we could, we often read each other's work to see who was ahead and whom we had to follow—the Internet and the

airwaves have lifted that to an astonishing level of self-absorption.

It's that self-absorption that represents the biggest concern about the new era of political reporting—an era in which the reporter has become more important than readers or voters.

Certainly, there was no Internet 13 years ago. Then, as colleague Robert B. Gunnison noted in a piece for the *California Journal*, a California-based monthly about politics and government, the press corps consisted of reporters—usually garbed in blue blazers and khaki trousers—from a dozen or so newspapers around the state. The occasional TV station had a reporter assigned to politics, but those were few and far between, and much of the campaign agenda was set by a small, collegial group of middle-aged, white males.

Clearly, the explosion of information outlets blew apart that old boys' club and diversified the perspectives brought to politics, perhaps at the cost of expertise and institutional knowledge about both politics and government.

While the press corps might have lacked many things, it also was absent "Entertainment Tonight." Obviously, without Schwarzenegger's melding of celebrity and politics, "ET" might not have been on the campaign trail this time, either, but who's to say there won't be future coverage of politics in a manner historically reserved for show business? And if there was no "ET," there also was no Romensko, The Poynter Institute Web site that focuses solely on journalists and reinforces a hierarchy of media celebrities and big-time news outlets.

The National Journal's Hotline, which enhanced the sense in California that the recall was a national story and dropped our names in front of our national peers, was a fledgling phenomenon 13 years ago. Thirteen years ago, there was no Rough & Tumble, a Web site (www.rtumble.com) that, like The Hotline, summarizes in a 24-hour cycle the leading stories on California politics and government. There were no Weblogs, in which reporters can describe their first impressions, circu-



The press spotlights Governor Gray Davis during a rally to defeat the recall. *Photo by* *Ciro Cesar/La Opinión.*

late rumors, and race to be first—a real-time blog can always be corrected later—without the customary filter of editors or time or further reporting.

And in just the last few years, there has been an explosion of information distribution points among political junkies—dozens of individuals or organizations that post all or part of political news stories or circulate through e-mail their own lists of the top stories of the day, often reflecting the political perspective of the distributor's special interests.

It has become a matter of daily routine to check a variety of Web sites to see where the newspaper's reporting landed on the list of top stories. The more stories near the top, the more convinced we are that we dominated that day's reporting. We could see if we were first with a story—a scoop—and we could be sure that our competitors around the state knew we were first and that we had a chance to show off our work to news outlets around the nation and enhance our own national reputation. This cycle fed on itself: We all wanted to write stories that would top the list.

At the same time, the recall election brought to California the circus of national radio talk shows and cable TV

shout-fests. Earlier this year—before the recall election emerged but long after the development of the new multimedia era—the Chronicle established a new partnership with a Bay Area TV station and a small studio was installed in the newsroom, pushing aside a number of copyeditors. Routinely, in a break between deadlines, political reporters and columnists would sit down on the studio stool and make a quick TV appearance on one of the many cable shows that must keep feeding the voracious appetite of a 24-hour news hole.

Often the participant would walk away from the studio muttering that the main requirement for such an appearance is an ability to shout over the other guests. The cross-media partnership is not unique to the Chronicle, and it could be argued that every newspaper needs a strategy of integrated media. That's a story for another time. But having this TV outlet for our reporting fed the growing sense that the coverage of the campaign was more about what we were doing—our ability to show off our expertise—than it was finding out what was on the minds of the voters and providing meaningful, useful information with which they could make an informed decision.

There always has been the tendency

to cover the process, not the policies. But now, increasingly, the process seems to be all that is covered because it's the best way to make a good impression among ourselves. After the election, Romensko carried a report of some comments by a California newspaper editor who asserted that the state's news corps did a poor job of covering the recall election. Too little attention was paid to what the voters were thinking. That editor was right—that newspaper fixated on Schwarzenegger's immigrant status when he first arrived in the country.

It was classic "gotcha" journalism, an attempt to expose Schwarzenegger's own positions on immigration as somehow hypocritical. It was never clear why the readers of that newspaper would find that information valuable. But assuming one role of the media is to tell people things they might want to know, that doesn't explain the newspaper's focus on the story over several days. That can only be explained as an attempt to attract attention, not from readers, but from other news outlets.

That kind of reporting should be distinguished from the Los Angeles

Times's stories in which women alleged that they were sexually harassed and abused and battered by Schwarzenegger. Those stories, thoroughly and credibly reported, touched on an issue that gave the public meaningful and timely insight into a candidate. The result was a bombardment of e-mails and Internet posts concerning the Times's story, comments and reaction that indicated the story touched a nerve among readers, for better or for worse.

And that may be the last, significant irony in the changing nature of political reporting. The public now has more ways to reach the media, and we seem to listen less to them and more to each other. The public also has more ways to comment, more means by which to complain about bias or to offer up independent analysis, or participate in special-interest pressure tactics. The reverse also is true—we can reach more people now, ask for a broader range of opinion, and write stories that truly reflect the mood and attitude of the people who are participating in the political decision making.

In short, we have a better opportunity to do the two things good news

reporting should do—tell the public something they didn't know and put into words for them those things they can't express for themselves.

The recall was a unique opportunity to reflect to readers what they were thinking, since it was an election that was less about what people knew and more about how they felt. The best reporting in the recall election captured what was on people's minds, was an early forecast of a public hunger for change, an anger at a mismanaged status quo that had badly tarnished the Golden State.

But more commonly, reporting seemed to be driven by a desire to reflect ourselves to ourselves. A decade ago, no one thought a political reporter was a celebrity. Now it seems as though each of us wants to be one, not just cover one running for governor. ■

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The Anger Journalists Never Fully Understood

We must figure out 'how to reach growing numbers of disillusioned citizens without pandering to them or jettisoning our core values.'

By Jim Bettinger

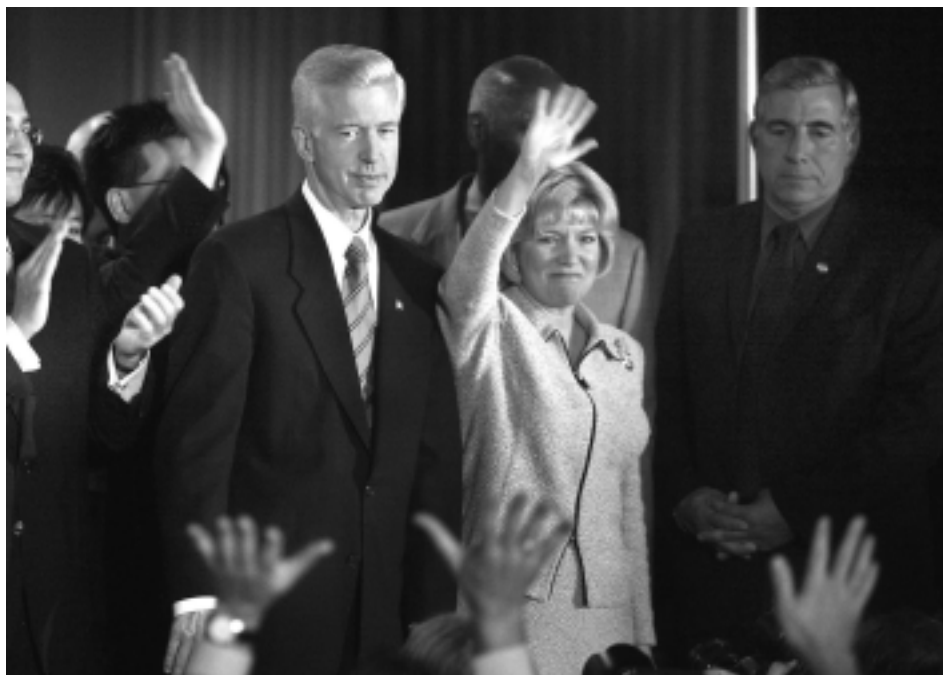
Journalism staggered away from the California recall election facing a witches' brew of problems. Now journalists face the challenge of having an awful lot to learn about what happened, with perhaps not much time to learn what they need to know.

This challenge arises not because the coverage of the recall was bad. It wasn't. In fact, by measures that serious journalists use to evaluate political coverage, it was very good. But good

coverage didn't seem to matter much and, in fact, it served to link journalists to an established political order that voters were determined to chase out of office three years ahead of schedule. This linkage seems apt since by philosophy and in practice, journalists are entwined in established politics. The recall election showed this graphically and also demonstrated how angry a significant segment of voters are at that established political order.

Warnings to Political Journalists

The warning I take away from the recall election's coverage is that serious journalism risks becoming irrelevant to a political process that may be undergoing fundamental change. For those of us who want to see journalism be a major force in democratic society and not just a constitutionally protected license to make money, significant chal-



Governor Gray Davis loses recall election. *Photo by J. Emilio Flores/La Opinión.*

lenges lie ahead. The toughest one: figuring out how to reach growing numbers of disillusioned citizens without pandering to them or jettisoning our core values.

One area where some very hard thinking is necessary is the degree to which established journalism really savors and relies on the established political process, when much of the public is sick of it. Let others complain about the length of political campaigns, especially presidential ones. Journalists *like* long campaigns. In long campaigns, political journalists participate in the vetting. In a foreshortened campaign like the recall, name recognition and celebrity matter more, and the press matters less, much to the irritation of journalists.

The California reporters and editors I talked with disdained the recall process itself, not to mention this particular election. In print and in conversation, the chances of the recall getting on the ballot were minimized. This gave an early hint that reporters might not be on top of a story that was happening outside traditional political bounds. Then, once the recall was a reality, serious journalistic outlets committed themselves to serious coverage

of the campaign and election.

That news coverage didn't seem to make much difference. According to exit polls, two-thirds of the voters made up their minds more than a month before the election, or about the time of the first debate, in which Arnold Schwarzenegger did not participate. Fifty-five percent of these early deciders voted to recall Governor Gray Davis, and 47 percent voted for Schwarzenegger. For them, all those news stories, all those profiles, all those issue charts, and all those live TV stand-ups evidently made no difference.

Major newspapers—the Los Angeles Times, San Francisco Chronicle, The Sacramento Bee, and San Jose Mercury News—recommended in editorials a “no” vote on the recall and recommended no candidate to replace him. (Under California's recall law, the recall question was a two-parter: First, yes or no on whether Davis should be recalled and second, which of the 135 candidates on the ballot—and not in alphabetical order!—should replace Davis if he were recalled.) This was a logically correct strategy, based on the conviction that the recall was a Bad Thing. But the election outcome shows that a huge segment of the popula-

tion—more than the number who voted for Davis in 2002—did not share these editors' disdain for the recall process.

Reporting on a Celebrity Turned Candidate

Journalists worked hard to scrutinize Schwarzenegger. But he and his crew succeeded in *appearing* to be scrutinized without revealing anything significant. In fact, they successfully turned most of the scrutiny on its head. Schwarzenegger appeared on entertainment TV and radio shows such as “The Oprah Winfrey Show” and “Howard Stern” and “Larry King Live,” while avoiding more informed questioners of the political press and traditional avenues such as meetings with newspaper editorial boards. As his campaign chief said in August, two months before the election in early October, “This is not a position election. It's a character election.” Schwarzenegger proceeded to ridicule attempts to probe his character and preemptively he warned that Governor Davis would try to drag the campaign to the gutter. He then coarsened his message with references to “puke politics” (his aides handed out barf bags and plastic vomit puddles to reporters) and vows to “kick some serious butt.”

These contradictions were dutifully reported. And it didn't seem to matter.

Schwarzenegger's name identification and celebrity trumped the tools that journalists had at their disposal. Schwarzenegger supporters had seen enough to make up their minds early, and no amount of standard journalistic effort to shame him into fuller disclosure, either about his character or his positions on issues, had any impact.

Many of these voters held a deep and seething anger that mainstream journalists have a hard time tapping into or even recognizing. Michael Lewis, writing in the New York Times Magazine, recounted chatting with Los Angeles talk-radio hosts John Kobylt and Ken Chiampou about their top-rated program in which they dialed in the political anger voters were feeling. “The challenge is to hold onto the

tone,' John says. Asked to describe the tone, Ken says, 'Rabid dogs.' John says: 'I don't know that part of the brain that shouts all these things you aren't supposed to say in polite company, but that's the part of the brain that we speak to.' Ken: 'People relate to the shouts. What differentiates us from a crazy man is that a lot of people agree with the shouts.'"

Whatever else the tone of 21st century mainstream journalism is, rabid dogs and shouting aren't part of it. It's so alien to most journalists that they have a hard time fathoming it as legitimate, let alone plumbing its depths and writing about it with power. And when we—here I lump myself in with serious journalists—enmesh ourselves, as political reporters, into the established political process, we become obvious targets of this same anger. While we might see ourselves as outsiders and watchdogs, keeping politicians honest and providing unbiased information to readers and viewers, the Kobylt-Chiampou audience regards us as part of an unholy cabal.

Watching the Anger Grow

Five days after the election, I wrote an analysis in the San Jose Mercury News about some of these issues, making the same point: that the established media are seriously disconnected from these citizens. The vitriolic reaction I got convinced me that I was right and also that my analysis of all of this had hardly calmed the seas. One person wrote representatively, "You seem to be saying, in a nutshell: There is a disconnect between journalists and the public. This is bad for society. So voters better shape up and get with the program." From another reader: "I want to thank Jim Bettinger for explaining to me why I voted 'yes' on the recall and for Schwarzenegger as governor. I believed I was doing the right thing, but it turns out I was just plain too stupid to understand what the Los Angeles Times, the Mercury News, and other 'Progressive' newspapers were trying to tell me."

Near the end of the campaign came the Los Angeles Times's investigation into six women's allegations that



The newly elected governor of California, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and his wife, Maria Shriver, during his victory party in Los Angeles. *Photo by Aurelia Ventura/La Opinión.*

Schwarzenegger had groped them. When given a chance to respond to the women before the story was published, the Schwarzenegger campaign ignored the specifics and instead portrayed the women's accounts as a tool of the Davis campaign. (After all, earlier they had successfully laid the foundation for this kind of a response.)

The campaign took on the newspaper, challenging its decision to publish the story five days before the election. After a loose and unspecific apology from Schwarzenegger on the day the story ran, the Schwarzenegger campaign made scourging the Times its message of the day. Maria Shriver, the candidate's wife and a TV reporter herself, called the detailed and exhaustive story "gutter journalism."

It was a tactic aimed at people prepared to believe the worst about the news media. And it seemed to work. Despite the swinish details, Schwarzenegger supporters whom I heard calling talk-radio programs took every opportunity to explain away the allegations. Others congratulated him for his apology, saying it made them more certain of their vote for him. For some, the very fact of publication seemed to prove to them that their candidate was an upright man who threatened the establishment; the problem wasn't Arnold, it was the press.

The Impact of This Anger

Some intriguing consequences have emerged in the aftermath of the recall. One is that a lot of people got very turned on by the campaign. A survey by the Public Policy Institute of California found that people were paying attention to the recall in numbers and intensity similar to the September 11th terrorist attacks. About half of them said they were more interested in politics as a result and nearly half said they were more enthusiastic about voting. Indeed, about 1.675 million people *more* turned out to vote in the recall election than had voted in the regular election less than 12 months earlier. Noting this, at least eight California television stations are considering reopening their state capital bureaus. Journalists in other sections of the country might find this amazing, but not since 1988 has a local television station had a Sacramento bureau.

My own thinking about the recall has shifted since the election. I've gone from being opposed on principle to a more ambivalent view. All the reasons to have opposed the recall are still there. But, I ask myself, if that many people are that upset about the way the state is being run, is it good government to deny them a political voice for that anger for three more years?

Serious journalists should have similar ambivalence about what happened and what they're going to do about it. Yes, Schwarzenegger's image ran roughshod over nuanced and critical coverage in this election. Yes, this was the clichéd "perfect storm" of an unpopular governor, an international icon, and a short campaign. And yes, rabid dogs and shouting are exactly *not* what many of us got into journal-

ism to cover.

But the fact remains that a significant segment of the public believes—to a moral certainty—that mainstream media work from an agenda of actively promoting liberal political goals and that they work in tandem with the traditional political system. As journalists, we need to figure out ways to connect with these angry voters and disentangle ourselves from the politi-

cal establishment, rather than dismiss this new political force as crazies who just aren't like us. ■

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Campaign Coverage Without the Candidates

A Sacramento Bee reporter and photographer discover the anger of California's voters.

By Marjie Lundstrom

The assignment was straightforward enough: Talk to people. Talk to people everywhere about California's historic recall election. Not the pundits. Not the professors. Certainly not the politicians. Just "go find people," hear them out, and take their pictures—an extended man/woman-on-the-street assignment, with "the street" being the 156,000-square-mile state of California.

So off we went. Beginning in early August, photographer José Luis Villegas and I steered away from the campaign trails—not once, in nine weeks of travel, did we cross paths with another journalist—probing the touchy question with voters of whether to throw Democrat Governor Gray Davis out of office and who, if it came to that, should replace him.

We talked to fishermen and farmers, bankers and beauticians, social workers and software execs. We met a woman chain-saw sculptor who turned redwood burls into art and a wise-cracking small-town barber with a 99-year-old barber chair that came from a brothel. We met a disabled man living in a squalid shack in the Central Valley and a retired investment banker in San Francisco's Pacific Heights with a million-dollar view.



Margaret Gillhan of Pelican Bay, California, where a maximum-security prison is located, voiced anger about what happened with the town during Davis's governorship. As Gillhan said, "This used to be a quiet little town," but it has experienced "teenage troubles" from the children of the inmates' families. *Photo by José Luis Villegas/The Sacramento Bee.*

Everyone, it seems, had an opinion. Unlike other news stories, whose specifics often elude large numbers of people, this story was as consuming to Californians as the O.J. Simpson trial had been nearly a decade earlier.

For all our diverse travels, it didn't

take long to uncover the essential truth about this election: Voters were steamed. The anger was palpable. There were the usual gripes—the budget deficit, the tripling of the vehicle tax, the controversial granting of driver's licenses to illegal immigrants. But after

that it got personal, with Davis at the core of a laundry list of grievances.

One mother held Davis directly responsible for her seven-year-old daughter's special education class being cut. A community college student blamed him for her rising fees and inability to enroll in a chemistry class. A souvenir shop manager in Hollywood was ticked off about her lack of parking.

On and on the list grew, but to each problem the proposed remedy was the same: Throw the rascal out.

If recall backers were making Davis out to be the villain, to opponents of the recall, he remained almost an abstraction. In rural areas and in cities, even diehard recall opponents were loath to say they actually supported the governor. Instead they expressed philosophical objections to the recall—its expense, the Republican's "power grab," the futility of leadership change, but would just as quickly add: "Not that I like Davis."

Hearing this chorus of complaint began to pose a journalistic challenge: to report what we were hearing might make it seem we were stacking the deck. So we looked harder for Davis supporters to provide some balance, but often came up short. We mixed up the story lineup, anticipating, for instance, that gay and lesbian voters in San Francisco would likely voice strong support for the governor, who had supported them on key issues. Instead, when we talked with them, we encountered widespread ambivalence. Many said they weren't terribly interested in the recall election. "San Francisco is a very colorful city. It's hard to have a governor as flavorless as Gray Davis," explained a lesbian attorney.

By early September, having logged some 1,800 miles, one thing was obvious: Gray Davis was in trouble, big trouble. We didn't have to say this—in story after story, the voters did.

Strategically Reporting on Voters

We knew none of this, of course, when our reporting journey began in early August. Back then, the greatest chal-



Rosemary Dominguez, with her two-year-old daughter Vanessa, intended to vote for the recall of Governor Gray Davis and for Cruz Bustamante for governor. *Photo by José Luis Villegas/The Sacramento Bee.*

lenge seemed to be how to make the pieces unique and not repetitious—to avoid the coffee-shop peril. All too often, it seems, journalists take the easy route on these kinds of assignments, blowing into a community, locating the town "hang-out," and quizzing a handful of patrons while discreetly gathering colorful anecdotes about the tablecloths and quaint wall hangings to give each piece a sense of place.

But this election, and this state, were far more complex than that. As the nation's most populous state, and the third largest geographically, California is a place where diversity is measured not just by race and ethnicity, but by many other factors: socio-economics, sexual orientation, language and culture, urban vs. rural, young and old, newcomer vs. old-timer.

To truly capture these wide-ranging voices, and to distinguish the pieces, we had to spurn the journalistic tradition of the mom-and-pop café—of hitting the road and winging it. We had to have a plan, a strategy for where we were going and why. With meticulous front-end research by Bee librarian Pete Basofin, who crunched and re-crunched statewide data and rifled through dusty political annuals, we

sketched out our targets before we left home.

There was Placer County in the Sacramento region, for instance, a Republican stronghold that had collected the highest percentage of recall signatures of any county in the state. Later, we would visit heavily Democrat San Francisco, the county that had returned the lowest percentage of recall signatures. We traveled to remote Modoc County on the Oregon and Nevada borders, where median household income is the lowest in the state.

And we spent time in Merced County in the San Joaquin Valley, where small dairy farms and lush orchards are giving way overnight to model homes and new Starbucks. As demographics have shifted throughout the Valley, Merced remains one of the last counties where Democrats still hold a slight edge over Republicans, though Republicans often prove to be more reliable voters.

These particular aspects about various locales helped frame the stories, giving readers a fresh context for each installment in the series. With Basofin's help, the stories contained not only colorful characters talking about the recall and what it meant to them, but also plenty of rich detail about the

areas and their historical and political significance.

Not all the pieces were defined by interesting demographics or political patterns. Some places were simply chosen as backdrops for specific subjects. For instance, we wanted to talk with prison guards—one of Davis's controversial constituencies, as he upped their pay during his leadership (then later tried to renege). For this we traveled to Crescent City near the Oregon border, home of the notorious Pelican Bay State Prison, where the maximum-security prison has not always enjoyed an easy marriage with the small coastal town.

Meanwhile, women's rights activists, supportive of Davis, struggled to be heard over the clang-clang of voters' fiscal alarm. For this perspective, we went to Fresno County in the Central Valley, where teen birth rates are the highest in the state—and actually cost taxpayers the most money. We used San Diego as the backdrop for a talk-radio story, focusing on conservative talk-show host and former mayor, Roger Hedgecock, an early recall supporter who whipped up local voters with "drive-by" petition signings. And just for fun, we hit San Diego's popular Tourmaline Surfing Park, where aging surfers defied the loopy, checked-out dude image and plunged into articu-

late, reasoned discussions about the recall.

Moving Beyond Assumptions

The surfers went against stereotype—one of the biggest traps I believe journalists can fall into on these kinds of assignments. With limited time in unknown places, there is a tendency to over-generalize—to make sweeping conclusions about a whole region or group of people, based on a day or two of interviewing.

As a 2001 Ethics Fellow at The Poynter Institute in St. Petersburg, Florida, I wrote a paper about what I call "geographic bias," an affliction suffered most commonly by national reporters. The journalists, who parachute into strange places at a moment's notice, routinely try to help readers and viewers get oriented with scene-setting or contextual stories—a worthy goal, except when the work ends up being one-dimensional or even twisted.

Rural areas are the most susceptible, probably because they are the most foreign to urban journalists—and seem so quaint and simple to the untrained eye. As a native Nebraskan, I cringe every four years during the presidential caucuses in Iowa and the predictable romps around farm country.



Jewell Charles blamed California Governor Gray Davis and the U.S. Government for the state of the economy. *Photo by José Luis Villegas/The Sacramento Bee.*

Never mind that Iowa's political decisions are driven by its urban areas. Never mind that Des Moines is one of the world's busiest insurance centers. Do we ever see Iowa people in suits and ties? Instead, we are constantly treated to footage of folksy farmers and rippling ripe cornfields, despite the fact that a cornfield in Iowa in January is nothing more than frozen stubble.

Where there is "geographic bias" by journalists, stereotypes abound. In rural areas, for instance, the regulars at the local steakhouse suddenly become the voice for the whole community or even state. The images from the barbershop or bingo parlor are portrayed as the sum of life here.

On our travels, José and I vowed to avoid that trap and developed a mantra to keep us grounded: "*It is what it is,*" we said over and over. At first, it was a response to weariness as we crawled inside the car after another long day of stalking and stopping strangers or getting chased by farm dogs. But I think over time it reminded us not to over-reach—not to even try to write the "definitive" piece about an area after



Dara Morehouse, dressed like Marilyn Monroe and pulling a wagon, takes flyers to Grauman's Chinese Theatre. *Photo by José Luis Villegas/The Sacramento Bee.*

only spending a day or two in it. Yet it was our journalistic instinct to try and say something profound, to extract some deeper meaning in every story, but the reality and time limitations of the assignment dictated otherwise.

It was what it was.

And it was important. People in California had a lot to say about this election, and their voices added immeasurably to the overall coverage. Because in the end, it wasn't the political experts or talking heads who decided Davis's fate. It was Rose at the General Store in Likely (population 200), who had been

soaking up the buzz behind the cash register and knew Davis was done-for. It was Maryanne, a waitress at a Los Banos lunch counter, who blamed Davis for her customers' inability to pay for a decent breakfast. And it was Edwin, a Fresno State college student mad about rising tuition and enamored with Arnold Schwarzenegger's "celebrity appeal."

These voices mattered most because they're the ones who decided October 7—all 8,984,057 of them.

The people had spoken. It was a privilege to listen. ■

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Celebrity Transforms Political Coverage

The Schwarzenegger campaign capitalized 'on his celebrity to make ordinary journalism so marginally relevant to the outcome'

By Dan Walters

We'd been there before—reporting on some rich guy without political experience running for governor of California, pretending to know something about the intricacies of state government based on what highly paid advisers were telling him and being subjected to withering journalistic scrutiny. This happened in 1998 when airline tycoon Al Checchi garnered the nickname "Checkbook Checchi" for lavishing tens of millions of dollars on running for governor and losing to a colorless career pol named Gray Davis in the Democratic primary.

But this time, the rich guy was also one of the world's most famous actors, who had conquered bodybuilding and motion pictures and now wanted to take his muscular physique and thick Austrian accent to Sacramento. Arnold Schwarzenegger's dramatic entry into the recall election directed at Davis—he announced it on Jay Leno's late-night television show after hinting that he had decided not to run—was not only the political event of the decade,

but one that altered everything we had assumed about what it took to run and win in the nation's most populous state.

Most of all—at least for those of us in the political scribbling trade—it altered the meaning of "political media," expanding it to include everything from Internet bloggers to "Entertainment Tonight" and Oprah Winfrey's daytime talk show. Schwarzenegger expanded the term so much, in fact, that it almost excluded those of us who actually cover and write about politics for California newspapers.

Transforming Political Reporting

This is not resentment speaking. I don't claim any divine right to exclusive access to politicians or to act as judge and jury of their qualifications, although some of my brethren act as if they have such a heavenly charter. I've always found the pre-election part of politics—campaigns, conventions, debates, etc.—to be mostly boring and irrelevant anyway and the media coverage

to be equally vapid, focused more on process and inside baseball than substance. Rather, I found it rather fascinating that Schwarzenegger and his advisers—political pros, all—could capitalize on his celebrity to make ordinary journalism so marginally relevant to the outcome, to go around us scribblers, and to convey his message of saving California so effectively.

Just as John F. Kennedy and then Ronald Reagan redefined political communications by using television so adroitly, the recall campaign against Davis and Schwarzenegger's campaign to succeed him might have created another paradigm shift, if one may use an overused term. "A presidential campaign was happening inside the borders of California," Schwarzenegger adviser Don Sipple said in a post-election conclave at the University of California, Berkeley. "It was about symbolic message and messenger."

Any doubts about Schwarzenegger's new definition of political media should have been dispelled not only by his use of the Leno show to make his announce-

ment but by his first major news conference, staged at a hotel near Los Angeles International Airport on August 20th, two weeks after his Leno appearance. Schwarzenegger convened a meeting of his economic advisory panel and then emerged with former Secretary of State George Schultz and billionaire Warren Buffett to answer questions. More than 30 television crews and dozens of print reporters from around the world showed up—easily a record for any political event in California—and Schwarzenegger handled it all with aplomb.

Tellingly and perhaps fittingly, the final question of the 40-minute session came from a carefully coifed “reporter” for “Entertainment Tonight” who wanted to know, breathlessly, what exalted role Schwarzenegger pal Rob Lowe would play in his campaign. “He’s a very good friend of mine,” Schwarzenegger replied coolly.

It was a taste of the media feeding frenzy that would continue for two months, until Schwarzenegger was introduced by Leno in a hotel ballroom on election night to claim victory. Later academic studies were to demonstrate that Schwarzenegger, by the sheer power of his celebrity, claimed so much attention that neither Davis nor any of Schwarzenegger’s hapless opponents—there were 135 names on the ballot—could gain more than token attention. Just one Schwarzenegger public appearance a day was enough to dominate television coverage. When the first major debate of the campaign was staged and Schwarzenegger refused to attend, most of the coverage was devoted to that, rather than what the participants had to say. And when he did attend one debate, it garnered the largest television audience of any California-only political event in history. His adequate, if not inspiring, performance in that debate sent his numbers up dramatically and those of incumbent Davis into the tank. “He sucked all the oxygen out of the air,” admiringly observed the manager of a rival campaign during the Berkeley postmortem.

My favorite personal anecdote about

the frenzy is this: One day I got a call from a field producer for a television crew from Jakarta, Indonesia, that had been dispatched to California to cover the recall—or more accurately, the Schwarzenegger phenomenon simply because the actor is so famous in that country. And they weren’t alone. I had calls, or interview requests, from publications and broadcast outlets in a number of nations, including Austria, of course, Switzerland, Australia and Canada. I practically took up residence at PacSat, a Sacramento television studio that specializes in interviews for TV network and cable talk shows. PacSat was running about a dozen journalists and politicians through its system each day and making a lot of money in the process.

The last gasp of the old political media in this campaign was a lengthy article in the Los Angeles Times, published five days before the October 7th election, that alleged a pattern of sexual harassment by Schwarzenegger directed at women in and around his movie productions.

In the Times’s article, Schwarzenegger’s campaign spokesman suggested the charges were politically motivated and untrue. But on the day the story appeared, the candidate acknowledged that he had behaved badly toward women in the past and apologized for it. Private polls showed that Schwarzenegger’s standing took a serious hit for a day or two, but quickly rebounded as Republicans and pro-Schwarzenegger radio talk show hosts denounced the Times. Schwarzenegger won the election going away, with nearly 50 percent of the vote despite the huge field of candidates, and Davis was recalled by a wide margin.

In retrospect, the Times did Schwarzenegger a favor, however inadvertently. Had the charges surfaced earlier, especially before the one debate in which he participated, they might have done more damage. And if they had been published after the election, they could have seriously damaged his governorship.

The question now, of course, is whether the media frenzy will con-

tinue after Schwarzenegger takes office. It will, for awhile. Los Angeles and San Francisco TV stations might even reopen the bureaus they shuttered in the 1980’s after concluding that politics is less interesting than freeway chases. But as the Schwarzenegger governorship begins, those of us in the real political media will also have our shot, because the nuts and bolts of governance are far more complicated and treacherous than selling a simplistic campaign message.

The reporters who covered the recall campaign for most of the larger California papers (the Bee being a notable exception) tended to be pure political reporters who specialize in campaigns—and often know little about, and usually ignore, the intricacies of government as they obsess on polls, television ads, and other forms of political minutiae. But once Schwarzenegger takes office, he will face the Capitol’s resident press corps, some of whose members have been tracking legislation and administrative policy for decades, and he will have a much more difficult time blowing smoke on the budget and other issues.

Gray Davis could tell him about that. After all, it was the Capitol press corps’ intense and critical news coverage of his actions as governor that sent Davis’s approval ratings on a tailspin from 60-plus percent to just over 20 percent and set the stage for the Schwarzenegger phenomenon. He’s coming into our domain now, and we won’t tolerate campaign-style sloganeering as a substitute for substantive action on the budget and other critical issues. ■

Dan Walters has been The Sacramento Bee’s political columnist since 1984. In 1981, while at The Sacramento Union’s Capitol bureau, he began writing the only daily newspaper column devoted to California’s political, economic and social events. His column now appears in 50 California newspapers.

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Scuttlebutt and Speculation Fill a Political Weblog

A newspaper columnist's blog becomes a must-read on the campaign trail.

By Daniel Weintraub

After 20 years writing about politics and public policy to some local note but no national acclaim, I managed to become almost famous this year—by dispensing speculation and instant analysis on the Internet and punditry on cable television.

I owe it all to the California recall and to my Weblog.

When I started the Weblog—known as the California Insider—I had no idea that the attempt to remove Governor Gray Davis from office would take root and evolve into the biggest political story of the year. Or that the Internet genre known commonly as the blog would come to play such a prominent role in the coverage.

For the uninitiated, a blog is an online journal of usually short, spontaneous items updated frequently as events develop. Many blogs are personal diaries read only by the author's family and close friends. Even the more prominent bloggers are usually nonjournalists who link to printed stories and critique them on their own time. Others are created and updated by college professors or experts in their fields.

Blogs, then, represent a democratization of journalism, or at least opinion journalism, because they allow anybody, just about anywhere, to publish themselves and gain readers in relation to their talent, their relevance and, ultimately, their accuracy, regardless of their credentials.

Breaking News on My Blog

I was breaking new ground by combining full-time journalism as a three-times-a-week columnist for The Sacramento Bee and a full-time blog that I updated constantly from anywhere I had access to the Internet—from my desk, home, campaign bus, and other unpredictable locations. When I wrote for the California Insider, I commented on the news and broke some, too.

It was a perfect marriage of medium and message. The recall was a fast-moving story from the start, first with the signature count and then the watch to see which candidates would file to run. The final, 60-day sprint to Election Day was filled with unexpected twists and turns that I could report and then

analyze on my blog 18 hours or more before they would appear in the print version of our newspaper. When I began the blog in early April, it was read by a few hundred people each day, mainly Capitol staff, lobbyists, political consultants, and colleagues in the press corps. By the end of the campaign, the blog was getting nearly 20,000 page views a day.

Some readers told me they would check the site eight or 10 times a day to see if anything was breaking on the story. Those readers included people from all over the world and many editors in newsrooms from Los Angeles to New York. One day, late in the campaign when I was riding on the Arnold Schwarzenegger bus tour, a reporter for another paper approached me after his editor had read an item I'd posted a few minutes earlier, called him, and asked him to check it out.

Ironically, the success of the blog was based on skills I'd long shunned as a journalist. In my 20 years as a beat reporter, I hated daily news, or at least the kind generated by politicians, which so often seemed artificial and often self-serving. Rather than staffing press conferences and sitting through staged committee hearings, I preferred enterprise stories and analysis. Now I found myself with a self-imposed deadline every minute, and I was filing items based not just on my reporting but also on press releases, campaign commercials, fundraising reports, and other routine developments.

While as a columnist I prefer policy to politics, my blog was filled with political scuttlebutt and speculation, the latest polls and observations on who was up

California Insider
 A Weblog by Sacramento Bee Columnist Daniel Weintraub
 November 19, 2003

Easy as Pye

Gov. Schwarzenegger has named Cassandra Pye as deputy chief of staff for external affairs -- a job that is the unofficial in-house slot responsible for tending to the governor's political connections in the community, especially among ethnic groups. Pye is the California Chamber of Commerce's vice president of corporate affairs and is the chamber's former political director, where she kept a close watch on legislative races. She has worked previously for the California Retailers Association, the Food Marketing Institute and the California Grocers Association.

Posted by dweintraub at 04:25 PM

Fun while it lasted

Strange and rather tense hearing today of the Assembly Budget Committee. The panel called Finance Director Donna Arduin to testify on Gov. Schwarzenegger's fiscal plans but double-booked her with the Legislature's own financial analyst, Elizabeth Hill. Although Arduin was asked to appear at 10 a.m., then told she wasn't needed until 10:30, Hill went on first and Arduin wasn't called to testify until after 11:30. Arduin had a meeting with the governor scheduled for noon, so the late start sharply limited the time she could spend with the members. The morning's mood was further fouled when Arduin, suffering from a sinus infection, asked if she could sit at the witness table rather than stand to deliver her report. The Committee Chairwoman, Jenny Oropeza, asked her to stand which Arduin did until finally giving up half-way through her presentation and deciding to sit, with or without permission.



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and who was down. Naturally, TV loved it. I was soon in demand as a guest pundit for all three major cable television networks, and halfway through the campaign I signed on as an exclusive analyst with MSNBC. I was bemused if not surprised that family and friends who had rarely if ever read one of my 850-word columns on state policy were thrilled to see me on television offering my latest sound bites on the recall race.

Even if I was going against my instincts, I found that the blog helped improve my column. The constant writing loosened up my style and made me always ready to write whenever I sat down to craft my newspaper pieces. The increased feedback from readers also helped, especially tips and analysis that flowed in as people responded to my posts. I also was able to use the Web site as a public drafting board, posting segments that would grow into columns over a few days' time.

The Blog and the Newspaper

I did stumble along the way. My newfound thirst for reporting breaking developments led me to post an item from a source close to

Schwarzenegger saying the actor had decided not to run and would be holding a press conference to announce his decision. As it turned out, the press conference was postponed and ultimately canceled and Schwarzenegger, of course, did enter the race. Such are the hazards of reporting the news minute-by-minute as it develops.

I also became somewhat notorious after I posted a sharply worded commentary critical of Lt. Governor Cruz Bustamante, the major Democrat in the race. Protests from the newsroom led to a decision to have an editor pre-clear my items. Before then, I'd posted directly to the Web with a simultaneous copy sent to my line editor. When the paper's ombudsman revealed this change in policy, it caused an uproar in the "blogosphere" among my new colleagues who believe that blogging and editing are incompatible because the craft is supposed to be spontaneous and unfiltered, then revised as readers jump in for a sort of interactive story session. Someone even started a "free Dan Weintraub" movement.

By Election Day, I was liberated, but not from my editors. Now that the campaign has ended and the transition

to governing has begun, I've returned to the pace I intended all along: I post a few items a day, some tidbits but mostly analysis. Readers tell me they are having withdrawal pains. But there is simply no way to keep up the pace of the campaign and also publish three print columns a week and still find time to eat and sleep.

The electronic media have also retreated. When, the day after the election, they packed their bags and headed for the Kobe Bryant trial in Colorado or the presidential campaign trail in Iowa, they also stopped calling for instant analysis. My teenage son noted my absence from the tube and asked with all the sincerity a 14-year-old can muster: "What happened, did your 15 days of fame run out?"

I guess so. But the blog, and the column that begat it, continue. ■

Daniel Weintraub opines on California politics for the editorial pages of The Sacramento Bee. His Weblog and column archive are at www.sacbee.com/insider

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Lights, Camera, Recall

Television news coverage could not get past a candidate's star power.

By Cecilia Alvear and George Lewis

The California recall was a mixture of historical event, high drama, and showbiz. In the beginning, it was covered as a farce, with 135 candidates in the field. The first week of stories profiled Larry Flynt, the self-styled "smut peddler with a heart," porn star Mary Carey, and former child actor Gary Coleman in pieces that reinforced every East Coast stereotype of California as a land of whackos. Then Arnold Schwarzenegger announced his candidacy on the "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno," and from that moment on the media focus narrowed to him,

embattled Governor Gray Davis, and a handful of other so-called "serious" candidates. But it was Schwarzenegger, with his superstar aura, who dominated the story.

His first news conference was an event attended by 160 journalists from around the world, representing outlets ranging from The New York Times to Variety, from the broadcast and cable news outlets to the celeb-news shows "Entertainment Tonight" and "Access Hollywood." There was a huge contingent of foreign journalists from Europe, Asia and Latin America, a testa-

ment to Schwarzenegger's international prominence as a movie actor.

In keeping with Schwarzenegger's status as a former Mr. Universe, Ironman Magazine was also present. Teagan Clive, the Ironman correspondent, granted numerous interviews to her colleagues in the room, telling the Pasadena Star-News "Arnold is the modern day king" and adding, "He is strong, and he shoots from the hip."

The news conference offered a preview of the campaign to follow: long on star power and short on substance. The candidate's refusal to get into spe-

cifics prompted a question from an NBC News' producer about exactly what cuts he would make in California's budget to ease the state's fiscal crisis. "The public doesn't care about figures," he responded, prompting some pundits to criticize his lack of specifics while others called it a smart ploy to avoid getting mired in a debate about financial issues. And so it would go throughout the campaign—a campaign that more resembled a Hollywood promotional movie junket than a traditional political contest.

The Candidate and Questioners

In the early days, Schwarzenegger was often not available to answer questions from the press. There were the quickie interviews with local TV anchors—10 minutes maximum, hard questions at a minimum. He also took time for interviews on conservative talk radio shows where the hosts had already endorsed his candidacy, while the traditional political press was kept at arm's length.

At one point, an NBC News' producer observed Schwarzenegger and his handlers conferring before a press conference. The aides were pointing out the reporters who were considered "friendly" and "unfriendly" and advising him to ignore questions from the "unfriendlylies."

One friendly reporter Schwarzenegger would always call on was Barbara Gasser, the correspondent for the Austrian newspaper *Kleine Zeitung*. She would ask him questions such as, "Will you establish an office of physical fitness in California?" or "How did you celebrate the 20th anniversary of your U.S. citizenship?" probing queries that made some of the hard-nosed political reporters roll their eyes. Eventually the Schwarzenegger campaign anointed her with a role similar to the one Helen Thomas used to play at presidential press conferences. Gasser got to say, "Thank you, Mr. Schwarzenegger" to end his question-and-answer sessions with the press.

"I will be the people's governor," Schwarzenegger often proclaimed, adding that he would go up and down

the state listening to the voters. So the campaign organized numerous "Ask Arnold" events, billed as town hall meetings with average Californians, where citizens could question the candidate. In reality, the participants were handpicked by the campaign. The invitees mostly served up softball questions that Schwarzenegger easily fielded with canned answers culled from his standard stump speech.

At one of the "Ask Arnold" events in East Los Angeles, a group of political activists, including one of the icons of the farm labor movement, Dolores Huerta, gathered outside, protesting Schwarzenegger's promise to repeal legislation granting driver's licenses to illegal immigrants. When several of the camera crews inside headed for the door to photograph the protest, Schwarzenegger's press aides warned them that if they left, they would not be readmitted to the event.

Schwarzenegger's training as a body-builder and actor—as someone accustomed to the limelight—served him well during the campaign. As he was walking through a crowd of college students at California State University, Long Beach, somebody threw eggs at him. The pool TV camera was right in front of Schwarzenegger at that moment, and the footage showed that rather than flinching, he just kept smiling and pressing the flesh as he plowed through the crowd, eventually pulling off his egg-stained jacket.

While police and security people were alarmed by the incident, Schwarzenegger later laughed it off by saying of the egg-thrower: "This guy owes me bacon now. This is all part of free speech. I think it's great."

Most of the images of candidate Schwarzenegger were flattering ones arranged by his staff. Arnold on the steps of the California State Capitol, broom in hand, promising to make a clean sweep of state government. The gigantic smiling Arnold picture plastered on the side of his campaign bus, befitting a rock star on tour. Arnold surrounded by soccer moms and schoolteachers holding up signs reading, "Remarkable Women Join Arnold."

It was straight out of the playbook of

longtime Ronald Reagan aide Michael Deaver, the man who raised the photo opportunity to an art form. Deaver's theory: In an age in which most people get their news from television, showcase your candidate in the most visually glorious setting possible, the leader surrounded by adoring citizens. Then no matter what the reporters say about him, what sticks in viewers' minds are those triumphant pictures.

From the beginning, the Schwarzenegger camp had to deal with allegations of his misbehavior toward women, something even he acknowledged when he announced his candidacy on "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno." Demonstrators from women's groups would routinely show up at his campaign events as early polls showed women had doubts about him. Schwarzenegger countered those attacks with the help of his wife, "Date-line NBC" correspondent and anchor Maria Shriver, on leave from her job. They went on "The Oprah Winfrey Show," a show with an 80 percent female audience. Shriver talked about the warm and fuzzy details of their private life, such as his habit of bringing her coffee in the morning. Almost overnight, Schwarzenegger's gender gap in public opinion polls melted away.

Then, late in the campaign, the Los Angeles Times published its exposé about Schwarzenegger's alleged groping of several women. The charges exploded throughout the media, but they didn't seem to sway Californians. Polls showed that they had made up their minds early in the campaign to vote for the recall and elect Schwarzenegger.

At the end of the campaign, Schwarzenegger thanked us for "all those wonderful pictures"—images that his people arranged and that we repeatedly broadcast to millions of viewers. From Schwarzenegger's standpoint, all the free television exposure was a boon to his campaign. Often there were so many cameras present at his events that the TV crews were tripping over one another repeatedly.

And no matter how hard we tried to put the pictures of those events into context, the image of the smiling su-

perstar candidate was more powerful than the words. For those of us working in television news, this triumph of the visual is always a source of frustration when we're up against politicians and others skilled at manipulating the medium. When we'd try to write thoughtful words about the issues raised in the campaign, it often felt like those words were drowned out by the hoopla. His campaign anthem, "We're Not Gonna Take It" reflected the angry mood of voters who wanted change in Sacramento and looked at Schwarzenegger as the action hero who was going to deliver that change.

In the end, it was clear that the voters didn't want to see television

stories or read newspaper articles about whether the candidate was short on answers to the state's fiscal crisis or whether he misbehaved around women. As reporters, when we did try to focus on issues, we felt as though we were doing such pieces for one another, because the general public had all but tuned out when it came to that kind of news coverage. Even so, we felt obligated to pursue the truth and tried not to allow our frustrations to poison the fairness or integrity of our reporting.

Schwarzenegger's star power is now influencing how television covers state politics in California. An unprecedented number of media outlets covered his

inauguration at the state Capitol and now, in what some see as a positive impact of "the Schwarzenegger effect," local stations that closed their Sacramento bureaus during the 1980's are reopening them as Governor Schwarzenegger takes over. The show must go on. ■

Cecilia Alvear, a 1989 Nieman Fellow, is an NBC News producer. George Lewis is an NBC News correspondent. Both covered the California recall election full time.

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WATCHDOG

Tracking Money in the California Recall Election

'Newspapers miss a major element of campaign coverage if they give short shrift to campaign money.'

By Dan Morain

California's first recall of a sitting governor was a populist uprising of historic proportions, an end to politics as usual, and a purging of political insiders. Or so it was said. Campaign donors must not have been told.

In a campaign that lasted 77 days and ousted Governor Gray Davis, the candidates who vied to replace him, political parties, and moneyed interests operating independent campaigns for and against the candidates, raised and spent between \$75 million and \$80 million. All the major interests chipped in: businesses, lawyers, unions, wealthy political patrons, Indian tribes that own casinos, and more. The recall was supposed to be different. It wasn't. Money was a defining issue, like it is in all campaigns.

"This is business as usual, as far as I can tell," Democratic campaign consultant Bill Carrick told the Los Angeles Times after the election. Added political science professor Gary Jacobson, a

campaign finance expert at the University of California, San Diego, "You can have a popular revolt—if you can find ten's of millions of dollars."

The million-dollar-a-day-campaign underscored several truths about money in politics. Six- and seven-figure checks were common even though the recall was the first statewide campaign in California in which there were contribution restrictions. Proposition 34, drafted by legislators and approved by the state's voters in 2000, purportedly barred individual donors from giving more than \$21,200 to a single candidate.

As quickly became apparent, however, money seeps in, while laws limiting donations can make money more difficult for the public and press to track. Additionally, if moneyed interests are restricted from giving large sums directly to candidates, they can form independent committees and spend unlimited sums for and against candidates. Unlike candidates who

must answer to the voting public about their tactics, operators of independent campaigns are all but unfettered.

"No matter what campaign finance scheme you come up with, money is always going to play a role," said Sacramento lobbyist Scott Lay, who created a Web page to track money raised for the recall. "Moneyed interests will find a way to speak out."

Reporting on the Money

Here's another truth: Newspapers miss a major element of campaign coverage if they give short shrift to campaign money. My editors at the Los Angeles Times assigned veteran reporter Jeff Rabin, Joel Rubin and me, plus researcher Maloy Moore and editor Linda Rogers, to track fundraising and spending in the recall. Rabin has focused on money in Los Angeles politics for years. I have covered money in politics as part of my assignments for the 10 years I have been in the Times's Capitol bu-



Governor Gray Davis addresses delegates at the California Democratic Party Convention with Lt. Governor Cruz Bustamante (to Davis's right, gesturing), also a candidate for governor. *Photo by Ciro Cesar/La Opinión.*

reau in Sacramento.

Money spent on presidential and congressional races attracts interest from national media, campaign finance reform advocates, and academic researchers. But stakes are high in the states, as reflected by the findings of The Institute on Money in State Politics, based in Helena, Montana, which counted \$1.54 billion spent on campaigns for governor, lieutenant governor, and legislative candidates in 2002, up from \$1.03 billion in 1998.

In California, the campaigns for legislative seats and statewide offices routinely cost a combined \$200 million or more. Cumulative campaign spending topped \$500 million in 1998, when Californians elected Davis as governor and decided several high-priced ballot initiatives. There is, in short, no way to report fully on state government—or elections to it—without tracking the flow of money. In many instances, money is at the confluence of politics and policy.

Starting in 1999, when Davis took office, I began building an Excel database consisting of his donors. By the time he left office, the file contained almost 12,000 entries. I could sort donors by name, city and state of residence, date of donation, and amount given. The file includes information

about the donor's employer and industry or interest, ranging from health care, gambling, entertainment and telecommunications to labor and state contractors. There were several sub-classifications. Within labor, for example, there are state employee unions, firefighter and police unions, building trades and others.

Using this accumulated data, my colleagues and I could write about the number of donors from outside the state who gave to Davis and how many appointees on boards and commissions were donors and how much they contributed. This enabled me to report in the Times, with some authority, that 23 percent of Davis's donations came from organized labor. I could readily see that \$175,000 was contributed in 2003 from the Mercury Insurance Group, but it's one thing to know that Mercury gave \$175,000 to Davis this year and \$270,000 since 1999. It's another thing to know that in 2003, Mercury sponsored legislation beneficial to its business, and Davis signed the bill before leaving office. Davis's aides and Mercury denied any connection between their contribution and his signature.

In his first term, as Davis was raising more than \$70 million, fundraising became a focus of much of the news coverage of his administration. This

was particularly true in the 2002 election year. Newspapers reported that he offered to meet with students at the University of California, Berkeley, who donated \$100, and that his administration authorized an oil refinery to dump dioxin in the San Francisco Bay after the refinery owner donated \$70,500.

The Times reported that he decided against regulating the dietary supplement, Ephedra, after a manufacturer gave him \$150,000. After the San Francisco Chronicle reported that Davis solicited a one million dollar donation from the California Teachers Association, the Times reported that Davis requested the money during a meeting in the governor's Capitol office. Davis narrowly survived the 2002 re-election against businessman Bill Simon, Jr. But tales of Davis's fundraising exploits served to increase his vulnerability to the recall. "[Davis] has two ears and two eyes and knows that he was hurt in the 2002 campaign by the perceptions that he was a nonstop fundraiser," Davis's chief political adviser Garry South said at a forum analyzing the recall campaign, hosted by the Institute of Governmental Studies at the University of California, Berkeley.

Tracking Campaign Fundraising

In California, retail politics is a quaint concept. Statewide candidates don't hold barbecues or shake hands outside factory gates. As a rule, local television news provides little original campaign coverage. Statewide candidates generally seek to influence the 15.4 million registered voters by spending two million dollars each week or so on television spots. The recall seemed different. News organizations—including local TV—showed intense interest, in part because Arnold Schwarzenegger was running but also because there had never been a recall of a sitting California governor.

Given this level of media attention being paid to the campaign, political experts believed there would be less need to raise large sums. From the start, they were wrong. Political gadfly Ted Costa proposed the recall last De-

ember, shortly after Davis narrowly won reelection. Most experts doubt that Costa would have gathered the requisite 900,000 valid signatures of registered voters to place the recall on the ballot without the infusion of two million dollars by multimillionaire Representative Darrell Issa (R-Calif.). Issa paid petition circulators one dollar to \$1.25 per signature and funded a direct mail petition drive. Altogether, he was responsible for 1.3 million of the 2.1 million signatures gathered in the drive, according to consultant David Gilliard, who oversaw Issa's petition drive. Issa had planned to use the recall to launch his run to replace Davis, until Schwarzenegger muscled him aside.

During the recall, the public had more access to fundraising information than in any past election. California Secretary of State Kevin Shelley's office expanded its Web site, making it easier to search for donors and download lists of contributors. Like Lay, the Sacramento lobbyist who knitted together a Web site to track recall money, California Common Cause set up a Web site allowing the public to conduct more detailed searches. The Times and other papers published charts showing the amounts raised by each major candidate.

But as the campaign took shape, Proposition 34's infirmities became apparent. The California Fair Political Practices Commission, which interprets and enforces state campaign finance law, carved some loopholes. Candidates found others:

- There were no caps on donations to committees established to support or oppose the recall, or on donations to and spending by independent committees established to support or oppose candidates.
- The Proposition 34 provision restricting donors to giving candidates no more than \$21,200 did not apply to the recall target, Davis. In his failed attempt to beat the recall, Davis accepted at least 70 separate donations of more than \$21,200; he received 46 separate donations of \$100,000 or more.

- While Proposition 34 barred candidates from loaning themselves more than \$100,000, candidates could take out bank loans, so long as the terms were generally available to the public. Schwarzenegger used this loophole to borrow \$4.5 million, at four percent interest.

Upon announcing his candidacy, Schwarzenegger portrayed himself as a political outsider who wanted to shake up the establishment. He proclaimed as he entered the race that he would accept no campaign contributions. He quickly withdrew that pledge, saying he wouldn't raise money from "special interests," which he defined as public employee unions and Indian tribes that own casinos. In both instances, he would be in a position of negotiating with them. "I take money from [the] little grocery store, or the little shoe store or the guy that owns the real estate company or something like that," Schwarzenegger explained. "But most of my contributions, 90 percent of them, are just from regular people."

As it turned out, Schwarzenegger led all other candidates in the money race. He gave himself and borrowed \$10 million and raised \$11.9 million from outsiders. I have begun building a new database on the new governor's contributors. It shows that much of Schwarzenegger's money came from longtime Republican donors, many of whom will have interests in legislation and decisions made by the governor and his administration. He took money from farm interests, insurance companies, the financial services industry and manufacturers, all of which have lobbyists in Sacramento. Real estate and development interests, which are affected by state environmental regulations and various fees, accounted for 14 percent of the nearly 12 million he raised.

One of the hottest policy issues in the recall campaign involved the vehicle license fee, also called the car tax. After presiding over its decrease in 1999, Davis tripled the fee in an attempt to help erase what was a \$38 billion budget deficit. Car dealers had donated a combined \$450,000 to Davis

during his first term. But in the recall, after the car tax was increased, their money flowed to Schwarzenegger. Schwarzenegger promised to roll back the car tax, thereby shaving the cost of new and used cars. Car dealers accounted for \$500,000 in donations to the new governor. Bert Boeckmann, who owns car dealerships that had donated to Davis in his first term, helped arrange a fundraiser for Schwarzenegger in the recall. Boeckmann told my reporting partner, Joel Rubin, that there were many reasons why car dealers supported the new governor, but "the car tax was one of the issues that was very strong."

Tracking money was an essential part of covering the recall race or, indeed, any campaign. The flow of money in the recall likely affected the fate of at least one major candidate, Lt. Governor Cruz Bustamante. But reporting on the influence of money on politics shouldn't end when the voting does. It ought to be integral to government reporting in off years. Reporters may find that Internet disclosure of campaign money will help, though the promise of Internet disclosure doesn't yet match reality in many states. Groups such as the Institute on Money in State Politics also can assist.

Reporters can make their own jobs easier by taking time to maintain an up-to-date and searchable database. To be sure, there's not always a direct line between donations and decisions. Honest reporting on the doings in a state house or city hall should include instances when politicians make decisions that appear to be in conflict with the interest of their patrons. Still, in almost any story about legislative and administrative issues, a few paragraphs describing the donations from the affected interests can provide added edge and give readers insight into the workings of their government. ■

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Covering the Recall for a Spanish-Speaking Audience

The political editor of *La Opinión* found herself being interviewed by a lot of other reporters.

By Pilar Marrero

From the beginning, minority communities in California, which by now are the majority of the state's population, were not part of the movement toward the governor's recall election, the tremor that shook the Golden State with a force reminiscent of periodic movements of the San Andreas Fault. The decisions involved in the recall of Governor Gray Davis emerged from a small but dedicated group of conservative activists and were later fueled by the suburban voter who worries about raising taxes and the proliferation of benefits for those less fortunate, including the largely faceless group referred to as "those illegal aliens."

This pattern is in keeping with Ronald Reagan's election as governor in the 1960's, passage of the anti-tax Proposition 13 during the 1970's, and the voters imposition of term limits in

the early 1990's. Voter revolts haven't come from the less affluent and expanding minority communities where economic downturns mean loss of jobs, cuts in pay, closure of neighborhood health clinics, and anti-immigrant initiatives. They arise out of the anger of the mostly white middle class.

Informing Potential Voters

So it became our job, as journalists from the state's only Spanish daily newspaper, not only to inform our community about developments in this fast-paced political story but also to try to explain this odd election to our readership. Most of our readers had no knowledge of the recall process. Is there relevant historic precedent? How will the election work? What happens next?

Those who rely on us for news include a mix of recent immigrants, new

voters, and older generation Latinos who'd never seen anything like this kind of political maelstrom and wondered how, in the end, this unique election might affect them. As the campaigns got underway, they also wondered whether it would devolve into a circus or showcase democracy in action. What choices would they have as voters?

Besides following the candidates, we struggled to explain what these campaigns were about. We dedicated a great part of our reporting resources to civic journalism, which is often a strategy used by newspapers that serve immigrant communities. By taking this approach, we are able to inform, explain, interpret and, at times, advocate for the interests of our readership. In this election cycle, we found this harder to do; even the experts often didn't know answers to our questions.

To help bring the community in tune with the developing political dynamic, we did some things we had tried during previous elections. We went out on the street and invited people to pose questions to candidates, which we used in our reporting on particular issues. We'd do articles explaining how the election would work—explaining what it is, its process and history. We encouraged political participation by letting our community members understand what was at stake for them in this election, pointing out the need to vote and reminding them of key dates for registering, requesting absentee ballots, and other details related to voting.

Journalist as Spokesperson

In my job as political editor for *La Opinión*, I was pushed to do more than



Former President Bill Clinton and Lt. Governor of California, Cruz Bustamante, greet crowds at the inauguration of a new school named after Clinton. *Photo by J. Emilio Flores/La Opinión.*

just report, write, plan coverage, and edit—all of which I normally do each day given the smaller size of our paper. In addition to these roles, I became a source for other journalists, as more and more called to interview me. They were trying to better understand Latinos and to explain us, as Americans, to Spanish-speaking audiences throughout the world. Though this happens during every political campaign, the interviewing demands on me were especially intense during this election, and the time I spent doing them, of course, took away from my own reporting and editing hours.

But I recognize that wearing this other hat—and becoming a source of news—is now part of my job. Other journalists want me to present the Latino perspective on news shows; often I am asked to express the thoughts, feelings or trends in the Latino community, as if I can represent the thoughts and feelings of this large and diverse group. “What do Latinos think about this election?” I am asked repeatedly. Most of the time, such questions strike me as funny, because I’ve never seen a colleague of the mainstream media being asked, “What do Anglos think about this?”

While I understand that these reporters come to journalists like me because we are viewed as “experts,” I often wish they would go out into the communities themselves and find out on their own about what issues the people care about and why. It makes me realize that the lack of a strong Latino presence in newsrooms of most mainstream publications presents a handicap to these news organizations.

Still, I try to explain to these reporters what I know as best as I can. I look at this as an opportunity to represent my newspaper in front of a different and broader audience. And I use these platforms to try to foster understanding about the political, social or economic realities in the Latino community. What I find is that the mainstream population has very little understanding—beyond its usual stereotypes—of what certain groups of people are like who live only blocks away from them.



Governor Gray Davis kisses his wife at a political rally. *Photo by Ciro Cesar/La Opinión.*

With Arnold Schwarzenegger’s entrance into the campaign, huge interest developed worldwide about the political process in California. Along with other colleagues at the newspaper, I received interview requests from reporters in Latin America, Spain and other countries in Europe, including the BBC’s world service in Spanish. My ability to speak Spanish and English and firsthand knowledge of the story made me a valued source.

With these reporters I struggled to explain that, in spite of the entertainment quality of the story and insistence by some that this was a circus, not a serious election, this was a very serious, legally sanctioned political event that would have real consequences for real people.

I was also invited to serve on the panel of journalists that conducted the candidate’s first debate in San Jose, California. There I worked with other political editors and reporters to prepare questions and topics for discussion. As a Latina journalist, my perspective generated a few questions about social and economic issues of particular interest to the Spanish-speaking community I serve. Because Schwarzenegger did not show up for this debate, we were not able to get his

perspective on these issues.

The Immigrant Connection

In California, the related topics of immigration and demographic changes find their way to the fore of nearly every political debate, and this recall election proved to be no different. At *La Opinión*, two major angles of coverage for our readers emerged early in the campaign: Lieutenant Governor Cruz Bustamante, who became the Democrat’s alternative candidate in the recall of the governor of his own party, is the first Latino to be the gubernatorial candidate of a major party in modern California history. And, in an effort to win over Latino voters, Davis signed controversial legislation favored by Latino activists and unions to provide undocumented immigrants with the possibility of obtaining driver’s licenses.

Bustamante’s campaign proved to be lackluster, and his candidacy’s purpose was hard for people to understand because of his politically complicated message of “No on the recall, Yes on Bustamante.” With this campaign, there turned out to be very little to cover after an initial surge and a couple of good proposals. Instead, the dynamic of the campaign started to re-

volve around how Schwarzenegger would "terminate" Davis.

The issue of permitting undocumented immigrants to get licenses is a story we're still covering. The bill, signed by Governor Davis in early September, would benefit an estimated one to two million people, but by becoming law it enraged a majority of the state's population, many of whom associate issues involved in immigration with their concerns about terrorism and porous boundaries. Right now, there are referendums and initiatives under way that target the driver's license bill and other benefits for immigrants, as anger generated by a bad

economy turns against certain populations. [The drivers license bill was repealed in November.]

Because *La Opinión* is a newspaper read by a Spanish-speaking audience, we will closely monitor what happens with these issues and do so more closely than most mainstream publications. And the perspective of our coverage will also be different, since we will definitely look favorably on immigrants' rights. We know our readership and why they've come to this country. This same perspective is found among the journalists who work for *La Opinión*. The majority of them are immigrants, and they bring their own life experi-

ences to their coverage of these issues.

There is no doubt that inflammatory immigrant issues, such as this one, will continue to be a large part of our political coverage during the months ahead and probably into the presidential campaign. In some ways, this is a legacy of this odd political process we've just endured. In other ways, it is simply a reminder that the more things change, the more they remain the same. ■

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Wondering What a Political Story Is

In this celebrity-driven election, a journalist questions her judgment about what should be reported.

By Ellen Ciurczak

When it began to look like California Governor Gray Davis might lose his job, my reporter friends told me I had it made. I had just begun working as a freelance radio journalist, self-employed for the first time after 15 years of job security at successful commercial and public radio stations in San Francisco. I'd spent the past four years as one of the few radio reporters covering politics at the state Capitol in Sacramento. This "recall thing"—happening in my backyard—would surely mean a lot of business for me.

But that's not what happened. Instead, I covered one major story—Native American gaming campaign contributions—and a few little ones. Because of my inexperience as a freelancer, my uncertainty of how this new role could work in the new climate of political journalism, and what I regarded as the extreme partisanship and just plain silliness surrounding the recall, I began to mistrust my news

judgment. In retrospect, I let several stories go untold that I believe might have served the public interest.

The Native American Gaming Story

About the same time that California's Secretary of State announced enough signatures had been gathered to force a recall election, an organization called the Independent Native News in Alaska became one of my clients. The service produces a daily five-minute radio program focusing on news of interest to Native Americans, and its stories run in states where there are high Native American populations, including California.

As it turned out, the managers at Independent Native News helped me stumble onto a big story to tell. California Indian tribes had become a significant lobbying group ever since they negotiated gambling compacts with the state in 1999. But a few months before

the recall became official, Governor Davis announced he wanted those gaming tribes to contribute a percentage of their revenues to help reduce the state's huge budget deficit. The tribes, which had traditionally supported Davis, now saw an opportunity to throw their campaign contributions to a candidate who wouldn't ask for their money, or at least not so much of it.

Two weeks after the race began, news organizations were reporting that Democratic contender Lieutenant Governor Cruz Bustamante, who was trailing in the area of fundraising, had received a \$320,000 donation from a Southern California gambling tribe. Independent Native News asked me to do a short report on this and, by the time I was done, I had broken a major story.

Looking for sources to comment on the tribal donation, I called the California Nations Indian Gaming Association, a lobbying group in Sacramento. The public information officer sug-

gested I talk to Indian gaming consultant Michael Lombardi, who gave me more information than I could have hoped for. He told me that Bustamante was speaking to the gaming association in three days to make his case for tribal votes and that Davis and conservative Republican candidate Tom McClintock would also appear. Lombardi said candidate Arnold Schwarzenegger had also been invited, but had not yet responded. (He did not attend.) And Lombardi made a bold prediction—by the end of the week, Bustamante would have the biggest campaign war chest of all the candidates in the race.

I called back the association's public information officer, who confirmed the information she'd conveniently neglected to mention the first time. She told me, however, the actual event would be closed to the press. I filed this story not only for Independent Native News, but also for KCBS Radio, the all-news commercial station in San Francisco, and for National Public Radio's (NPR) newscast unit, which produces the news that airs at the top and bottom of each hour.

This was major news. Indian gaming tribes were playing their biggest role ever in an election in California. Candidates and the governor were coming to them to make their case for votes. The next day, the only other news outlet that published the information was the San Francisco Chronicle, in its political news, talk and gossip column. As a freelancer, with especially limited access to sources during those weeks, this felt like one of my better days.

As Lombardi predicted, five days later Bustamante received \$2.5 million from a Southern California Indian tribe, almost equaling the amount of money Schwarzenegger had contributed to his campaign from his personal fortune.

Stories Not Told

The remaining two months of the campaign turned out to be much more

difficult for me to find stories to sell. Making independent judgments about news coverage was new to me. Rather than pitching ideas to my regular clients and letting those editors decide if the stories were newsworthy or not, I became my own—very critical—editor. With Schwarzenegger in the race, many of the stories focused on him and, because of this, I found myself trying to impose some balance. The consequence: I ended up holding back on stories that perhaps I should have suggested.

A story I covered, but ultimately decided against offering to any news organization, was San Francisco Democratic Assembly member Mark Leno's announcement on October 5th, just two days before the election, that he

It was also difficult to know how to report on Governor Davis's official activities during the recall.

was going to introduce a bill called "Arnold's Law." Leno held a conference call to discuss this. A reporter from The Sacramento Bee and I were the only two who asked any questions. (We appeared to be the only reporters even on the call.) Leno said allegations reported in the Los Angeles Times that women who had worked with Schwarzenegger had been groped by the actor had convinced him the penalty for fondling a woman in the workplace should be increased from a misdemeanor to a felony. Leno said the allegations had made him realize the effect this kind of incident could have on female workers and their ability to maintain their livelihood.

When I asked Leno about the timing of his announcement, he admitted that instead of waiting until the start of the legislative session in January, he wanted to publicize the measure now. "I won't be disingenuous and tell you this isn't in the middle of a campaign, and I don't have a political position on this, but I think these are very serious crimes, and I would be the guilty party if I kept

my mouth closed until January," he said. I questioned him about tagging the measure "Arnold's Law" and the likelihood the bill would be signed by the governor, if it was Schwarzenegger. I was surprised when he said he had come up with the name in the heat of anger and would consider changing it. But he also said, "If his [Schwarzenegger's] celebrity can help bring attention to what I think is up until now an overlooked but very serious crime, I think all the better."

Because I felt the partisan overtones were so strong, I decided not to pitch this story idea. As I look back now, I wonder if the story was indeed worth reporting, precisely because of its partisan nature and Leno's admissions. I've talked with Assemblyman Leno since the election. He says he's still considering sponsoring the legislation, but he will hold off for several months because he does not want its importance to be diluted by those who might see it as a political move against the new governor.

It was also difficult to know how to report on Governor Davis's official activities during the recall. Davis signed many bills during the campaign and announced support for bills that had not made it to his desk yet, something he'd steadfastly refused to do during the previous five years of his administration. This, of course, garnered lots of news coverage—in my mind, much more than he would normally get.

When Davis announced support for a bill to give driver's licenses to illegal immigrants—one that was more lenient than a similar measure he'd vetoed the year before—he was heavily criticized in the press—and by his political opponents—for pandering to the Hispanic vote. In an interview I did about the recall campaign with an NPR station in Boston, this issue was raised. I responded by mentioning another measure that in any other year the governor's office would have dispatched with little fanfare and that I would not have reported. In this new

political climate, Davis's office had put out an enthusiastic press release championing his signature on what seemed another attempt to attract Latino voters. The bill allowed fried dough to be cooked on moveable food stands. The headline of the Davis press release read, "Governor Davis Signs Bill Permitting Churros to Be Fried on Mobile Food Facilities." (A churro is a Mexican specialty, often sold at fairs, of fried dough covered in cinnamon.) Davis was quoted in the release as saying "Churros are popular in California. ... And everyone who has tasted one knows that freshly made churros taste better than warmed over ones."

The recall election had come down to this: A governor's power to give the people hot churros.

When a Reporter's Feelings Intrude

I also found myself watching some of the worst partisan politics, hypocrisy and grabs for power I'd ever seen while covering state politics in California. This stirred strong feelings in me, feelings that caused me to lose faith in my news judgment. It was during this time that I began to greatly miss the daily guidance of an editor and the conversations I used to have with my newsroom colleagues. My thoughts kept spinning round in my head, rather than being spewed out as part of the good-natured debate that happens among trusted colleagues.

I reacted viscerally to what I saw happening and became very disappointed in how some of the politicians I'd come to know were acting. I was dismayed by these feelings, and they led me to think there were no stories worth reporting. I wondered if I was seeing situations that I thought were unusual because I was naive and unduly surprised by the raw political calculus that was so openly on display. In addition, with one candidate in particular, Republican State Senator Tom McClintock, I began to feel compassion for his situation, and this caused me to back away from doing reports on him at all.

During the campaign, the California Republican Party leaned heavily on McClintock to get out of the race so as not to split the party's vote with Schwarzenegger. He refused. He had been a member of the state legislature off and on since 1982, and since he had started to serve again in 1996 he'd steadfastly supported his fellow lawmakers in numerous conservative causes. Despite this record, the Republican caucus in both the state senate and the state assembly announced they were endorsing Schwarzenegger.

After the announcement, I interviewed Assembly Republican leader Dave Cox. "I'm surprised that you would choose an inexperienced actor over a member of your own legislature," I said to him.

"There comes a point in time when you have to look at more than just legislative experience ... you have to look at the ability to get things done, and so it was a very difficult decision, but in the final analysis I believe that Arnold was the one who can and will defeat Gray Davis. Mr. McClintock's numbers have not been rising as he thought they would ... and as I look at the numbers, the more important consideration today is, can we win and can we win with whom?"

Cox's admission shocked me. It didn't seem to matter to the Republican lawmakers if they had a governor who'd worked with the legislature, knew the key players, and understood state government. They'd put their weight behind an inexperienced but seemingly sure winner. I didn't suggest a story about this abandonment of McClintock, but I should have. This seemed a calculation more about gaining power than serving the people of California. And the people of California might have wanted to know this.

By the end of the campaign, I had learned some things about myself. And I learned them from the candidate I was most reluctant to report on because I was identifying with him so strongly. Even before the recall began, I'd begun to question my decision to become a freelancer, to go it alone. I felt even more alone as the recall race

continued, as I was beginning to question my news judgment and my political savvy. But watching McClintock, who like me spent most of the campaign on a solo mission, helped me to gain some perspective. On Election Night, after his concession speech, he was nearly knocked over by reporters asking him about his plans. He said he'd given up any thought of running for higher office again and would return to the state senate. As he said this, I was thinking about when he returned there and how he'd be working with colleagues who had abandoned him.

His reply to the question about his future plans brought tears to my eyes. "I'm reminded of that old Scottish ballad," he said. "I am wounded but not slain, I will lay me down and bleed and then live to fight again."

Now, as the campaign was ending, I knew that I also had an internal fight of my own to wage. I'd need to learn to trust my news judgment and be willing to endure the possible mockery by editors of story ideas I put forward. And I'd need to invite colleagues into my thinking process—editors and other reporters—to create the kind of newsroom environment I was now missing. And in continuing to work on my own as a reporter, I also needed to trust more in my instincts and acknowledge my feelings. Now I know that all of this goes into the mix of what I should share with editors so they can help me report in a fair and contextual way the stories I see waiting to be told. ■

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War and Terror

As the United States's military engagement continues in Iraq, dissent at home increases and news organizations wrestle with how to report on it, writes former CBS and NBC News correspondent, **Marvin Kalb**, now a senior fellow at the Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard University. "The White House is determined to control the message," he observes, "which means it must try to exercise more control over the messengers—a strategic goal that has been tested by many other administrations with results that have always left much to be desired." An excerpt about the press and its coverage of dissent from a recent book Kalb coedited called "The Media and the War on Terrorism" accompanies his article. And from another book, "Terrorism, War, and the Press," a collection of papers written by visiting fellows at the Joan Shorenstein Center, comes an excerpt from a 2003 paper by former Los Angeles Times's Washington Bureau Chief **Jack Nelson**. In "U.S. Government Secrecy and the Current Crackdown on Leaks," Nelson writes about a dialogue taking place among some of Washington's top journalists and government senior intelligence officials "about the issue of protecting government secrets without infringing on the right to report on government."

In her job as a National Public Radio correspondent, **Anne Garrels** was one of the few American correspondents to remain in Baghdad and report to her radio audience as the Iraq War was being waged. Her account of this reporting experience has been published in a book, "Naked in Baghdad: The Iraq War as Seen by NRP's Correspondent." We are publishing excerpts from her book, which is written in diary style. In one entry, Garrels wonders about the value of a news organization "maintaining a presence at the cost of not reporting the whole truth," and describes her reporting mission: "I am here to understand how the Iraqis see themselves, their government, and the world around them."

To publish an oral history of journalists' wartime reporting, "Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq: An Oral History," coeditors **Bill Katovsky** and Timothy Carlson sought out those who had covered the Iraq War and recorded their remembrances. As Katovsky writes about these interviews, "war correspondents spoke frankly—and subjectively—about their experiences." In an accompanying excerpt from "Embedded," New York Times's chief foreign correspondent, **John Burns**, describes not only what it was like to report in Iraq during the war, but also during the difficult months preceding it. "Editors of great newspapers and small newspapers and editors of great television networks should exact from their correspondents the obligation for telling the truth about these places. It's not impossible to tell the truth," Burns observes. "I have a conviction about closed societies, that they're actually much easier to report on than they seem, because every act of closure is itself revealing. Every lie tells you a truth."

In his book, "Embedded: Weapons of Mass Deception: How the Media Failed to Cover the War on Iraq," Mediachannel.org founder **Danny Schechter** writes a posthumous letter to

former CBS news correspondent Edward R. Murrow, ruminating on what happened to the reportorial courage he personified in his coverage of Senator Joe McCarthy's hearings during the early 1950's. "Some things don't change," Schechter notes in his letter. "Media institutions remain citadels of conformity, conservatism and compromise. Courage is in short supply in our unbrave world of news because it is rarely encouraged or rewarded, especially if and when you deviate from the script."

Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer **David Turnley** spent time before and during the Iraq War working in the Gulf region for CNN as a correspondent, contributing to that network's coverage a mix of video, photography and on-air reporting. He worked in Syria, Turkey and then in Iraq, transmitting his work daily to CNN in Atlanta. In a book, "Baghdad Blues: A War Diary," Turnley weaves words and images together "to convey the immensely human story of life during the war in Iraq." Photographs and an excerpt from his book appear on our pages.

For 25 years, **Margie Reedy** has been a television anchor and reporter, most recently as the host of New England Cable News's "NewsNight," a news interview program. Early this year, as the Iraq War began, Reedy was a fellow at Harvard's Shorenstein Center, working on a documentary film about cable news. How major cable news organizations covered the war became her focus. Reedy's documentary tracks the approaches various cable networks took to their coverage and includes interviews with media observers about what implications there might be because of coverage decisions made during the war. Reedy notes that "there are profound implications for American television news if opinion—unidentified as such and masquerading as news—becomes the new paradigm for cable news or even the broadcast networks."

In "War Stories: Reporting in the Time of Conflict From Crimea to Iraq," **Harold Evans**, former editor of The Sunday Times in London and former editorial director of the New York Daily News, U.S. News & World Report, and The Atlantic Monthly, explores the dangers and responsibilities that war correspondents assume and shows what about the job has changed and what has stayed the same through time. He also addresses some difficult questions about journalism and war: "Should a correspondent or the editor ever put truth second to his own country's perceived national interests? What does history have to tell us about the consequences of evading the censor? . . . What public benefit is there—if any—in the firsthand picture of conflict, or does it amount to no more than voyeurism?"

This fall the **Committee to Protect Journalists** (CPJ) published an updated version of its guidebook to reporting on war and in other situations in which journalists' lives might be threatened. Entitled "On Assignment: A Guide to Reporting in Dangerous Situations," the information delves into a range of possible situations in which journalists find they need to report. Advice includes the warning that "journalists covering conflicts should never carry arms or travel with other journalists who carry weapons," since doing so "jeopardizes a journalist's status as a neutral observer and can make combatants view correspondents as legitimate military targets." But as the CPJ guide points out, this advice comes at a time when some journalists are hiring armed guards to accompany them into dangerous territories. ■

Dissent: Public Opinion, Media Reaction

Though dissent is a constitutionally protected right, to engage in it—sometimes even to report on it—is to risk having one’s patriotism questioned.

By Marvin Kalb

Dissent is so crucial to American democracy that its spirit was written into the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. After assuring citizens of certain other freedoms, such as the “free exercise” of religion and “freedom of speech, or of the press,” the founding fathers were very explicit about “the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”

You may define dissent in many different ways, often depending on whether it occurs in war or peace, but its essence has always been clear: People in a democracy have an inalienable right to express their dissent, their disagreement or disgust with a government policy, and the government, in response, cannot, or should not, take any step to curtail dissent, even if it is tempted to do so. President George H.W. Bush, aware of his limitations in this regard, once portrayed himself as “one man” in fierce battle with a horde of lobbyists on Capitol Hill objecting to an aspect of his Middle East policy—they were, in fact, “peaceably” assembling and petitioning their government. The President, taking advantage of his bully pulpit at the White House, was trying to paint the petitioners into an uncomfortable corner of public opinion, as though by disagreeing with his policy they were somehow engaging in an unpatriotic action.

His son, President George W. Bush, masterfully seized the tragic events of September 11th to rally the country in a global war against terrorism, and for a time he succeeded, probably beyond

his own wildest expectations. A tidal wave of patriotism swept across the land and much of the mood still remains. It is everywhere and regarded as a welcome relief from the dark skepticism of the Vietnam era. During the seventh-inning stretch at a World Series game, people rise in solemn unity and, with their right hands covering their hearts and American flags fluttering from poles, they sing “God Bless America,” and they seem to enjoy every cadence. Radio commercials extol the virtues of giving your “extra” car to veterans who might need one, and you get a tax deduction to add to the good feeling of helping someone in uniform. Bridges are bedecked with flags; trucks and cars sport them on back bumpers.

Not since World War II has there been such a warm rush of patriotism. Yet not since World War II has dissent seemed so problematic. It’s not that

The White House is determined to control the message, which means it must try to exercise more control over the messengers—a strategic goal that has been tested by many other administrations with results that have always left much to be desired.

there hasn’t been dissent; in recent months, since the swift military victory over Saddam Hussein’s brutal regime in Iraq, dissent has risen throughout the land, as a wide range of problems unexpected in their breadth and depth has erupted, leading to a slow but steadily corrosive effect on public support for the administration effort. The daily casualty reports only compound

the administration’s problems.

Critics who were very reluctant after September 11th to criticize the President, or his policy, for fear of seeming to be unpatriotic, have now emerged from the woodwork, some with full-throated criticism of both. “What went wrong with the intelligence?,” they ask. “Were we deliberately misled before the war about the extent of Iraq’s ‘weapons of mass destruction?’” “Was there in fact an ‘imminent’ threat, as we had been told?” Simply put, “Were we lied to?”

Journalism and the Iraq War

The administration knows that the post-war reality of Iraq does not make for pleasant reading or viewing, and it does raise serious doubts about U.S. policy. In response, President Bush has led an administrationwide counter-

attack, playing on a widespread conservative belief that the media, too “liberal” in its orientation, cannot be trusted to tell the truth. The President proudly asserts that he doesn’t read newspapers, acknowledging that he might occasionally glance at a headline but “rarely” reads the article. “The best way to get the news,” he explained during a lengthy

interview with Fox News, “is from objective sources. And the most objective sources I have are people on my staff who tell me what’s happening in the world.” He wore a straight face while making this outlandish comment.

The President has been unhappy about news reports from Iraq that often highlight the negative and rarely accentuate the positive. “We’re making

good progress in Iraq,” he insisted, during this same interview. “Sometimes it’s hard to tell when you listen to the filter,” the use of the word “filter” being his way of refusing even to mention the word “media.”

The White House is determined to control the message, which means it must try to exercise more control over the messengers—a strategic goal that has been tested by many other admin-

istrations with results that have always left much to be desired. Nonetheless, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice has been put in charge of a new White House task force whose primary responsibility is to turn negative news about Iraq into positive news—a daunting task, almost certain to fail.

There are, of course, various strategies to try to address this task. One is to tighten control over news sources in

Iraq, to reduce the number of officials who talk to the media; another is to limit access to normally newsworthy places, such as hospitals, police stations, and army depots. On one occasion, ABC News’s footage in Iraq was confiscated on a flimsy pretext. Still another approach is to send prominent U.S. officials to Iraq for the purpose of doing TV interviews from Baghdad joyfully proclaiming that the

The Press and Coverage of Dissent

The Media and the War on Terrorism

Edited by Stephen Hess and Marvin Kalb

The Brookings Institution. 307 Pages. \$22.95 Paperback.

Between October 31, 2001 and September 19, 2002, 20 sessions were held in which past and present government officials, foreign and domestic journalists, and scholars discussed topics related to the waging of and reporting on war. This book contains edited transcripts of those conversations. What follows is an excerpt from the chapter called “Dissent,” in which a panel comprised of pollster Peter D. Hart; Boston Globe media critic Mark Jurkowitz; journalism professor, 1986 Nieman Fellow, and former newspaper editor Geneva Overholser; human rights activist Alex Arriaga, and National Public Radio anchor Robert Siegel discussed the press and coverage of dissent. The conversation took place on February 27, 2002.

“In wartime, dissent carries an additional nuance—it not only denotes a difference of opinion, it suggests the minority squaring off against the majority, righteously arguing its case. Like the Supreme Court justice who registers a dissenting opinion, the dissenter, even the lone dissenter, has the right in a free country to register his or her opposition to the majority opinion of society and to government policy. So it was during the Vietnam War, frequently enough that dissent in war came to be seen as a natural appendage of public opinion in recent American history. So

the question arose, after the United States destroyed the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and prepared to fight Saddam Hussein in Iraq: Where was dissent in this ugly and unusual war against terrorism? ...

“... He [Jurkowitz] then produced anecdotal evidence to support his view that reporters were trimming their editorial sails out of concern that critical stories would kick up a patriotic backlash against the press. Overholser agreed with the Jurkowitz line of analysis. She believed that too few tough questions were being asked, too few dissident voices being heard. The result, according to Arriaga, was that our civil liberties were being jeopardized.

“Siegel provided yet another perspective. Normally the journalist was the one who produced the ‘first draft of history,’ said the NPR anchor. Now, it was the Pentagon and its unorthodox spokesman, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. By briefing almost daily, he controlled the message. Even if reporters ran contradictory stories, Overholser said, the public tended to believe Rumsfeld—he commanded the PR field.

“Patriotism was the administration’s ally, building a protective wall around its policy. Americans were outraged by the terrorist assaults, and they overwhelmingly supported the President’s response. The Taliban regime in Af-

ghanistan collapsed so quickly that there was no time for dissent in the United States to emerge and grow. Siegel noted that there were few protests on campuses, fewer demonstrations in central squares. If there was real criticism or anger, he said, NPR would cover it, ‘but that’s barely happening.’ This was a ‘fascinating moment’ of ‘near unanimity’ in American public opinion. If the war continued for years, he projected, there still might not be dissent of the type seen during the Vietnam War.” ■



progress they see everywhere is mighty impressive. Of course, the message loses much of its power when these same officials are hustled to Kuwait in the evening for “security” reasons. Once, when Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz decided to overnight in Baghdad, rockets slammed into his hotel, and a U.S. soldier was killed in a weekend of violence. Yet another way to sell the “positive” message, foolish in the extreme, is to encourage troops in Iraq to sign and send the exact same draft of a letter of support for the war to different hometown newspapers, apparently in an effort to suggest that if the troops support the war, then every American ought to, as well.

The White House is learning that control of the message was easier before the war. Then, reporters seemed reluctant to criticize the President or his policy. Patriotism stifled the urge to ask penetrating questions of senior officials or, on the omnipresent talk shows, to voice skepticism about the buildup to the war. Now, in the aftermath of a brilliant military campaign, the Bush administration faces huge problems in Iraq that were simply unanticipated by the Pentagon’s civilian leadership. Each of these problems, punctuated by violence, represents hard and unavoidable news, and the tone of coverage has decidedly changed—too much to suit the White House—and the White House is fighting back.

There is, undeniably, a rising chorus of dissent against the President’s policies—abroad and at home. Critics might argue that there is not enough dissent, that the administration has been suffocating dissent, but it exists. Read any newspaper. Watch any television report. Listen to any radio talk show. The debate is everywhere, and it is intensifying as the opening of the presidential campaign draws near.

Questions About Dissent

In “The Media and the War on Terrorism,” a book I edited with Stephen

Hess, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, we included a chapter called “Dissent.” Its content emerged out of a seminar held on this subject on February 27, 2002, six months after the September 11th terrorist attacks. With Iraq then on the horizon, the war in Afghanistan was a prime topic of discussion; agreement existed among our five experts that the war was “so popular, so swift, and so successful” that there was no “room or time” for a “broad, vigorous dissent.”

Pollster Peter Hart, a participant in this seminar, asked in one of his public opinion surveys whether dissent weakens the nation’s defense or strength-

... the media have begun to give more coverage of the political opposition and to antiwar critics.

ens it. Forty-nine percent of those he polled said it strengthened the nation. In a 1985 poll, 57 percent supported the right of dissent, even during war. Hart felt the figures indicated little real difference. I disagree. There has been a noticeable drop in support of dissent during the war on terrorism.

Other seminar participants spoke to issues related to the media and dissent. Boston Globe media reporter Mark Jurkowitz raised the question, “Who should decide what should be published during wartime about military operations?” A Pew Center poll revealed that two out of three Americans favored Pentagon oversight, in effect revealing the obvious: Many Americans didn’t trust the media. Columnist Geneva Overholser decried the fact that in her view too few voices of dissent were being heard, too few questions being asked. She inferred that when the voices are heard and the questions are asked, it might prove to be too late. National Public Radio anchor Robert Siegel noted that in the past journalists usually produced the “first draft of history.” Now, he said, that responsibility has been assumed

by the Pentagon’s Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, whose daily briefings have set the tone for national coverage of the war on terrorism.

In the bloody aftermath of the Iraq invasion, there is a strong sense this is all changing. With serious problems in Iraq and with the economy hovering between recovery and continuing uncertainty, the Bush administration no longer fully controls the message nor the news, as it looks ahead and sees a reelection campaign that months ago seemed like a cakewalk now appearing more like mortal combat. It sees spreading dissent and open disagreement, even within its own party, and the media have begun to give more coverage of the political opposition and to antiwar critics. The administration might yet prevail, but if it prevails, it will only be after a vigorous debate with those who are now taking fuller advantage of their constitutional right to express their patriotic dissent. ■

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How and Why Leaking of Secrets Happen

Journalists and senior intelligence officials are talking about 'protecting government secrets without infringing on the right to report on the government.'

Terrorism, War, and the Press

Edited by Nancy Palmer

Hollis Publishing Company. 316 Pages. \$19.95 Paperback.

In "Terrorism, War, and the Press," the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy has assembled papers written by visiting fellows, including those from the U.K., Northern Ireland, India, Israel and the United States. Each has lived through, reported on or studied these issues. In his contribution to this collection, first published in January 2003, entitled "U.S. Government Secrecy and the Current Crackdown on Leaks," Jack Nelson, former Washington bureau chief for the Los Angeles Times and a 1962 Nieman Fellow, explores the practice of government leaks, their uses by journalists, and the impact they can have. Excerpts from his paper follow. The paper can be found at www.shorensteincenter.org.

"In the never-ending sparring match between the government and the news media, no subject produces more friction than the practice of leaking classified information. Government officials—at least those who don't leak—denounce the practice. They say it can damage intelligence operations and reduce the government's ability to detect and deter terrorists or other enemies.

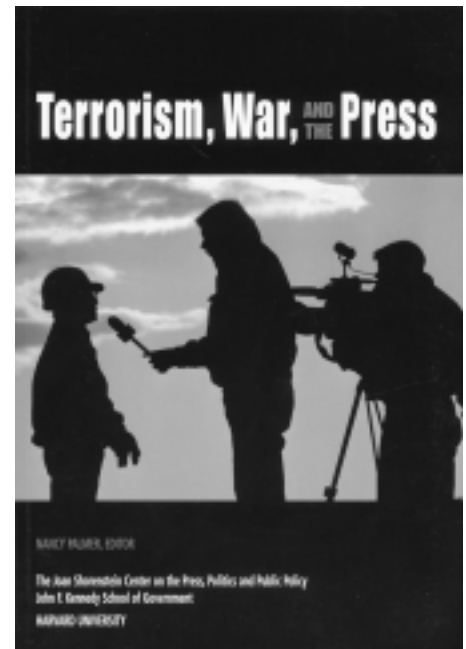
"Journalists, on the other hand, say they couldn't do their jobs without the leaks. Almost all leaks come from government officials, they point out. And in an era of managed news and wholesale classification of government documents, such back-channel information is often the only way the public can gain an understanding of what its gov-

ernment is thinking and doing.

"Not surprisingly, the debate over leaks has become increasingly heated since the September 11th terrorist attacks and the showdown with Iraq over giving up any chemical and biological weapons and abandoning its quest to develop weapons of mass destruction. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld called for jail terms for leakers and President Bush joined him in denouncing them. An intelligence official even suggested sending 'swat teams into journalists' homes' if necessary to root out reporters' sources. ...

"Several participants said one of the most significant achievements of the Dialogue¹ meetings, aside from weighing in on Ashcroft's decision not to seek anti-leaks legislation, has been a recognition on both sides of the need for the media and the government to be educated about both the dangers and the values of leaks. 'National security leaders need to understand that some leaks are good for democracy and the country even though others are bad,' says Jeffrey Smith. 'The press needs to understand more about the sensitivity of national security leaks. Everybody understands you don't publish that the 82nd Airborne is planning to land somewhere, but not everyone understands that it's a national security problem to report that Osama bin Laden's cell phone calls have been intercepted.' ...

"The war on terrorism and the showdown with Iraq clearly have given a greater sense of urgency to the issue of unauthorized disclosure of sensitive national security secrets. Journalists



such as those attending the Dialogue sessions say they clearly are more concerned now about the dangers of such disclosures. ...

"In today's climate, leaks undoubtedly will become an even more burning issue. With the war on terrorism raising serious concerns about violations of press freedom and other civil liberties, the news media and the government should continue the Dialogue sessions to broaden understanding on both sides. Dialogue meetings make it easier for both sides to avoid knee-jerk reactions. Also, the more sophisticated the news media's understanding of the problems, especially when dealing with sensitive intelligence, the greater the media's ability to avoid needless damage." ■

¹ Editor's note: A group of Washington journalists and senior intelligence officials have met since the fall of 2001 for an "informal, ongoing dialogue about the issue of protecting government secrets without infringing on the right to report on the government," with investigative journalist Scott Armstrong and Jeffrey Smith, former general counsel of the Central Intelligence Agency, as facilitators.

Reporting From Baghdad During the War

NPR correspondent Anne Garrels describes what she observed and thought while reporting from Iraq.

Naked in Baghdad: The Iraq War as Seen by NPR's Correspondent

Anne Garrels

Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 222 Pages. \$22.

From October 2002 until April 2003, Anne Garrels reported from Baghdad for National Public Radio. What follows are excerpts from the book she wrote in diary form about her reporting experiences as one of the few American correspondents to remain in Baghdad during the war in Iraq.

October 22, 2002

Costs of reporting: "Some Western news organizations' representatives have sat inside the Information Ministry, refraining from covering the [protest march outside], fearing they could jeopardize their Iraqi visas by documenting a so-called 'unauthorized demonstration.' They were right. Al Jazeera, the Qatar-based satellite channel that broadcasts across the Arab world, had its videotapes confiscated. A CNN correspondent has been expelled after the network carried the protests live. This is one of the few signs of bravery by CNN, which has curried favor with the Iraqi authorities in order to maintain its substantial presence.

"But is maintaining a presence at the cost of not reporting the whole truth worth it? Tonight there was a raging debate among some journalists at the Al-Rashid [Hotel]. One Italian television correspondent told me, 'I am here for the big story,' meaning the war. Reporters have long played a regrettable game, tacitly agreeing not to report on aspects of Iraq for the sake of a visa. Among the issues that are forbidden: the personalities of Saddam and his sons; the fact that he is widely despised and feared; the terror that his regime has instilled.

"CNN and the BBC are seen in real time by Iraqi authorities, who monitor the satellite channels normal Iraqis

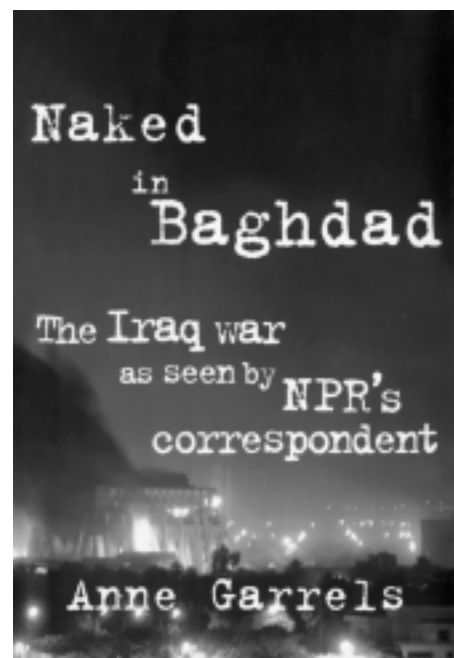
can't see. This puts a lot of pressure on them to pull their punches and 'behave.' Myself, I don't see the point in self-censorship. The obvious stories, press conferences, and official statements that are now the fodder for most news organizations can easily be had from outside Iraq. I am here to try to understand how Iraqis see themselves, their government, and the world around them."

October 23, 2002

Cultural divides among journalists: "There are many cultural divides here, most obviously between reporters and Iraqis who are scared to speak out. But there are also divisions between the various journalists who have come from around the world, each with his or her own national perspective. Though friendships cross national boundaries, journalists tend to hang out with their own. There is, however, another divide, and that's between print and television. Their demands are different. The way they cover stories is different. And the means at their disposal are distinctly different. Television folk have much more money, relatively large staffs, and big feet, which means they make a lot of noise wherever they go. They seem to live in another realm. As a mere radio correspondent, I fall somewhere in between print and video, and given that I work for National Public Radio, my feet are small."

November 1, 2002

On being a female reporter interviewing women like Huda al-Neamy: "It's at moments like this that I revel in being a female reporter, which on balance has been a distinct advantage. Men generally deal with me as a sexless



professional, while women open up in ways that they would not with a man. Hard as it was to break into journalism back in the dark '70's, and with few role models out there to follow, I have only benefited from my sex, reporting from overseas especially, ironically in societies where women are sequestered. Whether in Afghanistan or Saudi Arabia, I can walk both sides of the street, talking the talk with male officials while visiting the women's inner sanctums, which are often off-limits to foreign males. And being an older woman has its advantages, too. I would never have been able to interview a mullah along the Pakistan-Afghan border were he not assured in advance that I was an 'old woman.' He tutored the young American muslim John Walker Lindh, who then went to fight for the Taliban until he was captured by U.S. forces. However, I apparently did not look as old as the mullah had

anticipated, and on my arrival his aides demanded I wear a burka for the entire interview because 'he had the natural feelings of a man,' which he apparently could not control. Enveloped in the burka's stifling blue nylon pleats and peering through a square of mesh while trying to push buttons on the tape recorder and take notes was not pleasant, but it certainly wasn't impossible.

"As for covering wars, the dangers are basically the same whether you are male or female. Bullets don't discriminate, and while some of my bosses in the past have expressed concerns about the risk of rape, my response has been that men can be tortured just as badly, if in different ways."

March 15, 2003

Naked in Baghdad: "Tonight I did what I had to: I broadcast naked in the dark. Rumors swirled again about a late-night sweep for satellite phones. My thinking went this way: if I turn off the light in my room it's harder to see the antenna on the windowsill and from the corridor there will be no light shining under my door. If someone knocks, I can pretend they have woken me up, beg for a few minutes to get dressed, and then perhaps have enough time to dismantle the phone and hide it. Not a great plan, but the only one I could come up with.

"I laid out a dress that I could slip on in seconds, moved the equipment so it was close to the bed so I could quickly push it under the mattress if I had to, and filed my piece in the buff. Robert Siegel remained in blissful ignorance, and the whole exercise was totally unnecessary as no one came to the door. But they could have, and they still might in the future."

March 21, 2003

Ambivalence: "I am of many minds about the need and justification for this war. I have seen how brutal Saddam's regime is, but I am not convinced that he continues to have weapons of mass destruction. The United States has not made a persuasive case, and American diplomatic efforts appear lame. I also worry about the U.S. government's staying power to do what

needs to be done when it is all over. Americans have shown that they have a very short attention span. My ambivalence, however, makes it easier for me to cover the situation, to just listen to what people here say."

March 22, 2003

Stories that don't add up: "The command bus tours, announced on short notice, keep us on a very short leash. Late at night the Information Ministry rouses us for another trip. The bus meanders through the city, giving us a glimpse of some of the damage. We pass the smoldering Salam Palace, one of the most fanciful of Saddam's creations. Surrounding the central dome, which has now been hollowed out, are four huge busts of Saddam dressed as Saladin, the Mesopotamian warrior who took on and defeated the Crusaders.

"Suddenly air raid sirens signal another attack. Being out late at night, at bombing hour, right next to Saddam's palaces is about as dumb as it gets. I just hope our minders wish to live as much as I do. I swear off any more midnight tours.

"We are taken to four houses that have allegedly been hit by American bombs. Iraqi officials set up generators to illuminate the site. They talk of numerous deaths. But once again the stories don't quite add up. The officials say the bombs landed at one time; residents say they landed at another. The officials say several were killed and wounded. Residents say the houses were unoccupied. At a second location, it's the same confusion.

"I gratefully happen into conversation with an Iraqi Russian speaker; translators are nowhere to be found. He provided an elaborate picture of a happy family sitting down to dinner when an American bomb lands, killing them all. Others, who claim to be relatives of the victims, say no one was killed but some were injured. Once again the damage to the house itself is not consistent with a missile or an American bomb. I retrieve a piece of a shell and later show it to Amer [Garrel's guide]. He says it is from an Iraqi anti-aircraft gun."

March 23, 2003

The few left: "Press conferences are now impromptu affairs held in the lobby of the Information Ministry, the better to flee the building should it be hit, perhaps. Looking around at the reporters who are left in Baghdad I am struck by how few Americans there are. Who would ever have thought it would be pared down to 16, including photographers, with NPR, The New Yorker, and The New York Review of Books among them? The absence of CNN, Fox and the other large American networks has created an intimacy and a lack of hysteria in the coverage. The perception that television is most important, their money, their sharp elbows, their need for pictures, and their shorthand coverage all tilt the way a story is reported. I have to confess that this is a precious time that will undoubtedly never be repeated. Given what little access I have to outside news (at eight dollars a minute on the satellite phone, I don't log on for long), I really have no idea what the comparatively large numbers of Spaniards, Greeks, French, British and Italians are producing. I feel as if I am in a cocoon, documenting the small world that I can see."

April 8, 2003

Palestine Hotel hit by U.S. forces: "While waiting to do a two-way for Morning Edition, my editor, Doug Roberts, keeps me up to date. He tells me that a correspondent from Al Jazeera has just been wounded. Then he tells me the man has died. He was caught in the morning's battle while broadcasting from the roof of their office building. As I get off the phone, there's a huge blast that literally throws me from my chair. The hotel shudders. I think another bomb has landed close by and continue typing. The hotel phone rings. It's Amer. I assume he wants to tell me about an upcoming press conference and I start to mutter that I'm about to go on the air when he interrupts with the words 'Get out now. Hotel hit.' ...

"Most of us immediately assumed an Iraqi irregular, angered by Iraqi setbacks in the war and knowing the hotel housed foreign journalists, had taken a potshot at the building with a shoul-

der-launched, rocket-propelled grenade. However, a television camera had recorded the turn of a U.S. tank turret, its aim at the hotel, and the subsequent blast. News comes from the hospital: two cameramen have died. Three others remain in the hospital with wounds. ...

“At an early briefing at Central Command HQ in Qatar, Brigadier General Vincent Brooks initially says the hotel was targeted after soldiers were fired on from the lobby, which would have been a physical impossibility. Later he tells reporters, ‘I may have misspoken.’ U.S. military officials then say a tank from the 3rd Infantry had fired on the hotel, after reporting that ‘significant’ enemy fire had come from a position in front of the 18-story hotel. The Commander of the 3rd Infantry Division’s 2nd Brigade, which deployed the tank, eventually reports that the crew aimed at the Palestine after seeing enemy ‘binoculars.’ This was the dozens of lenses of TV and still cameras that were trained on the battle. I have to go on the air, but first I call Vint [Garrel’s husband] to let him know I am not one of the victims.”

April 9, 2003

What the cameras did not capture: “The street scenes are nothing like as joyous as the cameras make them out to be. There are plenty of people standing around, numb or shocked at the events. Dr. Sa’ad Jawad, an Iraqi political scientist, watches sadly as the Marines help topple Saddam’s statue, calling the scene humiliating. No fan of Saddam, he nonetheless warns of wounded pride. He acknowledges that now the Americans are here, they must be in full control, but he says their control will quickly be resented.

“When I get back upstairs, Amer confesses that he wept as he watched the scene below. Though he too hated Saddam, he says seeing American troops in Baghdad is more than he can bear. He doesn’t want their help.

“Pulling down statues makes for good television, but as I saw in Moscow in 1991, it doesn’t ultimately signify much. It doesn’t begin to answer the deeper questions. Wiping out the past doesn’t mean coming to terms with it. That’s what Amer is struggling with: Who are the Iraqis? How did they get a

Saddam? How did they tolerate the fear Saddam created? And where do they go from here?”

May 10, 2003

Conclusion: “The reasons I stayed have been justified and ignored in ways I had not anticipated. It turns out that Iraqis precisely predicted what would happen, and though many of us working in Baghdad had long reported what Iraqis thought and feared, the Bush administration has apparently heeded little of it. So accurate from the air, its initial reaction to events on the ground has been slow and inept. Iraq is a complicated place, rife with contradictions and divisions that the Iraqis are the first to acknowledge. I hope the United States employs the wits, wisdom, and patience to do what it can to ensure that this war doesn’t spawn another. ...” ■

Excerpted from “Naked in Baghdad” by Anne Garrels, published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux, LLC. Copyright © 2003 by Anne Garrels. All rights reserved.

An Oral History Tells Stories Seldom Heard

During the War

In ‘Embedded,’ war correspondents speak frankly about their experiences in Iraq.

By Bill Katovsky

Embedding the press with military units, hatched as an innovative public relations experiment by the Pentagon, allowed an immediate and intimate view of the Iraq War. From my living room in the San Francisco Bay Area, I became obsessively immersed in the war’s coverage. This fascination with the experiences of war correspondents I followed on the Internet, TV and in newspapers and magazines triggered a desire to investigate their personal stories behind the news as part of an oral history book.

Like my colleague in this project,

Timothy Carlson, I’d never written a book nor had any experience as a war correspondent. While Tim worked as a reporter for a decade at the Los Angeles Herald Examiner and four years with TV Guide, our recent work had mainly been in sports magazines. I emailed a five-page book proposal to The Lyons Press, a publisher that specializes in sports, adventure and military history. And to my disbelief, I received a response within 24 hours: “Go for it,” the editor said in reply. “Here’s a small advance to get you started.” He also informed me that the sales depart-

ment liked my proposed title, “Embedded,” even though we proposed to include interviews with unilateral (non-embedded) reporters.

Interviewing War Correspondents

As the U.S. Army neared Baghdad’s perimeter, I made arrangements for Timothy to fly to Doha, Qatar to interview reporters at U.S. Central Command’s media headquarters—he is a braver man than I—while I began the lengthy process of tracking down

reporters and continued to monitor war coverage. We feared that once the war ended in Iraq, worn-out journalists would immediately head home, so we needed to land interviews as soon as possible. We had no guarantee that these journalists would even talk with us. Nor could we assume that the personal accounts they might share with us would be engaging or compelling; we suspected that many of them would save their “best stuff” for their memoirs.

Tim’s first day in Doha, Qatar—April 19th, 10 days after Saddam’s statue fell in Baghdad—proved uneventful. By then, the media headquarters was thinly populated by low-level stringers from the major news bureaus. When we spoke, he sounded demoralized, but an interview the next day with an Al Jazeera reporter who had recently decided to no longer remain embedded gave him hope. One of the more risky of the Pentagon’s embedding decisions was to embed this Al Jazeera correspondent. The message behind doing so was obvious: to demonstrate that the U.S. military represented a democratic, open society with nothing to hide.

What happened, however, was that this Al Jazeera reporter, BBC-trained Amr El-Kahky, claimed he had been given back-of-the-bus treatment and suffered blatant discrimination from American officers in the field worried about security and believing that anyone from Al Jazeera represented the enemy. In time, El-Kahky left his embedded position in frustration and was castigated by Arab media colleagues and even threatened with death by a Free Iraqi Forces militiaman in the field.

Despite this revealing interview, Tim let me know in our dollar-a-minute cell phone call that: “No one is here. I must travel to Kuwait.” I wired him more money. After jumping through several visa hoops, Tim flew to Kuwait City. During the next week, he camped out in the air-conditioned lobby of Kuwait City’s Sheraton, from where he approached battlefield reporters on the way home or seeking a welcome respite. Many reporters he managed to

speak with were unilaterals who had covered the war from rented SUV’s, encountering fedayeen and armed militia ambushes and stonewalling U.S. and British forces trying to keep non-embeds out of harm’s way.

In all, Tim interviewed about a dozen war correspondents and photographers, including several military public affairs officers in Kuwait. Interviews averaged about an hour. Many were eager to discuss their experiences and often remarked that they were still in a transitional period of decompression, of trying to make sense out of what they had been reporting. Their recollections and reflections were fresh, visceral and dramatic. The longer they spoke with Tim, the more their wary journalistic guard lowered. They discussed personal feelings about confronting fear or facing death, watching enemy troops dying in a fiery attack, and crossing a wavering line of objectivity in the desert sand.

If the book’s goal was to excavate the emotional cost borne by these witnesses to war, these interviews were hitting pay dirt. Some were haunted by what they saw. Robert Galbraith, a freelance photographer from Montreal, Canada, revealed: “Lately, I’ve had nightmares. Not the usual ones. Worse, far worse. I dreamed that bombs and rockets were blasting into my home in Montreal. I heard my children screaming. They were being shot at, and I couldn’t move. Then I knew it was time to leave Baghdad.” Others compartmentalized their feelings. Voice of America’s East Africa bureau chief, Alisha Ryu, said: “What makes it fascinating for me is why people behave the way they do. In Africa, I have watched hands being chopped off. I’ve watched a man being roasted alive and his heart eaten. There is so much brutality I saw that after a while I became numb to it. It is terrible to say, but it’s true. Now I have almost no reaction when I see dead bodies.”

Many reporters, in particular those from U.S. publications, try to maintain objectivity and impartiality in the ways they cover events. But in these interviews, war correspondents spoke

frankly—and subjectively—about their experiences. Stored-up feelings were pried open. Seldom do journalists’ personal observations surface for public consumption. Peter Baker, The Washington Post’s Moscow co-bureau chief, said that after watching a live U.S. missile take out an Iraqi personnel truck on plasma TV screens in command headquarters, he felt that “it was an odd disconnect. It’s hard to sit there and watch a video like that and really process what it meant. It’s easy to be detached about it as they were and had to be. It’s their job. But there is also a humanity in that situation. Men are dying at that moment, and you are watching it happen live in front of you. That’s the problem with a high-tech war. In some ways it may appear more bloodless than it really is.” Still, Baker sounded surprisingly calm when recounting an incident when his wife, fellow Washington Post correspondent and Moscow co-bureau chief Susan Glasser, was under fire at a Basra hospital. Baker did ask command headquarters to see what they could do to help.

Embedded reporter Steve Komarow of USA Today echoed this sense of estrangement from the human side of war: “We’d be watching live video feeds at field command headquarters from hunter aircraft of night air strikes on Iraqi convoys. We’d hear them calling in the fires to take them out. Then the screen would go black and white with a flash. We’d just see the smoke. It was like a Tom Clancy movie. It sounds horrible, but we didn’t see the people who were killed. It was more striking when we came to a spot and there were just bodies rotting in the sun. The smell of human bodies rotting is an awful thing. It just hits you. I soon stopped looking.”

Moving on to Baghdad

After spending a week in Kuwait City, Tim insisted on pushing closer to media ground zero: Baghdad’s Palestine Hotel, home to news organizations such as CNN and The New York Times. With his only daughter heading off to col-

lege in the fall, I felt awkward asking him to go into Iraq to track down more reporters. In Iraq, journalists were dying. The causes ranged from traffic accidents to shellings and friendly fire and occasional ambushes. “I just have to be in Baghdad,” he said. More money for a driver and car was wired. On his way into Baghdad, two trucks loaded with menacing men tried to ambush Tim’s vehicle, but the driver made a quick U-turn, accelerated and beat the bandits back to a nearby British Army checkpoint.

Once Tim arrived in Baghdad, after four last-minute cancellations, he finally secured a key interview with John Burns, then Baghdad bureau chief of *The New York Times*. He also spoke with *New York Times* photographer Tyler Hicks and correspondents from CNN, *Newsweek*, Abu Dhabi TV, and a photographer from *Time*.

Back in California, I worked the phones. I called city desks at newspapers and asked to speak with reporters whose dispatches on the Internet or on television caught my attention. I also contacted reporters by e-mail and would often get a response a week or two later, usually with an apologetic note that their e-mail box had been overflowing with messages. I was pleasantly amazed that about 75 percent of those I contacted agreed to be interviewed.

On May 2nd, Tim started home. It was the day after President Bush landed on the aircraft carrier and declared the end of the combat phase of the war. While Tim transcribed his tapes and did more interviews, I spoke with a wide range of high-profile correspondents such as Jim Axelrod and John Roberts of CBS News, Martin Savidge of CNN, David Zucchino of the *Los Angeles Times*, Maya Zumwalt of Fox News, Mike Cerre of ABC News, and Gavin Hewitt of the BBC.

Reaction to ‘Embedded’

We completed a total of 75 interviews (10 were dropped for space or other reasons), and in mid-July I e-mailed the 420-page manuscript to the publisher.

In our interviews, we didn’t adhere to our original list of questions that we had created at the outset of the book project, but gently guided and nudged the subjects’ responses along. With oral histories, it is best for interviewers to fade into the background. But even as we receded from view behind the words of those we interviewed, we have remained attached—in a proprietary manner—to these stories we collected and to those whose personal narratives we helped to shape.

Our sensitivity to this aspect of putting the book together surfaced when *The Wall Street Journal* ran on its editorial page a lengthy excerpt from our provocative interview with two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist John Burns. [See accompanying excerpts from Burns’s interview.] Appearing on September 17th and headlined “An Absolutely Disgraceful Performance,” the text the *Journal* printed told what Burns had said about compliant journalists in Baghdad who, during the run-up to the war, gave bribes to Iraqi Information Ministry officials and ignored the rampant state-sponsored torture in exchange for access. As powerful and incendiary as Burns’s words were, the *Journal* mistakenly said that he had written them for “Embedded.” Tim and I had never and would never claim ownership to Burns’s words (or the words of any other journalist we interviewed), but this oversight by the *Journal* seems to come with the territory of what constitutes an oral history.

Soon after the *Journal* piece appeared, *The Washington Post*’s book editor called Lyons Press’s publicist and asked her if Tim and I “were compilers or editors, not authors.” His need for clarification seemed like a legitimate request. But the idea of being considered “compilers” was off the mark and demeaning. Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines “‘compiler,’ from Latin *compilare* to plunder, as to compose out of materials from other documents; to collect and edit into a volume.” Our book is an oral history as told in the words of those war correspondents who covered the Iraq War (arranged in story form by us, with

questions removed), and it also contains introductory essays to place the interviews in context.

What purpose does our book serve for newsrooms and classrooms? It’s a question I’ve asked myself countless times. The answer mirrors the different narratives that emerged in “Embedded.” If forced to distill these accounts into general themes and observations, the list would include these highlights:

- Many reporters observed that it wasn’t possible to remain totally objective under fire. Others said it was difficult to do, but crucial.
- Some said embedded reporting was fine as long as it was combined with unilaterals for balanced and complete coverage. Some embedded reporters such as *The Washington Post*’s William Branigin, who reported about an accidental checkpoint killing of civilians, wrote outstanding articles on the tragedies of war. The military wanted their story told—and accepted that some negative stories would emerge in the process—because they saw the embedded press as an effective counteracting force to what the Pentagon felt was aggressive use of Al Jazeera and other Arab media by al-Qaeda and other anti-Western forces.
- Reporters grew close to the soldiers they traveled with, and some, such as Scott Nelson of *The Boston Globe*, pointed out a sniper, or were handed a grenade, as Gordon Dillow of *The Orange County Register* was during a desperate firefight. Others, like *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*’s Ron Martz, dropped his notebook to help a medic in battle.
- There was a cultural clash between U.S. news organizations, which shied away from showing dead bodies, and the European and Arab press, who showed their audiences the nonsanitized version of the brutality of war.
- Arab media took pride in showing all sides and felt CNN and the U.S. media pulled punches and only showed one side. They compared

this happy news approach to the way Saddam and Arab government stations used to air only positive news of the government.

- Sometimes, 21st century instant coverage technology got in the way of reporting from the war. Some of the most thorough work was done with pencil and notebook, including coverage by Rolling Stone's Evan Wright, who was with a Marine recon unit.
- There was network news camaraderie on the battlefield when ABC News "Nightline's" Ted Koppel acted as a fatherly adviser and comforter to a colleague at CBS following the death of NBC News correspondent David Bloom.
- Although embedding appeared to work well, Pentagon officials have indicated that embedding might not be repeated, depending on the nature of the war and the battlefield.

These observations scratch the sur-

face of what will surely be an evolving give-and-take relationship between the media and the military. The foot soldiers of today are not just those who carry weapons. They are also the press. If the 19th century German historian Karl von Clausewitz were alive today, his famous adage might now read, "War is the continuation of media by other means." Still, it's the simple truths about war reporting that resonate the loudest, at least to my ears. For example, there are the evocative words of Anna Badkhen, a young staff writer for the San Francisco Chronicle, who has filed stories from war zones in Chechnya, Gaza, the West Bank, Kashmir and Kabul. She was in northern Iraq when we spoke by satellite phone and lives in Moscow with her husband, Boston Globe Bureau Chief David Filipov, and six-year old son, Fyodor.

Because her assignments often require her to spend months away from her home, she admits to experiencing

psychological fallout from her work. "For me personally, war reporting comes at a high emotional cost. I don't know how many people wake up from nightmares with bullets in their forehead, but it strikes me as a severe price to pay. I have these recurring dreams of being executed. I have dreams of killing children. I have dreams of being tortured," she told us. "I'm afraid the traumas of war must show even at home. Wars are bad, they are devastating, they are terrifying. There can be no good memories from a war." ■

Bill Katovsky is the coauthor, with Timothy Carlson, of "Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq: An Oral History," published in 2003 by Lyons Press. For more book information, go to www.embeddedthebook.com.

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Reporting in Closed Societies

'Every lie tells you a truth. If you just leave your eyes and ears open, it's extremely revealing.'

Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq: An Oral History

Edited by Bill Katovsky and Timothy Carlson

The Lyons Press. 422 Pages. \$23.95.

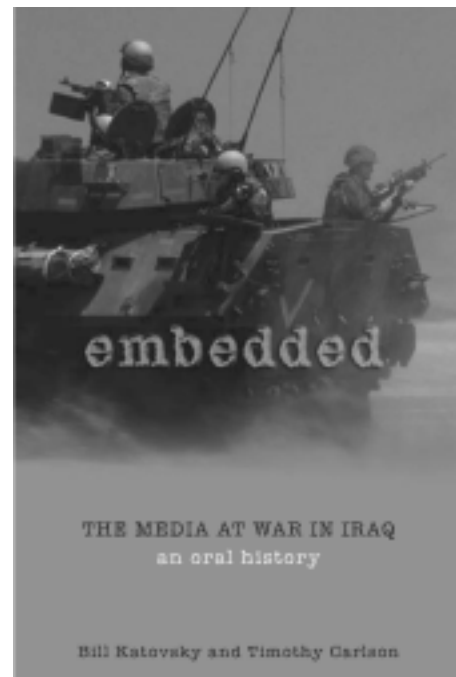
John Burns, The New York Times's chief foreign correspondent, was interviewed for this book (even though he was not embedded), and his words appear in a chapter entitled, "The Moral Compass of Iraq." Excerpts from his observations about reporting in Iraq and from other areas of conflict follow.

"There was one major media organization—the BBC—that didn't even go to Abu Ghraib prison on the afternoon of October the 20th last year. Imagine being in the Soviet Union, and you had a chance to be admitted to the heart of darkness at the time of the Great Terror. That is what Abu Ghraib was all

about. You had the BBC thinking it was inappropriate to go there because it means that it causes trouble. I couldn't find among my colleagues a single one who had read the human rights reports about Abu Ghraib. When Abu Ghraib came down, most didn't even know where Abu Ghraib was.

"We were summoned on that Sunday morning to form a motorcade outside the Information Ministry. They didn't tell us where we were going. It turned out to be Saddam's first tactical response to Bush.

... as we headed west on the motorway, anybody who'd read the human rights reports knew where we were going. The problem was even



when we arrived outside it, 98 percent of them [journalists] had never heard of Abu Ghraib. Had no idea of what it was. ...

"I found myself in the execution chamber—Special Judgment Division—where 20 or 30 butcher's hooks hanging from the ceiling rusty and red, soiled trousers were thrown about the room. It was horrid. Protests started in the days that followed. Sweeping across this prison floor were mostly women. Looking for sons, husbands, brothers, who had disappeared years before; wailing and throwing themselves on the ground and appealing to Allah. You couldn't miss this. They then formed themselves into groups and went to protest outside Intelligence Ministry buildings, which is phenomenal. They never protest. Some of my colleagues chose not to cover that. Saying it would only get you into trouble.

"The whole performance was woe-ful. I knew that I was walking a very fine line. The question was not so much could I get a new visa, because I was sure the time would come I couldn't even buy a visa. The question was, would I end up in Abu Ghraib myself?

"In February I was denied a visa. Then I found there were visas available. I was in Amman. Some of my rivals who had omitted to notice that Iraq was a terror state were busy here sucking up. They were very pleased with themselves. These were people who'd argued that it was essential to be in Iraq for the war. I got a visa of dubious quality; it was a visa which allowed me to come in and cover the peace movement. I assumed I would be thrown out immediately. I arrived only two weeks before the war.

"I went to the ministry of information director, General Uday Al-Tayyib. I said to him, 'We'll never agree about the nature of this society. But you're about to go to war with the United States. I think that you need America's principal newspaper here.' He said, 'You've written a great deal about killing here in Iraq, Mr. Fisher,' as they called me, which is my middle name, 'This is good. This is a shame for the Iraqi people. But now the Americans will be killing Iraqis. Will you write

about that?' I said, 'Whether it's an Iraqi government that is killing Iraqis, or an American government that is killing Iraqis, it's the same to me; I will write about both.'

"They accredited me. But I was immediately warned by friends in the ministry that it was a ruse; I would not be given a minder. They took my passport away and held it for five days until a man who is said to be a deputy director of the Mukhabarat showed up one day—a certain Mr. Sa'ad Mutana. He was assigned to be my minder. He was an extremely unpleasant man. At this point a dozen people from the Information Ministry came to me and said, 'Get out!' He was certainly the senior official. He introduced himself as a former general. The reason they kept me here is that when the war starts, I could become a hostage. Well, I stayed. On the night of April 1, they came to my room at this hotel and said, 'You're under arrest. We've known all along you're a CIA agent. You will now collaborate with us or we will take you to a place from which you will not return.' They stole all my equipment. They stole all my money. Then they left. The hotel had no electrical power at the time. They said, 'You stay in your room.' I assumed they left somebody outside. I went out into the darkened corridor. There was nobody there, so I slipped into the stairway. To tell you the truth, I didn't know what to do. As it happened, a friend of mine, an Italian television correspondent, happened to be coming up the stairwell. She asked, 'What are you doing?' I replied, 'I really don't know. I'm at wit's end.' She said, 'You come to my room. They won't attack my room.' She is a former Italian communist who had not challenged them. So there's a strange inversion. I found my safety at a critical moment with an old friend who had not challenged them. ...

"Now left with the residue of all of this, I would say there are serious lessons to be learned. Editors of great newspapers, and small newspapers, and editors of great television networks should exact from their correspondents the obligation of telling the truth about these places. It's not impossible to tell

the truth. I have a conviction about closed societies, that they're actually much easier to report on than they seem, because the act of closure is itself revealing. Every lie tells you a truth. If you just leave your eyes and ears open, it's extremely revealing. We now know that this place was a lot more terrible than even people like me had thought. There is such a thing as absolute evil. I think people just simply didn't recognize it. They rationalized it away. I cannot tell you with what fury I listened to people tell me throughout the autumn that I must be on a kamikaze mission. They said it with a great deal of glee, over the years, that this was not a place like the others. ...

"In this profession, we are not paid to be neutral. We are paid to be fair, and they are completely different things. For example, in Bosnia it was perfectly clear from very early on who were the principal villains of that war. Yes, the Muslims and the Croats got off some mayhem. But who started the war? Who did the overwhelming majority of the killing? The Serbs did. I worked for an editor at the time who wanted me to iron out of my stories any implication that there was one principal offender. He would have been happy with a story that said, 'They are all as bad as one another. This has been going on in the Balkans since the beginning of time.' This attitude comes from a complete misapprehension as to what our business is. Yes, we should be absolutely ruthless as to fact. We should not approach a story with some sort of ideological template that we impose on it. We should let the facts lead us to conclusions, but if the conclusions seem clear, then we should not avoid those on the basis of an idea we are supposed to be neutral. Because if that were the case, they might as well hire a stenographer, and a stenographer would be a lot cheaper than I am.

"As far as I am concerned, when they hire me, they hire somebody who has a conscience and who has a passion about these things. I think I was a little bit advantaged in this, because I am 58 years old." ■

Patriotism and Journalism

Edward R. Murrow said, “The terror is right here in this room.”

Embedded: Weapons of Mass Deception: How the Media Failed to Cover the War on Iraq

Danny Schechter

Prometheus Books. 286 Pages. \$26.

In a chapter entitled “What Can We Do About It?” Mediachannel.org founder and media observer Danny Schechter, a 1978 Nieman Fellow, writes a posthumous letter to former CBS news correspondent Edward R. Murrow. In it he wonders what happened to the kind of reportorial courage that Murrow showed in his news coverage of Senator Joe McCarthy’s hearings on Communists in the United States. Excerpts from this letter follow.

“Dear Ed:

“I got the idea of writing to you after visiting the Edward Murrow School of Communication out in the wheat fields of Washington State. I had come to debate the coverage of the Iraq War with a group of mainstream journalists, who surprised me by how they were willing to be candid outside their institutional settings. ...

“Your work shaped my idea of what a journalist should be. Your guts in taking on [Senator] Joe McCarthy later showed me that a reporter could stand up for truth.

“You used to talk about ‘illuminating’ issues, not just reporting them.

“Anyway, here we are in 2003. You have been long gone, and I am trying to honor your memory by pounding away at what’s happened to media institutions that ‘back in the day’ showed such great promise. ...

“Your broadcasts are still listened to in journalism classes, still revered. How much of the media coverage of the Iraq War will ever be regarded that way? Alas, so much of what we produce today is forgettable, disposable, even embarrassing. Sometimes it is thought of as a ‘product’ to be recycled into retrospectives or used as archival ma-

terial as today’s breaking news becomes grist for tomorrow’s History Channel specials. ...

“What you had then is what so many of today’s self-styled experts and oh, so authoritative newscasters lack today—a sense of humility that admits that none of us are know-it-alls. It is a stance that concedes that today’s news is just a first and often flawed draft of a history still to be written. ...

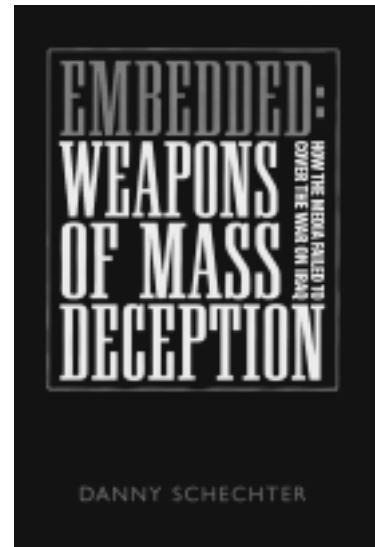
“A final relevant recollection comes from one of your producers, Joe Wershba, who wrote a book about your work and times. He tells of a moment when many at CBS had second thoughts about going after McCarthy’s Red Hunt. They wanted to kill the broadcast. You observed, as you listened but did not bow to the fears of your colleagues: ‘The terror is right here in this room.’

“And so it was—and so it is today when journalists hesitate to challenge the dominant storyline for fear of appearing unpatriotic. ...

“Some things don’t change. Media institutions remain citadels of conformity, conservatism and compromise. Courage is in short supply in our unbrave world of news because it is rarely encouraged or rewarded, especially if and when you deviate from the script. Ask Peter Arnett. There is little space, airtime or support for those individuals in the media who stand alone, who do it their way, who at times dissent to challenge the paradigm or who suspect that today’s emperor has no clothes. ...

“This book looks at how media outlets bought this whole distorted story, and then brought it to the rest of us. ...

Many media people remain defensive, far more willing to point their fingers at government deception than



their own. ‘I really want to read a book by someone who wasn’t there,’ was the dismissive response I received when I offered to send this book to a military correspondent on a newspaper in Atlanta.

“That may sound like [a] fair point. But the fact is that many of those who were there had no idea of the picture that most of [us] were getting, or how it was hyped, exaggerated and shorn of context. The value of news has to be evaluated by its consumers, not its originators. ...

“Perhaps it’s too soon for many in the media to recognize these truths. At the same time, I am sure that much of what I have to say, and perhaps even how I say it, is far too ‘unobjective’ for many in the media trenches to ‘get.’ Most distrust personality-inflected commentary from independent journalists who deviate or dissent from the straight and narrow, or even from the more predictable left-right divide. ...

“So Ed, I just wanted you to know that war reporting today has become just as controversial as some of your programs on the red scare were way back when. ...

“My hunch is that the analysis offered in these pages may have seemed too far out to some in the war’s immediate aftermath but will, in its essentials, be accepted down the line. ...

As you put it once, ‘the obscure we see eventually. The completely apparent takes a little longer.’ ■

'Baghdad Blues: A War Diary'

A photojournalist documents daily life during war.

Baghdad Blues: A War Diary

David Turnley

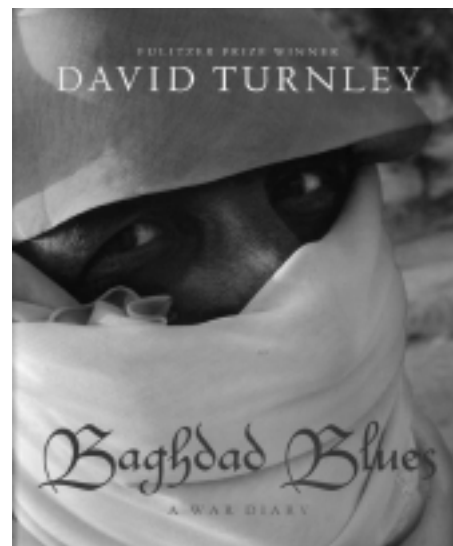
Magowan Publishing LLC and The Vendome Press. 160 Pages. \$25.

"... In February I was given an extraordinary opportunity by Eason Jordan of CNN to go [to] the gulf region, where I served as a correspondent mixing video, photography, and on-air reporting. My brief early on was to work in the surrounding countries and along the border of Iraq to tell stories of people who were in some way affected by Saddam Hussein's regime, and to put a human face on the population of the region.

"For the first month and a half of my three months in the Middle East for CNN, I worked in Syria and then in Turkey in the Kurdish-controlled area along the border of Iraq. As the war approached, our plan was to be in a position to enter northern Iraq, which

was held by the Kurds, and to eventually get to Baghdad to cover the war from there. The only two ways to get into northern Iraq were through Iran or through Turkey, but both routes were shut off—officially, at least. I couldn't get a visa from Iran, and the Turks would not allow me to cross their border legally. For the first time in my 20 years of covering conflict, I resorted to being smuggled, first in Syria and from there into northern Iraq. This is where my story begins. ...

"The photographs in this book were transmitted to CNN in Atlanta every day of the war, and many were seen on television, with me as narrator. 'Baghdad Blues' is the culmination of my personal experience during this



time. As a photographer, I am accustomed to communicating about the world visually, but in this book my words and images work together to convey the immensely human story of life during the war in Iraq." ■

David Turnley, a 1998 Nieman Fellow, is a Pulitzer Prize-winning photojournalist.



Kurdish children stand in the doorway of a home in the village of Handek in Turkey along the border with northern Iraq. *Photo by David Turnley.*



Kurdish men play dominoes during the war in a café in the northern frontline town of Kifri. *Photo by David Turnley.*



In the Turkish village of Handek, a Kurdish father kisses his child, who rests in a cradle inside the family's home. *Photo by David Turnley.*



Two Kurdish friends walk through an alleyway in the Turkish town of Cizre near the border with northern Iraq. *Photo by David Turnley.*

A Documentary Examines Cable News War Coverage

Was objectivity a casualty?

By Margie Reedy

As I began my fellowship at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, the impending war with Iraq dominated all discussions. I had come to the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy to produce their first documentary. As the former host of a news interview program, I had wanted to gauge the effect that cable television's contentious talk-radio-comes-to-television interview shows had on political discussion in the United States. But the war and its coverage became *the* story in broadcast journalism.

We witnessed several sea changes during this conflict. The major broadcast networks had always been the go-to places in times of crisis, but during the Iraq War, the number of viewers for the cable news networks shot up more than 300 percent. The Fox News Channel (FNC) jumped from its usual one million plus audience to five and a half million. CNN spiked to 3.3 million, while MSNBC more than doubled its audience to two million viewers.

But the battle was not only for ratings. The war coverage was a microcosm of the fiercely competitive ongoing war raging among the all-news cable networks over journalistic ethics and allegations of political bias. Even as the war was declared over, questions still lingered about whether objectivity—the attempt to give fair and equal treatment to all participants in a story without the influence of personal or political opinions—had been sidelined in the struggle for ratings and political supremacy.

What Research Revealed

To research my documentary, I watched endless days of live coverage during the war and ran through hours of tapes after the fact. The three cable networks differentiated their presentations, in

part, through the word choice, tone and delivery of anchors and correspondents. This is also where the other big change in news coverage became apparent, in the amount of open rallying for the United States and the attempt to chill dissent. On Fox, U.S. soldiers were more often referred to as “we,” troops were “liberators,” and protesters were the “great unwashed” or other negatives. The New York Times media writer, Jim Rutenberg, called the level of pro-America coverage on Fox “astounding and completely unprecedented.” He quoted Fox anchor Neil Cavuto telling “those who opposed the liberation of Iraq: ‘You were sickening then, you are sickening now.’”

As for tone, the same pictures could receive very different treatment on the cable networks. While voicing over a videotape given to the networks by Al Jazeera—with pictures of Arab men favorably greeting U.S. soldiers—CNN anchor Aaron Brown commented, “I suppose if you see American forces coming in the force they’ve come in, you’d want to look friendly too, no matter what you feel. . . . But they were warmly greeted and in that part of Iraq there’s no reason they wouldn’t be.” On Fox, anchor Shepard Smith said, “Check out the reaction of ordinary Iraqis to our liberating forces. Smiles and handshakes. . . . An Iraqi man has liberation for himself, his family, and his neighbors. So far the war is going as scripted.”

Alex Jones, director of the Shorenstein Center, who has closely monitored the rise of Fox, commented, “If you watch Fox you’re going to get a very positive interpretation of what’s going on, who’s right, who’s wrong. There will be very little ambiguity.”

Most Fox correspondents delivered straightforward, accurate reports. But during the evening on Fox, the analysts who usually host their opinion-driven

interview programs anchored their war coverage. They offered blatant endorsements of the decision to go to war and verbally attacked antiwar protesters, the United Nations, the French, anyone who stood in the United States’s way. Fox’s “you’re with us or you’re against us” attitude mirrored that of the Bush administration in its challenge to other nations.

It was “jingoism as journalism,” according to Tom Rosenstiel of the Project for Excellence in Journalism. Two of the cable channels, MSNBC and Fox, adopted the military’s name for the war—Operation Iraqi Freedom—as the title of their coverage. This “psy-ops” term—short for psychological-operations—was coined by the Pentagon to engender good feelings about the war effort. Rosenstiel viewed its use as “a clear and financially driven decision to pander to patriotic spirit as a way to get viewers.”

Bill O’Reilly, who hosts the most popular show on Fox, told me, “The reason we dominated in the ratings and continue to do so isn’t because we were rooting for the war, it was because we were accurate. Our assessment was it was a just war. We would win the war quickly. Both proved to be true.” The host of the “The O’Reilly Factor” went on to say, “If you’re going to tell me we shaded the news or did anything other than report the truth, I’m going to tell you you’re flat-out wrong.”

Fox failed to separate itself from the U.S. war effort, according to “60 Minutes II” executive producer, Jeff Fager. “Probably the hardest thing to detach from is your country. But you have to. That’s just something that is no longer as much of a priority in a place like Fox. It’s okay to say ‘we’ because you’re saying ‘we’ about a part of the audience that’s going to *love* you for it.” Rival network executives surmise that the

FNC business plan calls for appealing to conservative males—the largest segment of the news-watching public. Many conservatives believe the press are too critical of the country at all times, let alone during a time of war.

The Role of Objectivity

Should journalists be allowed to be more patriotic, a little less objective during a time of conflict? Andrew Heyward, president of CBS News said, “I think it’s possible to be objective, even if not neutral. It’s a subtle distinction, but an important one. I’m not neutral about the outcome of the war.

... when it comes to objectivity, the question is always the truth as seen through whose lens.

I want America to win. I’m not rooting for Iraq, but I remain objective in that I hope to maintain the ability to sift through information honestly obtained and honestly presented and give people the most accurate picture we can on what’s actually happened.”

The president of MSNBC, Erik Sorenson, suggested that since September 11th the country wants the news media to give the government more “benefit of the doubt,” to be less on the attack. Roger Ailes, chairman and CEO of Fox News, believes government should be given the “presumption of innocence” by cynical news people. It’s a false dichotomy, according to Rosenstiel: “It is as much a closed mind to say we’re just going to accept the government’s point of view as it is to say every politician is a liar. Both of those are a failure of professionalism, and I don’t think there is a sign that the American public has decided in a culture in which there is more information than ever to sort through that they don’t want the truth.”

However, when it comes to objectivity, the question is always the truth as

seen through whose lens. The debate about fairness in the war coverage intersects with the controversy about whether mainstream news organizations, such as The New York Times, The Washington Post, and CNN, have a political bias and color their reports accordingly. The fiercely competitive Ailes declined to be interviewed for this documentary, but he has long argued Fox News is the much needed antidote to the liberal media. Ailes regularly accuses CNN of leaning to the left, and his commentators take the fight on-air. During the war, a guest on the Fox morning show referred to CNN as “Al Jazeera West,” a remark greeted with gales of laughter.

In our interview for the documentary, CNN general manager, Teya Ryan, was adamant that the cable news veteran is “not about a political point of view.” Ryan said that CNN provided straightforward reports during the war. “CNN is about the news,” she said. “Nothing is going to pull us off that road.” But in recent years, with faltering ratings, CNN has been looking for a road map. Shortly after the war, Ryan was relieved of her position. CNN, which was the undisputed news leader during the first Gulf War, fell to Fox’s highly energized, pro-American presentation during the war in Iraq.

O’Reilly claims that other news outlets attack Fox’s journalism because they disagree with their politics and are jealous of their success. “Look, the bottom line on this is the establishment press, which leans left in this country and always has, is now losing its power to a new operation that leans right, *leans* right, but isn’t in lockstep with anybody,” he said.

Heyward fires back, “Those predisposed to seeing the networks as either left wing, which I think is ludicrous, or not appropriately reverential to authority probably have a fundamental disagreement about the role of journalism in this society and therefore welcome a network that more blatantly

acts as a cheerleader.”

Assessing the Future

The measure of any coverage can be assessed by what viewers learned and whether it is accurate. In October, an important postscript to my documentary was issued by a research group from the University of Maryland that has evaluated public misperceptions about foreign policy for a decade. In an analysis of polling conducted between June through September, the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) found 52 percent of Americans believed evidence was found linking Iraq to September 11th. Thirty-five percent believed the United States had found weapons of mass destruction, and 56 percent believed most world opinion supported the war. Those who watched Fox as their main source of news on the war were found to be most likely to hold one or all three of those misconceptions. PIPA’s research director, Clay Ramsay, said: “It is a cautionary tale. People who rely primarily on Fox News are living in a different world from people who get their news from a mix of sources.”

There are profound implications for American television news if opinion—unidentified as such and masquerading as news—becomes the new paradigm for cable news or even the broadcast networks. Such an approach to news could not only eliminate objectivity as a standard, but with more propaganda and less information, our democracy could be harmed in the process. ■

Margie Reedy has been a television anchor and reporter for 25 years in Boston, Detroit and Austin. For seven years she hosted the news interview program “NewsNight” on New England Cable News, the largest regional cable station in the country. Reedy was the researcher, writer and producer of “Cable News Goes to War.” The film can be viewed at www.shorensteincenter.org.

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Reporting From the Battlefield
 ‘... the unwritten last paragraph, the untaken last photo frame, is the true memorial of the war correspondent.’

War Stories: Reporting in the Time of Conflict From the Crimea to Iraq

Harold Evans

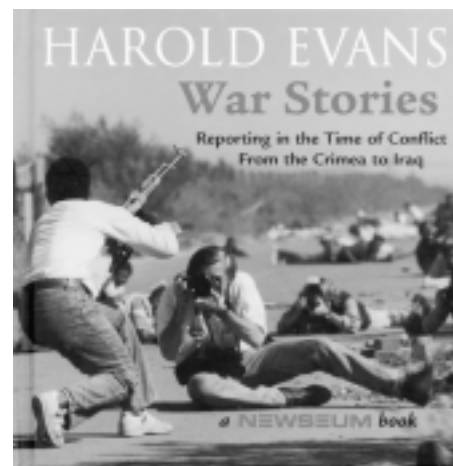
Bunker Hill Publishing. 96 Pages. \$12.95.

“Writing may be hard for everyone, but it is hardest of all for the war correspondent. He or she has to find the order of words that neither sensationalize nor downplay, that neither oversimplify nor stupefy, conscious always that lives may be at stake, that decisions of gravity may be taken on the strength of a few hundred words. Is the story accurate? Is it clear? Is it fair? How much personal emotion should it contain, if any? Is it meaningful? [War correspondent] David [Blundy], naturally, doubted whether he met the tests he set himself. On assignment from Britain’s *The Correspondent* in El Salvador’s civil war on November 17, 1989, he already had filed a good dispatch. Then he called in that morning

to say he was going out in the barrio to see if he should top up the story with one last paragraph. There, on a street corner, a random bullet took his young life.

“It seemed to those of us who were his friends that his ‘last paragraph’ was a mortal redundancy. And yet the unwritten last paragraph, the untaken last photo frame, is the true memorial of the war correspondent. To Blundy, there was a chance that the material gathered for his last paragraph just might affect the balance and readability of his story, and that was all that mattered. ...

“In their long history—for wars have always been with us—there is much romance and adventure, but a brutal



reality, too. And there are many questions. Should a correspondent or the editor ever put truth second to his own country’s perceived national interests? What does history have to tell us about the consequences of evading the censor? In foreign wars, is it ever proper to sympathize with one side or another? Should a correspondent always keep a professional detachment or has he or she a higher duty when it is possible to intervene and save a life? What public benefit is there—if any—in the first-hand picture of conflict, or does it amount to no more than voyeurism? There are no simple answers.” ■

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When Journalists Report in Dangerous Places

An updated version of a journalist’s security handbook offers background and advice.

In October, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) released an updated version of its guide to reporting on war and in other situations in which journalists’ lives can be threatened. The handbook is called “On Assignment: A Guide to Reporting in Dangerous Situations,” and what follows are excerpts taken from its various sections.

Part I: Introduction

“In the early months of 2002, Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl was abducted and executed by his captors while pursuing a story about Islamic militants in Pakistan. The kidnapping—which came only weeks after eight reporters were killed covering the conflict in Afghanistan and a little more than one year before 11 journalists died covering the war in Iraq be-

tween March 19 and April 9, when Baghdad fell—was a terrible reminder for journalists around the world of their vulnerability.

“In the aftermath of Pearl’s murder, veteran journalists—including the most seasoned war correspondents—began examining their own routines: Could they suffer Pearl’s fate? What can they and their media organizations do to make their work safer? How should they respond in an emergency? Are

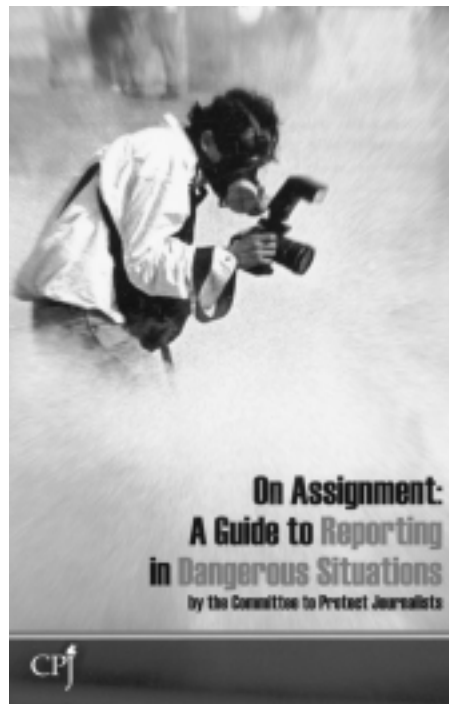
there new security issues for those reporting on terrorism, as Daniel Pearl was, in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks ...?”

From Part II: Who is at Risk?

“Recent fatalities in Iraq illustrate the dangers faced by war correspondents. But the hazards of war coverage are not limited to combat. During and after the three weeks of fighting in Iraq, several journalists died from either medical conditions that proved fatal in the field or from road accidents. ... But even all the risks of reporting in a conflict zone comprise only a small part of the risks journalists face worldwide. In fact, for every journalist killed in crossfire, three are targeted for murder. Between 1993 and 2002, CPJ research indicates that 366 journalists have been killed while conducting their work; of that total, 60 journalists, or 16 percent, died in crossfire, while 277 journalists, or 76 percent, were murdered in reprisal for their reporting. The remaining journalists were killed on the job in other situations, such as violent street demonstrations.”

From Part IV: Reporting in Hostile Areas: Minimizing Risks

“Journalists covering conflicts should never carry arms or travel with other journalists who carry weapons. Doing so jeopardizes a journalist’s status as a neutral observer and can make combatants view correspondents as legitimate military targets. ... In some particularly dangerous conflicts, journalists have hired armed guards. The practice first became widespread among television crews and reporters covering Somalia in the early 1990’s after journalists traveling without armed guards were robbed at gunpoint. Journalists who use armed guards, however, should recognize that they may be jeopardizing their status as neutral observers. For example, CNN crews used armed guards in northern Iraq in 2003. On one occasion, unidentified attackers shot CNN’s vehicle,



which was clearly marked with ‘Press,’ and CNN’s hired guard returned fire. The gunmen continued to shoot the vehicle as it turned around and drove away. CNN International president, Chris Cramer, defended the network’s use of armed guards as necessary to protect CNN personnel in Iraq. Robert Menard, secretary-general of the Paris-based press freedom watchdog group Reporters sans Frontières, however, criticized CNN, saying that the practice ‘risks endangering all other reporters.’”

From Part IV: Reporting in Hostile Areas: Battlefield Choices

“Although the term ‘embedding,’ or placing journalists with troops in wartime, was recently coined by U.S. Defense Department officials in 2002, the practice is as old as the earliest war correspondents. ... From at least the U.S. Civil War through the first two world wars, journalists who accompanied combatants were only able to file reports through military censors. ...

“Journalists briefly enjoyed more autonomy during the Korean War, although it was not until the Vietnam

War that many correspondents were able to file without censorship. This practice changed remarkably with subsequent conflicts. U.S. officials, along with their local allies, tried to keep journalists away from the fighting in El Salvador, Grenada, Panama, the 1991 Gulf War, and Afghanistan. ...

“U.S. officials changed policy, however, during the 2003 war in Iraq. By the time the three-week conflict was over, more than 800 journalists of various nationalities, including correspondents reporting in English and Arabic, had been embedded with either U.S. or U.K. forces. ... Whether to embed with any armed forces is a decision involving trade-offs. A primary advantage of embedding is that a journalist will get a firsthand, frontline view of armed forces in action. But there are also disadvantages. An embedded journalist is only able to cover that single part of the story, and his or her reporting can become one-sided as a result of becoming too close to the soldiers. ...”

“Since as early as the Vietnam War, U.S. Defense Department officials have used the term ‘unilaterals’ to describe journalists covering conflicts independently. Such reporting provides invaluable and compelling dispatches, but sometimes at the price of high personal risk. ... In one particularly chilling series of episodes, on the morning of April 8, 2003, U.S.-led forces fired on the offices of two international news broadcasters and a hotel filled with journalists in three separate attacks in Baghdad. One journalist died in the missile strike on the Al Jazeera network studio, equipment was damaged at the Abu Dhabi TV studio, and two cameramen died when a tank fired on the Palestine Hotel, which was being used as a base of operations by about 100 journalists at the time. ...

“According to CPJ, U.S. Defense Department officials, as well as commanders on the ground in Baghdad, knew that the Palestine Hotel was full of international journalists and were intent on not hitting it. However, these senior officers apparently failed to convey their concern to the tank commander who fired on the hotel.” ■

Sun Yu, who for 12 years was a reporter and editor of the Chinese and English language editions of China Environment News, explores ways in which news coverage in China of the SARS epidemic affected how the government and media interacted. She describes the reporting work of China's "independent publications" and also evaluates criticism of Western media's "exaggeration of the health crisis" in which the coverage "focused too much on negative aspects and mixed this medical crisis in with political issues."

Kwangchool Lee, bureau chief of the Korean Broadcasting System in Washington, D.C., reflects on the intensifying pressure for media reform in Korea. Since the February election of President Moo-hyun Roh—whose campaign was ignored and criticized by the major news organizations—calls for media reform have come from the president as well as the people. The issue now is how reform can happen. One thing is clear: "The people insist they do not want media reform to come from government, fearing that will damage democracy."

Lessons From SARS Coverage

Arguably, this coverage changed both the government and media in China.

By Sun Yu

Earlier this year Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) was like a nightmare to many who live in China. SARS first appeared in China's southern Guangdong Province late in 2003 and until February was still a regional epidemic. However, initial attempts to cover up the disease resulted in it spreading to Beijing and other provinces. Over time, a regional epidemic evolved into a national disaster.

This tiny virus caused China huge economic losses, far costlier than either the Asian financial crisis in 1997 or the flood disaster in 1998. Some experts conclude that SARS resulted in direct economic losses of 400 billion RMB yuan (48 billion dollars). Several international conferences planned for China were postponed or changed ven-

ues. The SARS crisis also exposed problems in China, such as the transparency problem behind the release of information to the public. Because media play such a critical role in getting information to the public, it is worth reflecting on what happened during SARS and what impact the media's actions continue to have.

Coverage By Independent Media

In recent years, so-called "fringe media" publications have emerged in China. These fringe media are less controlled by government; these independent publications enjoy more autonomy than mainstream media and rely on the market for financial support. Therefore, their viewpoints are

less influenced by the government propaganda machine. During the SARS crisis, some of these publications conducted in-depth investigations of the disease and its impact and delivered exclusive reports with unique angles. This gave them a golden opportunity to further establish their status as watchdogs.

The independent Caijing magazine led in reporting SARS. Unlike its counterparts in the mainstream media, Caijing Magazine started to cover SARS as soon as February, long before the Chinese government acknowledged the scale of the disease and before other media in the country were reporting on it. Caijing published many investigative reports about SARS, such as stories about large-scale SARS infection incidents in hospitals and Shangxi, the

affected area. Hu Shuli, founder and managing editor of *Caijing Magazine*, believed the news of SARS involved issues of government transparency, and the significance of these issues meant that the story had to be reported.

In an interview with *World Press Review* (WPR), Hu Shuli reflected: “Although at the time [in February] the disease was hardly mentioned in any Chinese media, I was quite sure that an epidemic like SARS could hardly be covered up. So I decided to start by reporting about the disease in Hong Kong. When I saw on the Web site of the World Health Organization on March 12th that the number of cases in Guangdong had jumped from zero to 792, I knew I had real news We assigned a group of four reporters to cover SARS at first and then put an entire desk of 10 people on the reporting. Finally, we put more people on the story and produced four special weekly issues on SARS in addition to our normal publications.” Hu was named WPR’s international editor of the year for her magazine’s probing and comprehensive coverage of SARS.

Another leader of the country’s fringe media is the *21st Century Business Herald*. On May 1st it published a SARS special edition of about 30 pages—normally newspapers only have four pages. From that point on, the *Business Herald* published investigative stories or editorials about SARS in almost every issue. On May 8th an editorial appeared saying that fighting SARS should depend on science and warning the local government not to take extreme approaches. On May 15th it published a series of investigative reports about the SARS infection situation in Inner Mongolia, Anhui, Hebei and rural areas of other provinces, analyzing the problems and solutions of the nation’s marginalized rural medical system.

Media Coverage in English

China’s news reporting in English serves as a window for the outside world to understand China. Since it caters to foreigners, in general, this coverage tends to be more open. One

advantage of news reporting in English is that it can draw on foreign experts’ viewpoints, which makes the reporting more balanced. With SARS, China’s media in English did probing analysis and sometimes went in front of the Chinese news media.

In April and May, the English-language program of *China Radio International*, “People in the Know,” invited foreign and domestic experts to give independent analysis of topics related to SARS. On April 14th, at a time of increasing public panic in Beijing, “People in the Know” interviewed David Ropeik, director of risk communication at the Harvard Center for Risk Analysis. He was able to explain risk analysis and inform the public about why they should not overreact to the disease. His interview was among the first to send a calming message to the public.

Ropeik explained that because SARS was a new disease, members of the press were focusing much attention on it. By doing this, the public’s perception of the risk it poses was increasing even though other epidemics, such as influenza, were resulting in far more deaths than SARS. Ropeik said that people should take precautionary measures, but they should behave rationally and not panic.

China Features of *Xinhua News Agency* reported on many SARS stories for foreign media, such as *Science*, WPR, and *Inter Press Service*. This reporting helped foreign readers get a better sense of the real China during and after the SARS crisis. Xiong Lei, managing editor of *China Features*, and her colleagues worked together with *Science* reporter Martin Enserink to cover the research on SARS in China and reported how mainland Chinese researchers missed the chance to be the first in the world to announce findings of the coronavirus—the real killer of SARS victims—because they were very cautious and thought that by announcing it they would not be respectful to other experts.

In July 2003, the article “SARS is Making a Change” was published in the WPR, and in it Xiong Lei described in blunt language the politics of silence

and change of bureaucratic mentality that has occurred during the SARS epidemic: “The dumping of these two officials [the mayor of Beijing and the minister of health], regarded as guilty of holding back information relating to the spread of the epidemic, is expected to change China’s old bureaucratic mentality. Before, many government officials would cover up anything deemed ‘negative,’ whether it was news about the collapse of a coal mine or a case of massive food poisoning.... SARS has shattered the philosophy among some bureaucrats that silence on negative topics might sustain their power.”

The Role of Western Media

In its initial stages, the Western media beat its Chinese counterparts in reporting the SARS crisis. However, some Chinese media specialists have criticized U.S. and other Western media’s exaggeration of the health crisis, claiming the coverage focused too much on negative aspects and mixed this medical crisis in with political issues. Just as the two governments—China and the United States—hold different views on many issues, the SARS crisis brought some of these differences to the surface.

David Ropeik, who was a broadcast reporter for 22 years, explained that one reason for this problem is that U.S. reporters tend to dramatize problems and overplay controversy to attract readers’ and viewers’ attention with headline-making news. John Pomfret, Beijing bureau chief for *The Washington Post*, said that Ropeik’s viewpoint has some credence, but he does not feel it’s the main reason. He argues U.S. reporters regard a part of their role as serving as a watchdog—watching what government does (and doesn’t) do to inform and protect the interests of the public. Erik Eckholm, who from 1998 to 2003 was Beijing bureau chief of *The New York Times*, agreed that some Western reporters tend by nature to give relatively more coverage to crises, corruption and emerging problems in society. He explained that the U.S. media’s job is, in part, to challenge and question every-

thing, and this attitude might make some people in China feel that Western reporters are too hostile. However, he pointed out that U.S. reporters go farther in reporting bad news in their own country than they do in China. In his paper's reporting on China, and the American press generally, Eckholm observed that in recent years there has been an enormous expansion in the range of topics covered, including more about what's happening with young people, the arts, culture, social change, and the economy. He said, the goal should not be to provide a "positive" or "negative" image of China, but a fair and well-rounded picture of a society with many contradictions undergoing rapid change.

What SARS Teaches Journalists

Historically, the channels of information in China have been very limited, and it was very easy for the government to control the flow of information. With the Internet, chatrooms and short messages transmitted by cellphone, that kind of control is no longer possible. And when no information is released via official channels, its absence can cause the public to panic and rumors to spread. Therefore, it is very important for members of the media to deliver news accurately and in a timely manner. To do so will bolster public confidence in the government and prepare the public for emergencies.

In a May 18th interview conducted by "People in the Know," Guo Ke, deputy dean of the College of Journalism and Communications of Shanghai International Studies University, analyzed the conflict between the role government perceives for itself and the media and how members of the media perceive their own role. On one hand, the government regards media as being part of it, or the government's mouthpiece—to say what the government wants it to say or to defend its behavior and policies. Guo Ke suggests that one reason why China's mainstream media overreacted in reporting about SARS was because news organizations were pushed by the relevant authority to cover the fight against SARS as a political task. On the other hand, many members of the media perceive their job as supplying information for the benefit of the public.

Guo Ke believes that the SARS crisis could serve as a wake-up call because it could prompt media to redefine its mandate and push for changes that will make the media's role one of benefiting members of the public and society. He thinks media ought to grow more independent and be ready to criticize government officials, when it's necessary. Given the Chinese media's experience with the SARS crisis, it is reasonable to expect that more aggressive investigative reporting for public emergencies will exist in the future.

Since the first SARS case was identified last year, slightly more than 5,000

cases have been reported throughout the world, and most people afflicted with the virus survived. Meanwhile, each winter about 36,000 Americans die from influenza and 114,000 are hospitalized. However, as we witnessed, the outbreak of SARS caused an irrational fear in China, as well as in the United States and other countries.

Some media experts believe the press played a large part in causing the spread of fear with this disease. Because of the virus's newness, it received attention that more well-known and also deadly viruses no longer do. And this coverage made people more frightened of SARS than they needed to be. Putting such news into its proper perspective is a major challenge for journalists. SARS coverage can and should be used as an example of why threats of disease should be handled in a scientific way and how journalists' coverage should not push the public into overreacting to the threat. ■

Sun Yu, a 1999 Nieman Fellow, was reporter and editor of the Chinese and English editions of China Environment News for 12 years. She was also editor of the Chinese edition of Fortune and executive editor of TimeDigest (the Chinese edition of Time). She is International Scholar at the Knight Center for Science and Medical Journalism at Boston University this year.

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Pressures for Media Reform in Korea

There are loud calls for changes in the way the press and government interact.

By Kwangchool Lee

In late February, Roh Moo-hyun was inaugurated as the 16th president of the Republic of Korea. As soon as Roh stepped into the president's oval office at the Blue House, he targeted the Korean press as an institution that he intended to reform. And he began this task by giving government officials

a "not to do" list to break the old practices that had characterized government and press relations.

On the president's list was an order that no members of his executive branch were to subscribe to the "street edition" of the daily newspapers. (In Korea, morning newspapers are avail-

able as "street editions" on the previous evening.) In past governments, officials hunted for unfavorable news coverage in street edition and then contacted editors to tell them not to carry such reporting in the morning edition. President Roh compared this practice to "begging," and ordered

those in his administration not to exchange their pride and dignity for this kind of arrangement with the press. Under his new policy, when a government official finds reporting is wrong, challenging the error must be done through legal channels, not by negotiating with reporters or editors or doing anything illegal.

President Roh also advised his employees not to flatter or give favor to reporters and editors so that favorable stories would be written. Cabinet members and government employees were told not to dine or drink with reporters. Roh argued that in doing this, government officials made the media “a powerhouse without responsibility.” For a strong democracy to thrive, he said, “healthy tension between press and the government is vital,” and Roh promised the public he would raise the quality of Korean media to the level of developed nations’ press. He said he wanted the press to become “power with responsibility.”

Journalists and editors were quite unhappy with how the president portrayed the press. Members of the Korean press responded to his actions and orders by contending that they do not change stories because government officials ask them to do so. Drinking and meals never changed stories about the truth, the journalists said, and reporters complained that it is government officials who invited them to bars and restaurants. For the most part, President Roh ignored complaints from the Korean press while continuing to set new rules for engagement with the members of the press.

President Roh instructed that a news briefing room was to be set up at the Blue House so the media could gain direct access to sources in his executive branch. But the president also prohibited correspondents from gaining entry to the office building where his staff members work, explaining that no nation allows open access to the president’s staff. While the staff offices remained off-limits, he allowed a pool of reporters access to activities at his oval office. In Roh’s view, these new measures would enable the press and government officials to devote them-

selves fully to their duties and provide the basis for democracy to flourish.

The President and the Press

In August, President Roh filed a \$2.5 million lawsuit against four newspapers and one opposition lawmaker for their report that a charge of speculative real estate trading had been brought against him. Three of the four newspapers he sued claim a 60 percent share of the country’s readers and are referred to as “majors.” In filing this lawsuit, he became the first president to make a legal claim against the press. Later, when the newspapers protested that while in office he cannot engage in legal action against news reports about him, he agreed to postpone legal action until he finishes his term as president. Also, The Wall Street Journal advised Roh that he should learn from British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who did not sue the British Broadcasting Corporation even though it reported the British government was under suspicion for distorting the facts in order to stage the Iraq War.

During the previous Kim Dae-Jung presidency, it had been these major newspapers (among a total of 23 media companies that were involved in the tax investigation) that had to pay an additional levy resulting from a tax investigation into their operations. Two newspaper owners went to prison for tax evasion, and the wife of one newspaper owner committed suicide during the investigation. These newspaper owners asserted that the tax investigation was a gag on freedom of speech, and international media organizations also supported this contention. The government contended it was a case of business practices (and taxes not paid), not an attempt to cut off free speech.

Roh, who was minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries in this administration, attacked the major newspapers publicly and argued for payment of taxes as the rightful cost of doing business. It was, perhaps, Roh’s support of the tax payment that led to many of the major newspapers criticizing him strongly during his campaign for presi-

dent. And after his election, workers at these newspapers suspected his media reforms were targeted at them in retribution.

During August, Roh also claimed that since the press had strayed from reporting fairly, government officials should continue to “engage in controversies” with them. A month later Roh was saying that because of accusations and false attacks on him and his government made by members of the press, the people would lose confidence in their work and the result would be that his government would become almost powerless. “We should read the newspapers for fun,” Roh said, in a joking way. “Occasionally I see the newspaper that way.”

President Roh spoke further about the government and members of the press fulfilling their duties in “their proper places.” However, media scholars had a hard time explaining references Roh made to the duties of the media, especially duties the government and the press owe to each other in their relationship.

In Korea, newspapers, television and radio carry more government-related news stories than the press does in other countries. The duties of the Korean press involve telling the news about government actions to readers, viewer and listeners speedily and accurately. However, government officials in Korea, as in other countries, attempt to conceal news that might be sensitive, making it difficult to bring this news to the public. Government officials see this as their duty to do so. These adherences to duty creates tension between those who try to collect information and those who try to hide it, and occasionally these tensions expand into emotional tangles and legal battles.

For example, a government official thinks of himself as being “generous” to the reporters and, in return, wants to be quoted as an only source. But to the reporter, this official is one of several sources. When a story appears in which the news event is characterized differently from how this official saw it, there is anger at the reporter. But the reporter maintains he did his job well

by going to a variety of sources to try to get an accurate story. At times these misunderstandings result in lawsuits filed by government officials who insist that reporters acted irresponsibly. Under President Roh, governmental bodies have made 117 legal claims against the press, a significantly higher rate of lawsuits than with any preceding administrations.

Media Regulation vs. Media Reform

Determining what the actual duties should be on each side of this relationship is very difficult and, because the boundaries are not clear, the major newspapers in Korea regard many of President Roh's orders regarding the press as attempts to regulate the media. And when Koreans hear the words "media regulation," they are reminded of when the military ruled, and the media were tightly controlled. Only "good news," filtered by government officials, could be delivered to the readers. Back then, if reporters wrote unfavorable stories, those in the government openly pushed news organizations to fire those reporters. If they were not fired, reporters were kept out of government buildings. Such restrictions hampered freedom of the press and stopped the growth of democracy.

Now in Korea, an understanding of the need for media reform is developing among the people. Those who are critical of the press focus on the "majors" and claim they have not been on the side of the people. (It was not surprising when the first newspaper President Roh visited was a "minor" paper.) But when polled, the people insist they do not want media reform to come from government, fearing that will damage democracy. Similarly, other newspapers are also highly critical of the "majors," saying that they act unfairly in their business practices, such as giving away bicycles to lure new subscribers. This leads to tension among those who work at these vari-

ous newspapers.

But the news media President Roh is most closely associated with is the Internet, which was responsible for his election, as his campaign was praised on Web sites while it was ignored or criticized by major newspapers. As soon as he became president, Roh allowed the Internet news media to enter the Blue House and cover his executive branch for news stories. He also gave exclusive interviews to reporters for Internet news sites.

The role and position of the Internet news media arouses a lot of controversy in Korea, as it does in other countries. While this method of transmit-

... when Koreans hear the words 'media regulation,' they are reminded of when the military ruled, and the media were tightly controlled.

ting news is still developing—as its access to readers, the depth of its news reporting, its reliability and other issues are being sorted out—those in the Internet news media believe they should have the same access to government officials and information as the existing press do.

Reform of the news media is difficult to accomplish. And when most people talk about media reform, the "majors" are the target of their criticism; some suggest that the Internet news media should replace them. Reporters, as a group, also advocate media reform but little agreement can be found on the method or goals, and their debates become divisive as groups of reporters argue with one another.

After a visit to Korea in October 2002, Professor Leonard R. Sussman from the Freedom House, an acknowledged authority on the press in Korea, recommended that a special commission composed of prominent, public-spirited citizens, drawn from relevant sectors—journalism, academia, finance, religion and commerce—should examine the strengths as well as the

complaints about the news media, past and present. The commission should hold open hearings and insist on wide coverage and, after much study, it should provide recommendations for media reform.

Such a course could avoid reform of the news media by the government. Instead, public pressure would compel nongovernmental entities to find solutions for problems that have pitted large segments of the public against major journalistic outlets. This approach could possibly avoid vindictiveness, as the criminalization of past actions would be ruled out. Civil charges might be appropriate, if conducted strictly under the rule of law. If large claims for back payment are sustained by the commission, fair arrangements for long-term payouts should be considered rather than demanding payments that would severely cripple or bankrupt a news institution.

It is not obvious that a special commission of this kind would succeed. Never before has such a commission existed in Korea, and President Roh has not made such a commission a priority when he talks about reforming the media. And some doubt that any resolutions that might come out of it could be made mandatory on the news organizations.

Now it is unclear what will happen to this idea, proposed by Professor Sussman. What members of the press and government officials must realize is they both exist to serve the people. Tensions will always exist between journalists and government officials. That is not going to change. But if serving the people can become the basis for building trust, then both the press and democracy will have a better opportunity to thrive in a system of balance and cooperation. ■

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Nieman Notes

Compiled by Lois Fiore

The Watchdog Journalism Project Moves to the Web

'We want to cajole, encourage, prod, stroke and, in the end, help create a sense of urgency and obligation to higher reporting standards.'

By Barry Sussman

NiemanWatchdog.org is about to get started. I'm the editor, and I can use your help.

As you might know, the Nieman Foundation has had its Watchdog Journalism Project for six years, created and funded by Murrey Marder, a distinguished, retired Washington Post diplomatic reporter. Marder's commitment to watchdog reporting is intense. He believes it's possible that, if reporters and editors work hard, perhaps they can help to improve things here and there and, once in a while, possibly even avert catastrophes. It's a belief a lot of us share. And if we believe this, we must continually work to see that it happens. This is what this new Web site is all about.

Watchdog reporting means holding accountable people and groups in positions of power and especially in government. In practice, fidelity to this goal ebbs and flows.

A grievous default in watchfulness by both the press and Congress in 1964 plunged the United States into the Vietnam War on a false rationale. While the principles remain constant, each generation has to learn the watchdog lesson anew. In Iraq, as in the Vietnam conflict, the shortcomings of the press have been remarkably similar: lack of probing pre-war questions about the war's justification, about the political, economic and military components of the U.S. war-fighting strategy and, most important of all, about the postwar costs and consequences.

Until now, the Nieman Watchdog

Project relied primarily on conferences with members of the press—most held at Harvard University, one in Washington, D.C.—to stimulate greater interest in how to use reporting to hold the powerful accountable. But the advent of the war on terrorism, with its wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, have made it imperative to reach a wider audience more quickly. The Internet makes this possible. During earlier times of war the public was conditioned to criticize the press for disclosing too much, but in the Iraq conflict a considerable portion of the public has been criticizing journalists for failing to question government policymakers vigorously enough.

With the Internet revolution, anyone connected to the Web has access to more raw information and far more opinion than any journalist could possibly sort through. What this means is that there is a critical need in this always churning news world for knowledge and ability to evaluate this deluge of data. No reporter or editor is equipped to cope with the interwoven complexities of foreign and domestic policy, science, economics, the environment, world trade, culture, religion, genetics and all the other issues that now engulf us.

NiemanWatchdog.org is poised to assume this role in offering a unique service to journalists at newspapers, TV and radio and to online reporters and editors, journalism students, and citizens who care about the world around them.

The Nieman Foundation's objective is to "elevate the standards of journalism" by further educating "persons deemed especially qualified for journalism." The Watchdog Web site will marshal the vast learning resources of Harvard University, which have nourished Nieman Fellows for more than a half-century, to help supply inspiration for questions and lines of inquiry that reporters around the globe can pursue with policymakers. Harvard University will not be the sole source of information on this site; thought-provoking ideas will be offered by other academic centers, scientists and specialists from these diverse fields.

We want to cajole, encourage, prod, stroke and, in the end, help create a sense of urgency and obligation to higher reporting standards. We will be international in scope. We will offer less trivia and more substance, but we also know that if we are dull, or even hard to navigate, we are dead.

We have plans for several main features, each of which focuses on interactivity. In one part of the site, there will be brief essays or columns by Harvard professors and other experts in a variety of fields. The journalist can select the subject matter to explore, such as how to better report on OPEC or race relations or recidivism or Afghanistan. This list is large. These experts might focus their writing on aspects of an issue that the press isn't covering well and might include questions that ought to be asked. And here is where the interactivity begins: The

essays, commentary and questions will be open for comment and queries by the user.

Our site will debut during the upcoming election campaign, which means we will present a lot of material about politics in America. For example, a Harvard Kennedy School of Government professor contends that misguided election campaign coverage is partly to blame for low voter turnout in the United States. He'll present his views and suggestions for better re-

porting, and then journalists, if they desire, can query him before using his information to inform their reporting.

We are asking for as much assistance as possible from alumni/ae and readers of Nieman Reports. Consider this Web project a family business. It won't take long to see what we're about and, when you visit us, we'd appreciate hearing back from you with your questions and comments and also with your ideas for issues we should tackle. Please also let friends and colleagues know what we're

doing. This is your project, too. ■

Barry Sussman was a Washington Post editor for 22 years. He was special Watergate editor, a columnist for the Post's National Weekly edition, and director of opinion polls. He left the Post in 1987 and in recent years has been a news media consultant as well as the author of several books.

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—1951—

Simeon S. Booker, Washington bureau chief for Jet Magazine, recently celebrated 50 years with the magazine, as reporter, Washington bureau chief, and war correspondent. Hundreds of friends, journalists and well-wishers gathered for an afternoon reception in July at the Johnson Publishing Company's office in Washington, D.C., according to a November 2003 article in Jet Magazine. In addition to oral tributes, Booker received many gifts, among them a ... history book from Frederick Douglass IV, the great-great-great grandson of the abolitionist Frederick Douglass.

After his Nieman year, Booker went on to become the first full-time black reporter at The Washington Post and then joined Johnson Publishing Company. While at Jet Magazine, he continued to cover civil rights events in the South, including the Emmett Till murder case. He also covered the wars in Vietnam and Grenada.

In 1982, Booker was the first African American to win the National Press Club's Fourth Estate Award.

—1955—

Robert L. Drew's four documentaries about President John F. Kennedy aired for the first time together on The History Channel on November 22, 2003, commemorating the 40th anniversary of the assassination of President Kennedy.

While an editor at Life magazine, Drew specialized in candid, still pic-

ture essays. Then, during his Nieman year, he developed filmmaking equipment that allowed him to create motion pictures based on candid photography, minimizing narration and following the action as it unfolded. His first subject, who was a good fit with his innovative technique, was John F. Kennedy.

Drew's first documentary, "Primary," focuses on Kennedy running for the Democratic presidential nomination in Wisconsin in 1960. "Crisis: Behind a Presidential Commitment" is the "first and only film ever shot candidly of a President making decisions during a crisis," according to The History Channel's press release. The film shows Kennedy and Robert Kennedy, then-U.S. Attorney General, making decisions concerning Alabama Governor George Wallace's refusal in June 1963

to let two black students enroll at the then all-white University of Alabama. "Faces of November" presents the reactions of participants and onlookers to Kennedy's funeral. The documentary, "Adventures on the New Frontier," captures Inauguration Day and night and the early weeks of Kennedy's presidency in the Oval Office. The Kennedy films have been released on DVD and VHS cassettes.

Drew, president of Drew Associates, since 1959 has produced over 60 non-fiction films. His films have won major broadcasting honors, including Emmys, Peabodys, and duPont-Columbia awards.

Bill French writes: "I retired 13 years ago after 42 years with The Globe and Mail, the last 32 as literary editor. I wrote three columns a week (reviews

The Knight Center: A Lippmann House Addition

Nieman Curator Bob Giles announced in November that the new wing on the Nieman Foundation's headquarters, Walter Lippmann House, will honor the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation for its long-standing support of the Nieman Foundation and its mission to elevate the standards of journalism.

The addition to Walter Lippmann House includes a seminar room, a library, and a media technology laboratory and will be called the Knight Center. "Putting the Knight name on our

new wing is a fitting recognition of the Knight Foundation's exceptional support of education for journalists and its generosity to both the Nieman Foundation and Harvard University," said Giles. "The Knight Center provides a modern learning environment for the Nieman Fellows and will enable the Nieman program to include the Harvard community and the larger world of journalism in many of its activities."

In his Curator's Corner on page three, Giles writes more about the Lippmann House addition. ■

and author interviews). Retirement came just in time. As chief book reviewer for the paper, I was running out of space in the house for more bookshelves. When I retired, my papers were acquired by the University of Toronto Libraries and my collection of Canadian fiction and poetry (first editions) by the University of Western Ontario Libraries. (Modesty be damned.)

“Any success I had as a literary critic was due in some measure to a course I took at Harvard as a Nieman—the Modern Novel, given by Albert J. Guerard in the English Department. I chose it as my major course, did all the homework and assignments (I still have my lecture notes). That’s where I first encountered Malcolm Lowry’s ‘Under the Volcano,’ which has since been recognized as one of the great novels of the 20th century. Lowry was living in Vancouver at the time, and the city government was trying to evict him from his seaside shack—a circumstance I was able to turn into a good story for the Globe and Mail. Professor Guerard was a brilliant teacher, and his course had a profound impact. I saw his obit just the other day; he spent his final academic years at Stanford, where his

father had been a star on the faculty. ...

“**Jean** [French’s wife] and I have done a lot of traveling, including a cruise last year around Australia and New Zealand. We spent a splendid day in Wellington with **Ian** and **Tui Cross** and talked a lot about our days at Harvard. As you probably know, Ian retired after a very successful career as head of New Zealand television. We had hoped to see **Fred Flowers** in Melbourne but were, alas, too late.”

Mort Stern writes: “A couple of years ago, after two terms on the Georgetown (Colo.) governing board, I let myself be persuaded to run for mayor against a nice young lady whose qualifications (unknown to me) included a spell as a professional strip teaser. She alleged that I represented the ‘Old Guard’ of this historic village since I was in favor of zoning as well as of having the town marshal enforce the posted speed limits. She beat me by 31 votes, which was roughly the number of people who could drink standing up at one of our downtown saloons.

“For some reason, the media ... thought it was a great story and kept my phone busy questioning how I had

managed to lose. ... In the normal course of headline-making, the new mayor managed to get herself arrested for driving under the influence and for allegedly faking an attack on her by a foul smelling man She subsequently lost a recall election (not to me, thank goodness), but she still managed to get a big spread and Playboy-type color photo in The Times of London, which presented the words *stripped of office* spread across her otherwise unadorned bosom. And I must add this footnote to illustrate the shape of politics on this portion of the Western frontier: Shortly after my election loss, a neighbor called to get my assistance with the town government on a complicated matter. After listening to him explain the ... issue, I said, ‘Thank God I lost the election!’ to which he replied, with obvious sincerity, ‘Well thank me, too, because I worked against you.’

“Late in 1990 **Pat** [Stern’s wife] and I both thought we would retire to full-time living in this historic mountain town about 15 minutes drive from the Continental Divide. But her interior design clients continued to request her services, and I got occasional requests for writing and editing assistance. So we cranked up our consulting partnership (P. Paty & Co.), and we are still at it and doing a lot of civic service besides

Bill Woestendiek retired in 1995 as director of the School of Journalism at the University of Southern California, Annenberg. He writes: “Since my ‘retirement’ ... I have been a Knight International Press Fellow in Russia and served as a communications consultant for the U.S. State Department in such places as Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Kenya, Ethiopia and Azerbaijan.

“My son John, who now works at The (Baltimore) Sun, won a Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting at The Philadelphia Inquirer in 1987.

“I should add that I had a heart attack about a year ago, but I am doing well.”

Sam Zagoria’s last full-time job was as news ombudsman for The Washington Post from 1984-86, “courtesy of

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 Conferences, the publishing of excerpts of the conferences and articles on watchdog journalism in Nieman Reports and on the Nieman Web site, and the Nieman Watchdog Project. Following is an accounting of expenditures from the fund as of October 31, 2003:

Balance at 10/31/02: \$285,800.14

Income: \$97,492.41

5,184.53 — interest on balance at end of FY 2002-03 (at 6/30/03)

92,307.88 — income from endowment for FY 2003-04 (7/1/03-6/30/04)

Expense: \$51,354.69

34,335.00 — design of Watchdog Project’s Web site

13,942.31 — editor of Watchdog Project

2,873.15 — travel/lodging/meals

204.23 — miscellaneous

Balance at 10/31/03: \$331,937.86

Executive Editor Ben Bradlee," Zagoria says. Since then, Zagoria continues, "I got busy with a Fulbright in wonderful Copenhagen, teaching at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton ... and then teaching in the Wake Forest University MBA program for eight semesters I managed to write two books (neither reached best seller range), 'Public Workers and Public Unions,' and 'The Ombudsman: How Good Governments Handle Citizens' Grievances,' and traveled in 38 countries."

Zagoria, who will be 85 next spring, and his wife, **Sylvia**, celebrated their 62nd wedding anniversary this winter.

—1962—

John Hamilton writes: "Hamilton Productions continues to produce both corporate and on-air TV programming, including our long-running 'Watch on Washington' series. We shape it on a state-by-state basis to feature a state's congressional delegation, and we produce it in association with Reuters and ABC News. We broadcast from the Reuters' studios here in Washington and have access to their worldwide news footage. Kate Snow of ABC News serves as our on-camera host. ... Now we are launching a new series that will air on public broadcasting stations nationwide. It's called 'Environmental Minutes.' We are producing it in association with Sky Farm Productions, another independent production firm headed by Peter Berle, an old friend of mine. UNC-TV, the North Carolina public television system, is our presenting station. The National Educational Telecommunications Association is distributing our series to all public broadcasting stations."

John Hughes, on leave as a tenured professor of journalism and director of the International Media Studies Program at Brigham Young University, is editor and chief operating officer of the Deseret Morning News, an 80,000-circulation daily in Salt Lake City. He has just taken the News from afternoon to morning publication, with a 7.3 percent increase in circulation, and now is in head-to-head competition with his

Letter to the Editor:

Over the past year, we have challenged the premise and facts of William McGowan's book, "Coloring the News: How Crusading for Diversity Has Corrupted American Journalism." We stated that Mr. McGowan presented facts selectively in his book to help support his argument that efforts to diversify the media industry have corrupted journalism. We are writing now to challenge once again statements he made in the 2003 fall edition of the Nieman Reports.

While Mr. McGowan is entitled to his opinion, we are entitled to challenge them. He wrote the following in the Nieman Reports article: "Many news organizations demand a pronounced commitment to diversity as a requirement for career advancement. Failing to do so, or asking too many questions either about its animating premises or its execution in the newsroom, can 'dramatically narrow' one's career options, as New York Times publisher Arthur Sulzberger, Jr., phrased it. Indeed, stepping over the party line on this subject can result in ostracism, opprobrium and banishment to career Siberias."

If media executives are so fearful that their career advancement might be stalled for not hiring more journalists of color, then why do journalists of color continue to be underrepresented in U.S. newsrooms? The percentage of journalists of color working at all local TV broadcast stations has declined over the past two years from 24.6 percent to 18.1 percent. The representation for Latinos working at English-language stations dropped from 7.3 percent to 5.2 percent during that same time.

At daily newspapers, journalists of color make up only 12.5 percent of all newsroom employees. Meanwhile, people of color make up more than 30 percent of the U.S. population. This historic failing of the me-

dia has yet to be resolved. I guess that's why so many media executives are being banished to career Siberias.

We also take exception with how Mr. McGowan presented the facts surrounding the debate sponsored by the National Press Club. He writes that he "had agreed to debate NABJ" about his book, but that "the NABJ pulled out." The National Association of Hispanic Journalists (NAHJ) is the organization that called for the debate. That debate between McGowan and NAHJ took place in the fall of 2002 and aired on C-Span. The press club did invite the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ) to participate, but the group chose not to take part at the time. It is unfair to criticize NABJ for not participating in a debate that the organization did not call for.

Meanwhile, McGowan was unable to accept an NABJ invitation to debate his book at the group's 2002 convention. However, former NABJ President Contrace Pressley did debate McGowan twice. She debated him the first time on CNN in the summer of 2002 and for the second time earlier this year on the C-Span program, "Washington Journal."

It would be irresponsible to state that Mr. McGowan refused to debate NABJ when he did debate the organization on two separate occasions. Too bad Mr. McGowan did not extend the same courtesy. It is convenient to leave out those facts when you are attacking the credibility of NABJ, an organization that has played an instrumental role in improving the quality of journalism in this country. It is also convenient to be selective when trying to support a flawed premise.

Sincerely,

*Joseph Torres, Deputy Director
National Association of Hispanic
Journalists*

partner and competitor in a JOA, the morning Salt Lake Tribune.

Dave Kraslow writes: "I am a life trustee of the University of Miami and was recently appointed as the university's representative on the Miami-Dade County public health trust. The trust governs the Jackson Health System. The UM medical school faculty staffs Jackson Memorial Hospital, which also serves as the school's teaching hospital."

Henry Raymont splits his time between Washington, D.C., and Berlin, where he spends each spring teaching a seminar on U.S. relations with Latin America at the Freie Universitaet of Berlin. He teaches the class, he says, "in Spanish, of course." Along with writing a column, Raymont, at 76, still writes a few news stories a day.

Murray Seeger went back to a part of his old East European beat to hold a training session for economic journalists in Sofia, Bulgaria. "This was my

fourth visit to this little country—I had been there twice as a reporter and once as representative of the International Monetary Fund immediately after the fall of Communism. Now, more than a decade later, it was fascinating to see how people have blossomed out with energy and spirit, opening new stores and cafés and enjoying their pretty little city. Like all the former East Bloc countries, Bulgaria has problems building a new political and new economic system simultaneously. The press is poorly developed and will need a great deal more help to fulfill its responsibilities."

—1963—

Saul Friedman, who founded and writes a weekly column on senior issues for Newsday, suffered a stroke last April that partially paralyzed his right arm and leg. But after five months of therapy, Friedman is walking with a cane, and he resumed the column in September with a piece about, what else, stroke. He's using a couple of

fingers on his left hand, plus voice recognition software, to do his writing.

Victor King McElheny writes: "My latest news is publication early this year of my irreverent, unauthorized biography of the enfant terrible of biology, Jim Watson (who got the Nobel Prize during my Nieman year). It's called 'Watson and DNA: Making a Scientific Revolution' (Perseus). The best review from the subject was a quote in The New York Times last February. Asked about the book during an interview, Watson said, 'McElheny makes me seem much more unique and much more eccentric than I ever felt.' The book, selling fairly well in a tough market, was timed for the 50th anniversary of the Watson-Crick discovery that DNA is a double helix, which has been celebrated all over the place, including a gala in the Grand Ballroom of The Waldorf-Astoria, a conference in Cambridge, England, and two meetings at Cold Spring Harbor, all of which I attended.

"My first book, a biography of the father of instant photography, Edwin Land, came out in 1998. Also from Perseus, it's called 'Insisting on the Impossible.' I'm now starting book number three.

"In 1998, I retired as director of MIT's Knight Science Journalism Fellowships (based on the Nieman model), which I headed for 16 years. ...

"My wife, **Ruth**, and I divide time between Cambridge, Massachusetts, where we've lived for 21 years, and our place in the woods in New Hampshire."

—1966—

Wayne Woodlief, a political writer who has been with the Boston Herald for 27 years, is retiring from full-time duty at the paper after the Herald announced a series of buyouts, retirements and layoffs. Woodlief, who will continue to write a weekly column on politics on the op-ed page, said: "I'm retiring a little bit earlier than I wanted to. I had hoped to cover this campaign fully. I've had a great run, and I got a good retirement package."

Special Edition of Nieman Reports

A special edition of Nieman Reports featuring practical and reflective guidance from 84 leading journalists and scholars who study or report on science, the environment, health and medicine has been published by the Nieman Foundation.

A grant from the Scripps Howard Foundation provided the resources to print 15,000 copies and distribute them to nearly 8,000 journalists who report on these topics as well as to 105 accredited college journalism programs and departments. Faculty members will be able to order additional copies for use in their classrooms. The magazine will be sent to every U.S. member of the National Association of Science Writers, Society of Environmental Journalists, Association of Health Care Journalists, and the American Medical Writers Association. Foreign members of these organizations, as well as others interested in this special edition,

can order a copy by contacting the magazine's subscription manager, Elizabeth Son, by phone: 617-496-2968 or e-mail: elizabeth_son@harvard.edu. The articles can also be found on the Nieman Foundation's Web site, www.nieman.harvard.edu.

Each article originally appeared in one of four consecutive issues of Nieman Reports. The science articles were published in the Fall 2002 issue; reporting on the environment appeared in the Winter 2002 issue; health reporting was part of our Spring 2003 issue, and medical reporting was in our Summer 2003 issue.

Melissa Ludtke, editor of Nieman Reports, said "Our hope and intent is that these journalists' experiences and insights will become a valued training tool in both newsrooms and classrooms as journalists work to improve their coverage of this broad range of critical topics." ■

—1969—

Richard Longworth, senior correspondent at the Chicago Tribune, writes: “After 54 years in the news business and 27 years at the Tribune, I’m leaving journalism—not retiring but shifting gears, to become executive director of the Global Chicago Center at The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations. The Center, which works to raise Chicago’s profile as a global city and to promote cooperation between the city’s global players, grew out of a report that I wrote for the MacArthur Foundation four years ago on Chicago’s transition from the industrial to the global era. I’m also the coauthor of a book on Chicago and globalization, to be published by the University of Illinois Press in the spring, and do a lot of lecturing and guest teaching around the area, plus an annual lecture to the Knight-Bagehot Fellows at Columbia J-School. I was one of three finalists for the Pulitzer on foreign reporting this year for a series on U.S.-European relations. Too bad the Pulitzers don’t have a geriatric category, which would have improved my chances considerably.”

—1977—

Hennie van Deventer’s eighth book, “In Kamera” (“In Camera” in English), has been published in South Africa. Van Deventer writes that the book “is an armchair journey through my life and career. I page through my stack of photo albums and write about my memories. Naturally, there is a chapter about Harvard. There is also one about my dear wife, **Tokkie**. The title has a twofold meaning: ‘In Confidence’ and also ‘In the Eye of the Camera.’ I am writing a ninth and *last* book at the present moment, about life in the bush as a neighbor of Kruger National Park.”

Van Deventer, who is retired, is a former editor of the Afrikaans-language newspaper, “Die Volksblad,” and chief executive of Naspers Newspapers.

—1984—

Jacqueline Thomas, freelance writer and editor who was editorial

page editor of The (Baltimore) Sun until late 2001, was a fellow at the Institute of Politics for the fall 2003 semester. Thomas taught a study group entitled “Up Close & Personal: News Coverage of State and Local Issues.” She is also working on a book about African Americans during the period between the World Wars.

—1991—

Rui Araujo writes from Portugal: “I left RTP, Portuguese Television Network, last June. I wasn’t fired. I asked them to leave. I was sick and tired to be paid (with public money) to do nothing—for almost four years. Twenty-three years in the same company is more than enough—especially when you don’t have any challenges and perspectives (since you’re not a member of the ruling party). The other problem is, they no longer have a single news show like ‘60 Minutes’ in the public sector. Commercial television made the same option. Portugal is the exception in Europe.

“Now I work as a stringer for Le Point (a French weekly newsmagazine), Liberation (a French daily newspaper), and for the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists. I cannot find a job in Portugal. It seems to me I am only a decent reporter for foreign companies. Unfortunately, the foreign media are not interested in Portugal (nothing happens here).

The Portuguese government controls the two most important media groups in the country. They don’t forgive me for what I wrote (along with special assignment French reporter Dominique Audibert) in Le Point this summer: a three-page story on pedophilia in Portugal—including three lines on the two ministers of the actual government who are pedophiles. This story continues to make headlines here. The other media groups prefer to replace professional journalists by students—they work for free, and they don’t complain. The fact that I received nine national journalism awards is not important.

“As an outsider, I accept the price I have to pay to preserve my name and

my principles.”

—1992—

Marcus Brauchli is now the global news editor of The Wall Street Journal. Brauchli had been the Journal’s national news editor. In an announcement in September, the Journal’s managing editor, Paul Steiger said, “Journal news editors everywhere will be part of a 24-hour global news desk and will be responsible for serving all of our editions ... as well as the edition with which they are directly affiliated.” The position of global news editor that Brauchli will hold is new.

Brauchli’s wife, **Maggie Farley**, U.N. bureau chief of the Los Angeles Times, shared top honors with her colleague Robin Wright at the U.N. Correspondents Association awards dinner in October.

Mike Ruane reports on the publication of his new book:

“I am the coauthor, with Washington Post colleague Sari Horwitz, of the new book, ‘Sniper: Inside the Hunt for the Killers Who Terrorized the Nation.’ It’s about the October 2002 serial sniper spree that killed 10 people and injured three in the D.C., Baltimore and Richmond area, and the coast-to-coast events that led up to it. The book was published by Random House and came out September 30th.

“To my great pleasure, a book reception at the paper in October was attended by, among others, **Bill** and **Lynne Kovach** and by 1999 fellow and current Post reporter **John Kelly**.

“**Katie** [Ruane’s wife] works for The Catholic University Alumni Magazine. Emily is away at college, the University of the Arts, in Philadelphia. Julia, a senior in high school, and Sean, an 8th-grader, still at home, are doing great.”

—1995—

Kemal Kurspahic writes: “The Vienna, Austria-based South East Europe Media Organization (SEEMO) has awarded me its annual Dr. Erhard Busek Award for Better Understanding in the Region. The award is for my book,

'Prime Time Crime: Balkan Media in War and Peace,' published in March 2003 by USIP Press. The book, translated and published by the Sarajevo-based Media Center, has been well received by the professional community and the general public in Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia-Montenegro, including book events in Sarajevo, Zagreb, and Belgrade." The award was presented to Kurspahic in October in Vienna.

—2000—

Laura Lynch is now based in London as the European correspondent for CBC News. Her assignment began on November 9th.

—2002—

Michele McLellan will be leading a project, "Tomorrow's Workforce," to conduct research and then develop ways to improve midcareer training for journalists. The project, which will be based at the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University, is funded by a \$2.2 million, four-year grant awarded to Medill by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. The grant is a part of the foundation's larger, \$10 million initiative to "improve existing journalism training and to increase the news industry's investment in professional development." McLellan, a former editor at *The Oregonian* and primary author of "The Newspaper Credibility Handbook," will research the project by visiting newsrooms across the country and talking with people on both the corporate and editorial sides of newsrooms.

McLellan said in the press release announcing the project: "Effective training could impact newsroom cultures. Research has shown that good staff development contributes to higher employee retention."

The Knight Foundation learned in a recent study that eight out of 10 journalists and nine out of 10 executives expressed a need for further professional development. The \$10 million initiative was created as a response to that need.

—2004—

Erin Hoover Barnett, a reporter at *The Oregonian*, won second place in Distinguished Feature Writing in the 2003 C.B. Blethen Memorial Awards for the story of a father and son's relationship after the father gravely injured the son in a logging accident in their Oregon family logging business. The judge said: "The reporter has done an excellent job of stepping back from the story and letting the drama unfold. Through her well-paced writing, she gives the reader a glimpse of the strong but silent connections between father and son both before and after such a tragic accident. The vivid writing coupled with sensitive storytelling make this father-son tale unforgettable. It is the ultimate story of forgiveness."

The Blethen Award was named after a former publisher of the *Seattle Times* and this year involved 129 newspapers in at least five western states.

Jodi Rave Lee, Native American beat reporter for the *Lincoln Journal Star-Lee Enterprises*, received top awards in September at the Nebraska Associated Press contest for her "Broken Trust" series. The *Journal Star* editors accepted the first place award in the "enterprise reporting" category. Since the three-part series was published in fall 2002, it has also netted first place recognition from the Native American Journalists Association. Additionally, Rave Lee received the Thomas C. Sorensen Award and \$2,000 for the series from the University of Nebraska School of Journalism. The series will also be featured in a journalism textbook being compiled by the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism due out by fall 2004.

The "Broken Trust" series unraveled the complexities surrounding the U.S. Interior Department's handling of billions of dollars belonging to Native American landowners. Earned income came from mineral, timber and land leases from reservation allotments across the country. The series rose from a 1996 class-action suit that was "one of the most complicated pieces of litigation in federal court history." ■

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End Note

Exploring the Alaskan National Wildlife Refuge

By boat and backpack, three journalists wander through this vast, treeless tundra.

By Richard Read

Pontificators often sound flat when they write about subjects—grizzly bears, say, or whales—that they haven't actually seen or tasted. That's one reason I jumped at the invitation to backpack in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge with Nicholas D. Kristof, peripatetic columnist for *The New York Times*, who called out of the blue last summer.

I don't write opinion, at least not consciously. Neither did Nick when we first met in 1989 at adjacent telex machines in Pyongyang, North Korea. But Nick, who travels to the ends of the earth to report his op-ed column, planned to explore the Alaskan refuge where the Bush administration favored drilling for oil.

Perhaps Nick called me believing that no *New Yorker* would be crazy enough to go along. Or maybe he merely figured that Oregon, his home state and my adopted one, was on the way to Alaska. In any case, Nick called back a few days later. "Uh," he said, "you have done some hiking before, haven't you?"

Those who write columns without hiking, or without at least moving from their keyboards, run certain risks. So do people who brave grizzlies, polar bears, blizzards, severe cold, and rickety bush planes in America's most remote preserve. But Walt Audi, a bush pilot Nick located, was reassuring when I reached him by phone as he flipped burgers for his hotel guests in Kaktovik,

Alaska. Walt said he'd throw in some bear spray for us.

Bear spray? "If a bear attacks you, just spray yourself in the face, and you won't see it."

I passed along this tip to the third member of our party, Naka Nathaniel, Paris-based multimedia man for the *Times's* Web site, figuring he might opt out. I thought Nick himself might not make it, given that he described in his column getting a car stuck in Ukraine the week before our rendezvous.

But we met in a Fairbanks' hotel in late August. Fog stranded us the next day in Deadhorse, the aptly named gateway to the Prudhoe Bay oil fields. A commercial pilot generously agreed to drop us in Arctic Village beside the



Richard Read, of *The Oregonian*, rows with Nicholas D. Kristof, of *The New York Times*, on the Canning River below Alaska's Brooks Range. Read, Kristof and Naka Nathaniel, of www.nytimes.com, spent five days floating north toward the Arctic Ocean. *Photo by Naka Nathaniel.*

refuge. On the fly, he arranged for passing bush pilot Dirk Nickisch to ride us in from there.

Winging over the spectacular Brooks Range in his 1952 DeHavilland Beaver, Nickisch popped a question. "Hey, you guys want to do a raft trip?" It turned out he was retrieving a group of vacationing oil company geologists who happened to have an inflatable raft belonging to Walt Audi.

And so we bounced to a stop on a Canning River gravel bar, to be served chicken pesto tortellini, red wine, fresh chocolate cheesecake, single-malt Scotch, cigars and the remains of four kegs of beer. After the nine Arctic bon vivants flew out, we saw not a footprint, not a shred of plastic, and not a cigarette butt during five magical days floating 40 miles toward the Arctic Ocean.

The first grizzly showed up conveniently at breakfast, enabling Nick to file an add to his column by satellite phone. The second grizzly, a towering tawny animal, seemed to find nearby musk oxen more appetizing than journalists.

The refuge was so pristine that some caribou actually approached us. "They seemed to be trying to determine

whether we were pitifully deformed caribou," Nick wrote.

The vast tundra blazed with autumn color like a treeless New England in places, complete with succulent blueberries. Hummocks of vegetation and water trapped above permafrost made hiking difficult. On my birthday, we lit candles amid a stiff 40-degree breeze.

Nick floated an opinion as we bobbed along: The refuge could be opened to oil exploration and drilling as part of a grand bargain on the environment that would also address global warming. The government would break the environmental policy deadlock by increasing vehicle mileage standards, controlling carbon emissions, and subsidizing alternative energy.

I thought it would make a fine column. I also thought it was a lousy idea. Why should caribou suffer the sins of Hummer drivers? But as I say, I don't write opinion.

Walt flew us out as promised to Kaktovik, an island village closer to Greenland than to Oregon and closer to Finland than to New York. Never mind that Walt's Cessna crashed the next day as he kindly tried to remove some wayward rafters from a mudflat. "Survived another one," he said with a

shrug.

In Kaktovik we watched hungry polar bears circle as Inupiat hauled ashore a 43-foot bowhead whale amid snow flurries and celebration. Whale meat, we found, goes down far better drenched in ketchup.

Nick got five great columns out of the trip before departing New York for Africa. Naka produced stunning, narrated slide shows of our adventures. All in all, Nick went easier on the caribou in print than I thought he might. He called the administration's attempted assault on primordial wilderness shameful.

What would Huck Finn have said? There's nothing like a river trip, a shot of whiskey, and a chunk of blubber to open a person's eyes. ■

Richard Read, a 1997 Nieman Fellow, covers international affairs at The Oregonian. To read Nicholas D. Kristof's columns and to see Naka Nathaniel's audio slide shows, visit: <http://www.nytimes.com/top/opinion/editorialsandoped/oped/columnists/nicholasdkristof/index.html>

✉ RichRead@aol.com



A musk ox eyes rafters from a gravel bar in the Canning River. The rugged animals, wiped out in Alaska by hunters during the 1800's, were reintroduced from Greenland beginning in the 1930's. *Photo by Naka Nathaniel.*