

NIEMAN REPORTS

THE NIEMAN FOUNDATION FOR JOURNALISM AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

VOL. 53 No.3 FALL 1999

Five Dollars

The Press in Russia

Powerful owners, government officials and politicians work hard to control what journalists write and say. With elections ahead, the press faces critical tests of its independence.



'Watchdog journalism is the only function of journalism that justifies the freedom that journalists enjoy in this country.'

A Report From the Second Watchdog Journalism Project Conference
The Topic: How Journalists Use Sources

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Reporters Wrestle With How to Use Sources

Name them? Socialize with them? Trust them?

On May 15, 1999, journalists met at Harvard University to talk about the relationships that reporters have with their sources and to examine the potential consequences posed by changes in how sources are treated by reporters and how sources treat reporters. This conference was convened as the second in a series of conferences sponsored by the **Watchdog Journalism Project** at the Nieman Foundation. Reporters whose investigations have garnered many awards shared insights, concerns and advice about ways in which members of the press can work more effectively with sources and thereby avoid the loss of journalistic credibility that many in the profession believe is related to the rise in use of anonymous sources.

This section of Nieman Reports contains excerpts from observations made by participants at this Watchdog Journalism Project conference and an article about press coverage of Whitewater. This article exemplifies some problems that arise when reporters are misled by an anonymous source's information. What follows is a guide to these topics:

Introduction: Reporting on government, national security, nonprofits and business.

List of conference panel members.

Naming Sources

False Sources and Misleading Information

“In Reporting on Whitewater, an Anonymous Source Misinformed the Press,” an article by **Gilbert Cranberg**

Reporters' Relationships With Sources

How the Real Story Gets Told in Pictures

The Role of Reporter's Judgment

When Reporters are Shut Out By Sources

Stages of Reporting: Finding and Using Sources

Verifying What Sources Say

Working With Key Sources

The Roles Editors Play

Impact of Investigative Stories

‘Watchdog journalism is the only function of journalism that justifies the freedom that journalists enjoy in this country.’

Bill Kovach, Curator, Nieman Foundation

Bill Kovach began the conference with introductory remarks focused on coverage of the Clinton/Lewinsky story which, in his view, epitomizes many of the consequences of a shift in how sources are used.

This year, the Clinton/Lewinsky story has highlighted the extraordinary degree to which American reporting, especially in Washington, has put itself in a position to be manipulated by those who have a vital interest in the outcome of the story. One impact of the new technology has been to shift the power relationship toward the sources of the information and away from the news organizations that cover them. Increasingly, sources usurp the gate-keeping role of the journalist to dictate the terms of the interaction, the conditions under which the information will be released, and the timing of publication. This is a power shift so dramatic that I believe it can destroy journalistic independence and certainly it changes the whole notion of journalistic distance.

If you think this is a radical conclusion, we now have the testimony of Michael Isikoff in his book, “Uncovering Clinton,” in which he says he realized that he stepped across the line from being a reporter to a participant. “I was trying to influence the action of the players,” he wrote of trying to persuade Lucianne Goldberg and Linda Tripp not to negotiate a book deal that would compromise the credibility of his sources. “As a reporter, that’s not my job,” Isikoff goes on to tell us. “But I didn’t realize something else. I was at this point too involved to avoid influencing the players of the story.”

Some argue that the ultimate outcome of the story—President Clinton’s ultimate admissions—is a vindication of the press’s role in the unfolding story. But this “ends justify the means” argument is, as former Washington Post reporter Murrey Marder has reminded us, too self-serving for any self-respecting journalist to make....

For those who are convinced that watchdog journalism—the monitoring of the institutions of power—is the central purpose of a free press, it is vital that we examine the reporter/source relationship and how it shapes our reporting today.

- How much socializing among reporters and sources is acceptable?
- How much information trading is acceptable?
- What about giving advice to a private source?
- What about helping a source financially?
- Can a reporter deceive a source, expose a source? If so, when and why?

It is questions such as these that we hope to explore and examine today. We do so in the hope that with enough thought and enough discussion we can begin to find ways to redress the imbalance of power between reporters and sources that the competitive atmosphere of the new technology and the new economic organization of the journalism business have created.

As moderator of the discussion about reporting on nonprofits, Kovach also explained why it is increasingly important that journalists retain their role as vigilant watchdogs of these organizations at a time when the social service work of large public agencies is diminishing.

Most news organizations do not and have not covered nonprofits. But as the power of government devolves, and it’s devolving rapidly to state and local government in terms of social programs, those aspects of public life are, in many cases, being picked up by or left to nonprofit organizations to handle. And in this time of enormous wealth creation during the past decade, an awful lot of money has moved into fewer and fewer hands at the top of the economic structure of our country. More and more of those people who are collecting more and more personal fortune are choosing to withdraw their support from government by investing their profits in nonprofit organizations targeted to things in which they are personally interested.

As broad-based support for public programs dissipates, the power of nonprofits again is becoming more and more important to how our society is structured....

Since 1970, this area of nonprofit organizations has grown four times faster than the overall economy, which itself has

grown pretty steadily. For the last two years, the IRS reports they have been granting new tax exemptions to 75 organizations per day. That's on top of nearly 1.5 million nonprofit organizations that have federal exemptions from taxes. In 1997, the federal tax exemptions alone withdrew \$21 billion from the national treasury. State and local tax exemptions added another 30-plus billion to that....

All sorts of aspects of our social and political activity take place at the direction of private money through nonprofit organizations. And the journalistic problem attached to that is that these are private organizations and private money and journalistic access to those precincts is not nearly as clear as it is to government organizations.

Jim Tharpe, *an editor who has led several lengthy investigations of nonprofits, echoed Kovach's admonition of the need to report on nonprofits but also described the effort to do so as one that demands enormous tenacity from reporters.*

"I'd never done any reporting on nonprofits. I thought they were all good guys. They were mom and pop, bake sale, raise money for the local fire department types. I had no idea how sophisticated they were, how much money was raised, and how little access you have to them as a reporter.... We had access to 990's [mandatory financial records filed to the government by nonprofits] which tell you very little, but they are a good starting point.... If I had advice for anybody looking into a nonprofit, it would be this: It's the most tenacious story. You have to be more tenacious in your pursuit than anything else I've ever been a part of.... We [at the Montgomery (AL) Advertiser] were accused of attacking essentially the Mother Theresa of Montgomery, that being Morris Dees in the Southern Poverty Law Center."

Being a watchdog on national security issues requires its own set of strategies to get past some of the bureaucratic hurdles put up by military and diplomatic organizations. And it requires that journalists find ways to work around the hurdles to avoid being "handed" by sources in ways that stifle their abilities to monitor the events of their beat. Several reporters recalled times in which their judgment and/or persistence had to prevail in order for them—or others—to develop and publish important stories.

Susanne M. Schafer: "In order to cover a bureaucracy as large as the military, as large as the Pentagon, what you've got to fight for is that ability to get out there and interview the soldier in the trench, the lady in the cockpit. It's very hard to do, but that's the only way you're going to get beyond what I call death by briefing. You can waste hours and hours listening to those people, and that's exactly what they want to do. They want to entrap us there.... [there is a need to] get beyond what people in Washington are telling you the story is to the reality of what it is on the ground."

Murrey Marder: "I got a call one day from Dick Duggin from the St. Louis Post Dispatch, who was a first-class reporter during the Vietnam War. It was on a Sunday. Dick said he had just gotten a call from the White House. 'One of the presses in the White House is telling me if we print a story I'm working on, it will jeopardize national security,' Dick said. 'Has this happened to you?'"

"I burst out laughing. He said, 'What's so funny?'"

"I said, 'Dick, you don't realize the advantage you have in appearing in the St. Louis Post Dispatch: The White House doesn't see your copy. It happens to me all the time.'"

"He said, 'What do you tell them?'"

"I said, 'I generally tell them if they can prove it will jeopardize national security I will consider it, but until then I won't even think about it.'"

"He said, 'What happens if they prove it to you?'"

"They never have,' I replied."

Roy Gutman: "The Balkan conflicts that we've seen from 1991 to now were an example of an event that the establishment, both in government and the elite of the East Coast, preferred to ignore. NATO itself decided that the war against Slovenia and Croatia in 1991 was beneath its field of vision. I once went to see the U.S. Ambassador to NATO. I had just reported for Newsday that the Croats had repelled an invasion attempt over part of their territory on the Adriatic. I had it down to the last detail of just how it happened, which officer changed sides at which moment, and how they saved basically the middle Adriatic coastline of Croatia."

"The Ambassador told me, 'We really are not following this matter. What's your next question?'"

"I said, 'Don't you want to at least see it? I think this has changed the entire course of the war.'"

"Well, if you want to leave the article, you can. But this is not something that NATO is following,' he told me...."

"And I think the intention within the U.S. government was to let it happen and to hope that it would happen quickly. Our editors at Newsday who were aware of this had a difficult decision to make. I was the reporter for all of Europe: Why should we justify covering a war that is not seen by anybody in the national security establishment as being of national security concern? How do you get the interest of your editors in something that you feel is really central?"

Business reporting, when it's done from the perspective of journalists being watchdogs, poses difficulties in terms of finding credible and identifiable sources. These problems are magnified when a story must be told on television, as panel moderator Paul Solman, business correspondent for "The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer," described.

"[Business reporting is] a unique beat...[with] unique problems with regard to sourcing implicit in what we do.... There are two kinds of problems with sources.... One is the

nature of TV itself, and I separate that into physiology and egomania.... The second is the nature of the beat itself, the business and economics beat....

"If you're doing TV, you are stuck with the sources who are going to appear on camera...because how long can you go on paraphrasing somebody else?

"...of course, there's the issue of accessibility and my flip use of the word 'egomania.' The fact is that if you're in our business, TV, and particularly reporting on business and economics where people have no obligation or even incentive to talk to you most of the time, then you go with people who are articulate and accessible and are willing to talk to

you. Well, who is willing to talk to you? As often as not, it is people—maybe it's a gross characterization to call them 'egomaniacs,' exhibitionists might be a little milder—but it is certainly people who want to be out there, like to hear themselves talk, like to be heard. And in the world of business and economics, where people are being paid to manage this process, their clients, that is to say the CEO's and spokespeople from the corporation, they're given TV training now and have been for years, to do this well. So viewers are seeing again a subsample of a subsample....

"So there's this entire issue of source management that we all face, but we face it particularly within our beat." ■

Panel Members:

Byron V. Acohido: Investigative reporter, The Seattle Times. Since 1998, a specialist in covering the aerospace industry and aviation safety. His five-part series detailing problems with the 737's rudder system won 11 journalism awards, including the Pulitzer Prize for Beat Reporting.

David Barstow: Reporter, The New York Times. Formerly a reporter with The St. Petersburg Times where his investigative reporting on Rev. Henry J. Lyons and the National Baptist Convention made him a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize.

Doug Frantz: National correspondent, The New York Times. Was a Pulitzer finalist for a series of investigative articles he wrote about the Church of Scientology.

Alison Grant: Reporter, The Plain Dealer (Cleveland). Has covered City Hall since 1996. Previously she reported from the suburbs where, in Beachwood, her one-year investigation of corruption in the awarding of city contracts resulted in a Pulitzer Prize nomination as a finalist in the Beat Reporting category.

Roy Gutman: Correspondent, Newsday (Long Island). While European Bureau Chief in the early 1990's, his reporting on Serb atrocities in Bosnia was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting.

Susan Kelleher: Reporter, The Orange County [CA] Register. In 1995, she and another reporter broke the story of a fertility treatment clinic that was stealing eggs from infertile patients and giving them to other infertile women. This report won a Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting.

Bill Kovach: Curator, Nieman Foundation.

Murrey Marder: Sponsor, Watchdog Journalism Project at the Nieman Foundation. Formerly a reporter at The Washington Post whose investigation of Senator McCarthy's claims about Communist infiltration led to hearings which destroyed his credibility and whose reporting on the Johnson Administration's manipulation of news regarding Vietnam led to accusations of the U.S. government's "credibility gap."

James McNair: Reporter, The Miami Herald. Covers large corporations in South Florida and white-collar crime, including investment scams involving penny stocks, commodity futures, sweepstakes and psychic hotlines.

John McQuaid: Special Projects Reporter, The Times-Picayune (New Orleans). Reports on science, politics and the environment. He was lead reporter on a series about global fisheries that won a Pulitzer Prize for public service.

Lars-Erik Nelson: Washington columnist, the New York Daily News. As a foreign correspondent for different publications, he covered the start of the dissident movement in Russia, the Prague Spring, and Middle East shuttle diplomacy by Henry Kissinger.

William Rashbaum: Reporter, the New York Daily News. He covers crime and criminal justice issues, focusing on the New York City Police Department and organized crime.

Susanne M. Schafer: Chief Military Correspondent, Associated Press (currently on leave). Since July 1989, she has covered the Pentagon and military operations, and in 1996 became the first journalist to attend the National War College and obtain a master's degree in national security studies from the National Defense University.

Paul Solman: Business correspondent, "The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer."

Pete Souza: National photographer, the Chicago Tribune. He was official White House photographer during five and one half years of the Reagan administration and has won numerous awards for his photojournalism.

Jim Tharpe: Deputy Metro Editor, The [Atlanta] Constitution. While he was Managing Editor of the Montgomery [AL] Advertiser, the newspaper was a finalist for a Pulitzer Prize for its reporting on the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Mark Thompson: Defense Department Correspondent, Time. He has reported on some of the magazine's biggest stories in recent years, including United States's confrontations with Saddam Hussein, the explosions in Oklahoma City and aboard TWA 800, and various White House scandals.

Loretta Tofani: Reporter, The Philadelphia Inquirer. Since 1997, she has covered gambling. While at The Washington Post in the early 1980's, her series of stories about men getting gang-raped in a jail in Prince George's County, Maryland, won a Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting. ■

Naming Sources

Increasingly reporters cite anonymous sources rather than provide readers, viewers and listeners with actual names. At this conference, journalists, whose work demonstrates how information was gathered from sources who agreed to be named in the story, told how they had done their reporting to achieve this end and why it mattered that names were used. Excerpts on this topic from discussions among panel members follow. (A space between quotes indicates that this material was taken from different sections of their presentations.)

Doug Frantz: Investigation of the Church of Scientology. “I wrote a 5,000-word story about a very controversial subject and in it I had one unnamed source. That was a person who was identified as a senior government official who was involved in the decision-making process. That is because the person was an IRS official who couldn’t under law speak about the internal deliberations of the IRS. But I spelled that out in the story, so I think that that provided the transparency that meets one of my [reporting] rules.”

“We have to tell our readers where these sources are coming from.... Even if you use their names, I think you need to provide some background.... One of my key sources was a private detective named Michael Shomers. From the outset he was on the record. I could use his name, and he provided me with enormous documents.... The third or fourth time I sat down with him, I asked him, ‘Why are you talking to me, because Scientology is known for going after its critics with great vigor?’ He knew this as well as anyone, having been on the attack side of it. He said, ‘Well, I don’t trust Scientology anymore, and also I had a financial dispute with my former partner at the private detective agency.’ It was good for me to know that. I also put that in the newspaper because it’s not enough that I know it, my readers have to know it, because they need to evaluate what this source is saying, not just to me, but to them in the newspaper. Even though his name is attached, I think you need that kind of transparency.”

Loretta Tofani: Investigation of rapes in jail. “The series was unusual at the time [1983] because all the victims were named and the men who raped them were also named and quoted. The series consisted of about a dozen case studies of men who had been gang-raped: Within each case study there was the victim’s story corroborated by the rapist’s story. Also, there was medical evidence for those rapes, and the Post published the photographs of both the rapists and the victims.”

“With the rapists, I used a somewhat different approach [than I did in interviews with the victims]. I felt I didn’t have to read them their Miranda rights or warn them there was a

chance of being prosecuted. I went in there and talked about jail conditions and asked them about how they had done the rape. If they said they didn’t rape someone, then I’d find the other gang rapist in the same rape and get somebody there to describe it and go back to that person with new information and the story would come out. I just used their names. I didn’t feel I was talking to somebody in the State Department where it was understood that everything was confidential. I was a reporter. They knew it. I had written to them on Post stationary and I used their names. It was simple. [And when I was with them] I was writing in my notebook.” [See Tofani’s additional comments in section “Stages of Reporting: How to Find and Use Sources.”]

“This story was given to the government basically on a silver platter. It had the names. It had everything. It had medical records. It had victims’ names. It had rapists’ names.... [The government] convicted all the rapists.”

Roy Gutman: “I think it’s essential that to keep our credibility strong we have to make it clear in our coverage just where we get this stuff from and whose agenda we are pushing or whose agenda is being pushed by virtue of this story. In the last couple years there’s been a real decline in this transparency and all I can do is point to it.... It’s a terrible trend, and it’s a disastrous trend in a free society. People will stop believing us if we don’t start telling more about where we get our stories and why we’re running them.”

Bill Kovach: “The journalists who cover national security and think they have a tough time ought to look at some of this work [of reporters who investigate nonprofit groups and organizations], journalists who are putting everything on the record. These are not source stories, 5,000 words, one source. These reporters get some of the toughest information in one of the toughest areas to cover on the record.... [And] one of the results of increasing journalistic interest in nonprofits is that lawyers have talked about this kind of reporting at Bar Association meetings, and there are now law firms that specialize in calling news organizations that are investigating nonprofits and offering their services.”

Jim Tharpe: Investigation of the Southern Poverty Law Center. “We did not publish anything in the series unless it was attributed to somebody. But we went beyond that. I think if we had stuck with that tack as the only thing we did in the series, we would have ended up with people at the Center easily dismissing them as disgruntled employees.... But by looking at 990’s [financial records of nonprofits], what few financial records that were available we were able to corroborate much of that information, many of the allegations these former employees had made....”

“Initially they [the people at the Center] would answer our questions in person, as long as they could tape record it. After we asked about finances, they wanted questions written down and sent to them in advance. Then they finally said, ‘We’re tired of you guys. We’re not answering anything else.’ And they completely cut us off.... [When] we asked to look at their financial records [at the 23,000 checks the Center wrote over two years], they hired an independent attorney who began threatening me, then my editor, then the publisher, and told us, ‘You’d better be careful of the questions you ask and the stories you come up with,’ and cited libel law to us. So we were under threat of lawsuit for two years, basically during the research phase of the series.”

A new twist regarding the involvement of outsiders in monitoring the actions of reporters and their use of sources surfaced in a front page story, published on July 28, 1999 in The New York Times and written by Watchdog conference participant Doug Frantz. In his story, “Journalists or Detectives? Depends on Who’s Asking,” Frantz revealed ways in which former journalists work as “investigators” for people involved in legal cases. To “gain access to sources who would be unlikely to speak to a private investigator,” these “detectives” posed as reporters. The article focused on this practice during the legal fight involving Koch Industries.

Susan Kelleher: Investigation of an infertility clinic. “My newspaper has a policy that we have to quote everybody on the record. No one is allowed to be quoted anonymously in our paper. I am enormously grateful for that [policy] because it has made me a very hard-working reporter. Had I been allowed to use anonymous sources a lot, I probably would have gotten myself into some trouble, especially early on when I was not really wise to the ways of the people who tried to manipulate. Also I think that the stories were much more solid. They had much more credibility, and I think the people also felt good about their participation in them.”

“Before anybody participates with me in a story, in the sense of a source, I tell them how I work. I tell them they have to go on the record. I tell them I am going to be asking other people about them, that even though I find them really nice people, I am still going to have to check them out. I ask them what their concerns are. I tell them what my concerns are. I tell them I don’t like to be lied to and that if I find out that I’m lied to I get really upset. I tell them basically everything they ask me. If they want to know anything about anything, if I have an answer to it, I’ll give it to them.

“I basically give them a choice of whether to be a part of the story as opposed to controlling the content. I say to them, ‘Once you agree to talk to me, that’s it. You don’t really have control, but you do have control to the degree you want to participate. And once you are on the record, if there’s something you don’t need me to know, then don’t tell me because it’s going to be on the record, and we’re not going to be playing games.’”

Journalists at the Watchdog conference agreed that the practice of relying on anonymous sources is becoming more widespread. No group of reporters uses them more often than members of the Washington, D.C. press corps. One panel member commented on troubling aspects of this practice:

Murrey Marder: “I was absolutely horrified to find out, when the Committee of Concerned Journalists was doing its conference in Washington, the explanation given by the White House press about why they’re being entrapped by their sources into non-identification. [They don’t give] even remote identification, not just inability to identify the person, but inability to identify whether they were coming from the right, left, center, upside down, or what. That, to me, is inexcusable, to have an absolutely blank source out there. There is no reason to get entrapped in that.” ■

False Sources and Misleading Information

Journalists put the public’s trust in peril when they publish stories in which a source has either given false leads or misleading information. Yet some journalists at the conference worried that this is happening more frequently.

Roy Gutman: “The worst kind of sourcing is the false independent source. We had that all last year through the Ken Starr investigation, where he was identified in a lot of papers as ‘a lawyer close to the case’ or ‘sources close to the case’ or ‘lawyers familiar with the investigation’ without [reporters] saying which side he was on. I don’t mind people who quote anybody as long as they identify which side they’re on. But when Starr, who is the prosecutor, is identified simply as ‘a knowledgeable attorney,’ and then he puts

forth an accusatory quotation, to me that’s unforgivable on the part of the reporters who bought that. But that was his ground rule: ‘You can quote me, but you can’t identify me, even which side I’m on.’ I think that’s a deal that should never have been made.”

The article that follows presents an even more troubling situation. It illustrates what can happen when information is provided by an anonymous source, then presented again and again by reporters as a fact to support an allegation. In this case, the public wasn’t given the opportunity to be skeptical about its authenticity because there was no indication of how reporters had received the information or who provided it.

In Reporting on Whitewater, an Anonymous Source Misinformed the Press

By Gilbert Cranberg

Savvy newspaper readers know to be on guard when information in stories is attributed to anonymous sources. But what if a news organization relies on an unidentified informant and withholds that fact from readers? The public then is robbed of a precious opportunity to be skeptical.

A glaring case in point: Whitewater.

The 1996 prosecution of James and Susan McDougal by Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr featured testimony by FBI agent Michael Patkus. According to news stories at the time, Patkus testified that nearly \$50,000 of a fraudulent \$300,000 loan from David Hale to Susan McDougal was diverted to benefit the Whitewater Development Co., i.e., the Clintons. The “fact” of a tainted \$50,000 benefit to the President dogged him thereafter in the press and became a major focus of attention in the Whitewater saga.

One small problem: There was no such testimony by Patkus. [For a detailed description of how major news organizations wrote “carelessly, or incompletely, or just plain falsely” about the facts, see “Getting It Wrong on Whitewater,” *Nieman Reports*, Winter 1997.]

In a nutshell, the so-called nearly \$50,000 benefit to the Whitewater Development Co. was in two chunks. One chunk did not come from the corrupt \$300,000 loan, nor did Patkus say it did despite press reports to the contrary. It came from another, apparently legitimate, bank loan to James McDougal a year earlier. The second chunk was only briefly in Whitewater’s name and did not benefit the Clintons.

So how did news organizations come to put words in Patkus’s mouth? They did it, I’ve recently learned, because they gave credence to what they were told privately by Starr’s deputies about the so-called benefit during the 1996 trial. This information was then incorporated into stories without informing readers that anonymous sources were at work.

More than two years later, Starr himself went public with the same erroneous recital in his impeachment testimony to the House Judiciary Committee. “Based on our investigation,” he told the Committee, “we now know that some \$50,000 of that [\$300,000 fraudulent] loan went to benefit the Whitewater corporation.”

When the Office of the Independent Counsel was prodded by me and Iowa’s Senator Tom Harkin, at my request, to explain the basis for Starr’s testimony, Deputy Independent Counsel Edward J. Page replied to Senator Harkin on April 13, 1999: “The testimony in the first McDougal trial served as the basis for Judge Starr’s testimony,” Page wrote. Sent a copy of Patkus’s actual testimony and asked to square it with his letter, Page was unable to offer a coherent explanation.

The rationale for use of unnamed sources is that it serves

the public’s need for information it would not get otherwise. In this instance, the public was served up misinformation. Worse, the misinformation was given spin, by one party to a dispute, and presented as fact. Worse still, the press continuously concealed the existence of a confidential source, thus compounding its flimflam of readers.

If you are keeping score, score one for the Office of the Independent Counsel, which succeeded in spreading its slanted version of the facts widely; score one also for the press, which had another juicy scandal story. The losers: a deceived and deluded public.

Now, when the press is awash with concern about credibility, seems a good time for news organizations to level with the public about how they mishandled this story. However, such a confession would require members of the press to disclose that Starr deputies were confidential sources. And breaching a promise of confidentiality, of course, is considered a journalistic no-no. But it isn’t always.

The rock-bottom reason for source confidentiality is to benefit the public. It would be perverse if the promise of confidentiality became, instead, a device to hoodwink the public. Implicit in the press-source bargain is that news organizations will protect identities in return for trustworthy information. When sources fail to live up to their end of the bargain, the press ought to blow the whistle. Besides, when the Independent Counsel’s office went public with the same information it had earlier given reporters privately, it waived confidentiality for all practical purposes.

Anthony Lewis recently disclosed in his column the name of a confidential source in Starr’s office who had misled him regarding an unrelated matter. Lewis did it both because of the deceit and because he learned that the source had told the same distorted story, on the record, to Bob Woodward.

The Gannett Newspaper Division’s principles of ethical conduct put it this way: “All sources should be informed that the newspaper will not honor confidentiality if the sources have lied or misled the newspaper.”

Whether the expectation of honesty is implicit in the press-source relationship or whether it is spelled out explicitly to the source at the outset, it’s imperative that the press expose deception whenever possible. Otherwise, anonymous sources will enjoy a shield for duplicity. All the more reason, then, for journalists to come clean about their shoddy reporting on Whitewater. ■

Gilbert Cranberg, former Editor of The Des Moines Register’s editorial pages, teaches journalism at the University of Iowa.

Reporters' Relationships With Sources

No topic consumed as much of the conversation at the Watchdog conference as that of reporters' relationships with sources. How are these relationships established? How can and should they be maintained during the course of reporting a story? Where should reporters draw the line in terms of their interactions with sources? Can reporters get "too close" to their sources? How can a story not be compromised by a source's own agenda? These and many other related questions were interwoven into each of the day's four panel discussions.

Doug Frantz set forth three rules that he abides by in his relationship with sources.

1. **"I never socialize with sources.** I worked for five years in Washington and I never went to a party with sources.... Particularly for the five years I spent in Washington for the Los Angeles Times, it was vital to my independence that I not be on a first-name basis with my sources, that I not go to parties with them. That was important."

2. **"Transparency.** We have to tell our readers where these sources are coming from. Even if you use their names, I think you need to provide some background."

3. **"Don't give advice to sources.** People often call up and ask you, 'What do I do now? Should I talk to the government? Should I talk to the prosecutor? Should I blow the whistle to the IRS?' I just have a flat rule not to tell them anything.... You can't be pure enough on that point."

Loretta Tofani: "In the end this relationship I had with the rapists came back to haunt me because there was an implicit understanding. I told them I am a reporter. It's okay to talk with me, and they believed me. They talked. They admitted their crimes. So it was very chilling some months later when, after the series came out, the rapists were indicted for the rapes and I was given a subpoena to testify against them.... Maryland has a shield law, and reporters were protected from speaking against their sources only if the source was unnamed. But I had named them all, so I had to testify."

"I really had to think a lot about what was my relationship with them [the sources who were rapists]. I knew this much: I was not going to testify against them. There was no way. I felt I could not continue doing work as a reporter, or at least the kind of work I found meaningful as a reporter, if I were to testify against my sources. For me it was really a matter of conscience.... I had an implicit understanding with these sources, the rapists, that I was not acting as an arm of the government. It would hurt the view of myself as a reporter to start testifying for the government against people I interview. I'm not sure how I could keep going on being a reporter doing that. It's a role I don't envision myself having

as a reporter. I feel like my job is, you get the story, you put it in the newspaper, and then the chips fall where they may. But then you don't keep sticking it to them. It didn't matter to me whether the victims were men or women. I wouldn't have testified."

"People at the newspaper felt differently: Ben Bradlee [the Post's Editor], surprisingly, was one of them. He felt I really should testify. At that time, he said reporters had good citizen responsibilities. We argued about it, but it was clear his mind was made up.... Bradlee was forceful, and he had other editors in the newsroom calling me and telling me I really should go along with it. But in the end, I didn't testify. I stuck to my guns, and the paper really was forced to back me up.... So I ended up explaining in court why I wouldn't testify, and then I was cited for contempt of court. The jail rapists were all indicted, and I'm sure they feel quite badly about me today. But I still feel I have some sense of honor because I didn't testify against them."

William Rashbaum: "The relationship between reporter and source is a delicate one.... The same can certainly be said for the relationships between management and ownership of the newspaper in the subjects of the stories that appear or, sometimes more importantly, don't appear in their publications. While many people argue that reporters have insufficient independent oversight, some might say there's less scrutiny of owners and publishers...."

"New York City is a tough, incestuous town when it comes to reporting on police departments and law enforcement in general, and the beat reporters who write about the police department usually cover both crime in the city and the department as an agency. So one day you can be writing about management failures that preceded the recent [Amadou] Diallo shooting, corruption, or the Police Commissioner taking a freebie junket to the Oscars. The next day you are chasing desperately sought after details of a high-profile crime that's captivated your editors, if not the city.

"Some could argue you're not biting the hand that feeds but cannibalizing it. This is a town where one reporter at a major daily writes for the police union newsletter and sells T-shirts for a group that benefits the families of slain cops. Another was called 'Bratton's Boswell' in print because a columnist felt that his relationship with the former police commissioner was too close. Another columnist deftly killed a young reporter's story about a top police official's drug-addicted daughter. She was a regular in Lower East Side shooting galleries and roamed around there in his department car, complete with police radios, phones and lights and sirens. The columnist and the official, needless to say, were good friends. At the other end of the spectrum is a man

who wrote a laudatory column about the priest who baptized his son and later turned the cleric into column fodder when he felt he kept black youngsters off a local Little League team.

“But there’s a lot of room between, and that’s where most of us work.... I think a lot of beat reporters do a very good job holding the department’s feet to the fire.... We work in a highly competitive environment where we face the competing obligations to our readers on the one hand and our loyalties, professional and sometimes personal, to the people who provide us with information, sometimes very important information, on the other side.”

Alison Grant: “Perhaps this is a simple idea but one way to get closely held information yet not compromise yourself is to demonstrate your usefulness to the people that you want to have as sources. My relationship with the two detectives [in Beachwood, a suburb of Cleveland] was symbiotic. Over the course of the year it became more and more the case that the detectives and I appeared to be working toward the same end. At times we did trade information. Some people would say that you should never deal with law enforcement officials in this way, but I think some exchange of information is all right.... It was only in retrospect that I realized I had provided a shield for the police, to an extent, at least to get their investigation launched, too.... I think you can happen to provide that function to a source and yet not compromise yourself in dealing with that source. I also felt in Beachwood from the beginning that the cops were honest. So I didn’t feel like if we happened to fill that need for the cops that it was any kind of compromise on the part of the Plain Dealer.”

“I also had to be careful that the newspaper was not being used by my sources merely as a foil for their agenda.... Purists may not agree with this, but I think you sometimes have to deal with minor characters who did bad things in order to get to the people higher up who are orchestrating the corruption.... The prosecutor was also very talkative and he was a friendly source, but the caveat with him was that he wanted to run for judge. He is a municipal judge now in Cleveland. That was one reason he sought publicity for the case, so it helped to be aware of his future ambitions. We traded some information. We gossiped about Cleveland politics and kept the relationship oiled....

“It does help to understand the subtext and agendas as much as possible, because there are naturally many agendas under foot. It helps, too, to be as candid as possible with sources on how you expect the story to play. Despite sources’ agendas, the reporter is writing for the reader and shaping a story that may not be what the sources expect, unless they are told....

“Despite the sources’ agendas—the cops’ need for cover, the prosecutor’s political ambition, the City Hall source’s anger over losing out on a promotion, the anger of Dominic Calabrese [her initial source] over his brother’s contract with the city—almost everything they told me was borne out

by reporting.... [And] despite their individual grievances and aspirations, these sources were also interested in shedding light on the corruption.... This is one way for reporters to draw information from sources: by having a shared sense that an injustice is happening.”

Susan Kelleher: “It was really telling their [patients who were inappropriately treated by infertility doctors] stories. I looked at them as sources as well, and yeah, I did get too close to those people. [And] I got very angry at the doctors.... I really did get attached to those people. I also felt a little too close to the whistleblowers, my initial sources. There were three of them, and they had settled a lawsuit for about a half-million dollars because they were fired, they said, for blowing the whistle on it before we had even written about it.”

“[When the story was published] I felt conflicted when the editor would use the words ‘hush money’ to describe the settlement [that the whistleblowers had received]. I would have preferred writing that ‘they signed a settlement with the confidentiality agreement.’... I did feel the need to argue [with my editor] that we should have used the longer explanation as opposed to the more sexy ‘hush money.’” [And each time “hush money” ran, Kelleher’s source would call and scream at her.] “I really felt for her and I did feel bad because I think the words did mischaracterize [her actions].”

David Barstow: Investigation of Rev. Henry J. Lyons and the National Baptist Convention. “We penetrated closed entities through the use of sources, which immediately threatens to put the source, who has access to that closed entity, in the driver’s seat.... [But we focused on finding] ways of leveling the playing field when we dealt with these sources so that we were not constantly the supplicants to them and therefore susceptible to spin, to their agendas, and so forth....

“[As a reporter] you have to be clear, constantly, every day, about what your agenda is and make absolutely clear to these people that your agenda has nothing to do with their agenda. If interests overlap, great. So be it. But never, ever, ever give anybody [who is a source] a name of a lawyer. You don’t give them advice. You don’t tell them what your next story’s going to be. You’ve just got to play it completely by the book, so that you are never in a position of feeling compromised.... You have to be willing to be beat on a story if it means that not getting beat is going to require you to make a decision with a source that could compromise that power relationship with them or, in other words, put you in debt to them in some way that is going to affect your subsequent coverage. And it’s a painful thing to do. I did it a few times in this story but I’m glad I did it. I think I slept better for it.”

“Sometimes we would call different members of the Convention and they would begin to ask our advice: ‘Do you think we should have a press conference?’ ‘Do you think we should mount a protest of some sort?’ ‘Should we have a

petition campaign of some sort to get rid of this guy?’ I was, ‘I don’t care what you do. I just want to know, Are you doing something?’ ...Very early on I committed to myself [to the view of] I don’t care what happens. I don’t care if they don’t do a thing. I don’t care. The only thing I care about is telling this story. I do not have a horse in this race. Making that vow to myself very early on kind of relieved me of any expectation or pressure or anything of the sort. I think it’s also just a clearer way to go about your business as a reporter, not to have a horse in the race.”

Byron Acohido: Investigation of the crash of TWA 800. “[We had] to learn how to avoid getting sucked into this dynamic or this corporate force which is powerful and smart and very motivated to manipulate whatever it can. First of all, it manipulates the government agency that is supposed to be the public’s watchdog and, along the way, if we’re not vigilant, we get manipulated as well....”

Acohido described several steps reporters can take to avoid being manipulated in the midst of reporting such stories.

- Seek out the stakeholders involved.
- Try to use experts, the people affected directly by whatever issue you are covering.
- Seek out the plaintiff lawyers: “A lot of them are doing the same thing we are doing, trying to connect the dots to get to a point.” [When he uses lawyers as sources, Acohido “tries to corroborate and check out their information like everybody else...it’s no different than dealing with other sources, but they’re better in the sense that they come from this industry where they have to be careful about getting the foundation set up under facts. That is why they’re most useful. And they’ll point out where you are weak as well.”]
- Make use of powerful technology: Tap into the Internet and E-mail.
- Look at the historical record.
- Take the time to pause and check the clips.
- Check the developing coverage, see what doesn’t make sense and what does make sense, and try to figure out where you want to go next.

James McNair: [As a business reporter] I’d love to have the dilemma of being chummy with sources. We business writers don’t hear enough from sources other than corporate spokespeople or what moves on the news wires. It’s in part because corporations really have no obligation to reporters. You can’t walk into a corporation.... We’ve got no right to set foot in a corporation. They have pretty much put out the word to their executives and their employees that they’re not supposed to be talking to the press. CEO’s have no obligation to talk to the press. How often do we get a CEO? Half of what you read from a CEO in the press, unless you’re The Wall Street Journal or The New York Times, is a canned quote. You just can’t get the CEO to come to the

phone. You can’t ask him tough questions. At annual meetings, the public relations people will head you off as you make your way to the CEO, so they play that little game.”

“If anything, business reporters need to thrust themselves more frequently into situations where getting too close to sources is a possibility. I’d love to hear from employees, but they’re so insulated; from the shareholders, but how do you find a shareholder? How do you find these people? At a time when many business sections have been dumbed down into how-to manuals for choosing a mutual fund, picking the right computer, and running a small business, American newspapers could stand business reporters who cover corporations to actually leave their offices and develop first name relationships with sources.”

“Some corporations, weary of being at the mercy of a reporter’s pen, try to steer reporters to analysts with favorable opinions. This is a new tactic. Not only that, they lean on analysts to return the phone call. They know that the reporters have a hard time getting the analyst to the phone.... [And] corporations browbeat reporters for calling analysts with negative points of view, and some reporters, eager to ensure their continuing access to the company, play along. This, of course, deprives readers of opposing viewpoints necessary to help people decide whether to invest in a company or not.”

Mark Thompson: “It’s important also to realize that there isn’t a source. I’ve been doing this [reporting on national security] for 20 years, and every year it’s like plowing a field: you’ve got to leave one field alone and let it grow back. It’s an ever-changing constellation of sources. If you get too wedded to one, you’ll run dry pretty soon.”

Lars-Erik Nelson: “There’s a way of making accusations now also using sources that troubles me, and I see this in the press frequently. A source will make an allegation, and the reporter takes it to the person who is being accused and he fumbles with it. Then a story is written saying, ‘So-and-so has been slow to respond to charges that....’ And now you’ve got a new scandal. It doesn’t matter whether the charges are true or false. Look at the Whitewater coverage. The Clintons were accused of being slow to respond to allegations from sources that they were crooks in Whitewater. It turns out the charges were not true...but still it’s a stain on the Clintons that they were slow to respond to these baseless charges.”

“Now we [reporters] go with the allegation. We make the charge. We accuse the victim of being slow to respond or imply that there’s a cover-up. To me, that’s adopting an agenda from sources that we should be treating much more skeptically. I’m a columnist now. I’m out of the business [of reporting], and I’m watching it from afar. And I must say I’m watching it with great dismay.” ■

How the Real Story Gets Told in Pictures

For five and a half years, Pete Souza was the official White House photographer during the Reagan Administration. His intimate access to the President provided him with an ability to produce pictures that captured authentic expressions through which real stories can be told. Now, as the Chicago Tribune's national photographer based in Washington, he struggles to deliver a photograph that he can truly say captures the authentic expression of the current President.

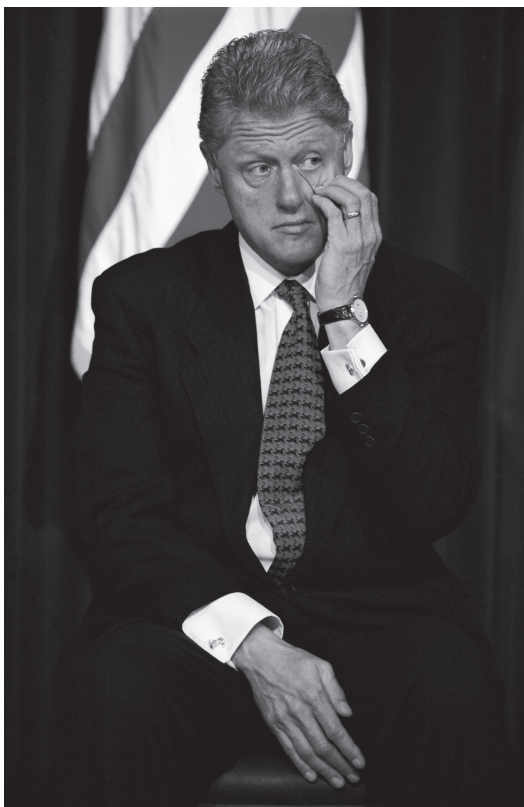
"In a lot of ways I think that I was more a journalist covering Reagan, as an employee of the government, than I was covering Clinton as a newspaper photographer for the Chicago Tribune," said Pete Souza. "I felt when I covered Reagan I did it journalistically and presented the right photographs of him. With Clinton, I really don't know if I did a journalistic job or not."

"I am going to show you two photos that were taken 30 minutes apart. This is the Tower Commission presenting their report to President Reagan, and there are 10 people in the Cabinet Room and me. You talk about being a fly on the wall. That's what I was. I swear to God, when I pushed the shutter button it was like a cannon going off. This is the moment when John Tower is telling Reagan, 'Our commission has concluded that it was an arms for hostages deal.' This is a real picture. I'm a government employee."



"The second photo is what the press got. Now this is the difference between having access and not having access. And I will argue that this first one is a photojournalistic picture, even though I was a government employee. And this one is not."





“With Clinton, he’s a guy on stage. This is the way I look at it. He could show you five different faces during any one appearance. I transmit my photos digitally to Chicago every day, and the most difficult thing I do is figure out which one to send because I don’t know which one is the true moment. I can make him look anyway you want to match a story of the day. Do you send the pensive look? Which look do you send?”

“Towards the end of the year, when it looked like he was going to get impeached, he sort of changed his game face. When he appeared publicly it was more showing that his staff is behind him. It’s the happy face, kind of a little smirk, almost. But whether it’s a true moment, I don’t know. It’s so hard to tell.” ■

The Role of Reporters' Judgment

A question from the audience elicited discussion about whether there can ever be truly "independent sources." The whole notion of independent sources, this questioner posed to the journalists, "is an oxymoron like jumbo shrimp or educational TV." "Is there," he wanted to know, "such a thing as an independent source?"

What follows are excerpts from the Watchdog conference that were either made in direct reply to this question or emerged out of other related discussions:

William Rashbaum: "There's no way to maintain complete independence from your sources and still be really effective as a watchdog. But I think that we have to continually work to limit our dependence. And I think we have to do that in obvious ways, such as having many, many sources over as wide a range of areas and disciplines as possible, sources at the top of institutions as well as at the bottom in the trenches. Read absolutely everything you can get your hands on so you become as expert and knowledgeable about the area that you are covering, and just use your eyes, ears, and mind, rather than relying on what you've been told."

Murrey Marder: "No, there is no such thing as an independent source, and the first thing a reporter should ask himself when he is talking to anyone whom he thinks may be a source is, 'Why is this source talking to me? What is in it for him?' First, I have to find out what is in it for him before I find what is in it for me...."

"Now, some source may be discovered one day in Washington who comes in virginal robes and with a halo. But I certainly have never encountered him and I would never assume that any source is telling me the whole truth, because I don't think the source knows the whole truth...."

"I work from a premise which may be old-fashioned, and I hope it will become new-fashioned: that the source I am talking to does not know everything about the subject he's talking about. Second, if he knows a great deal about it, why is he talking to me, and what is his point of view, and why is he selling it to me?"

"With all the emphasis we have given to sources [at this conference], it may very well create the impression that the reporter functions best when he is collecting information from various people. I would say on the contrary, he's functioning best when he's collecting information from various people and thinking it through for himself. I know of no solid story that I've ever written that was simply drawn from either a single individual or even a group of individuals. It's something that I had to piece together in my own mind, with my own resources, essentially, and present in that way."

Loretta Tofani: "No one really had an overview of the jail system, a system that didn't work. Everybody had a limited view and some people just had plain incorrect knowledge, and so it was really my task to try to make the view complete and make all these different parts see why the other parts weren't working."

Roy Gutman: "The only way that a reporter could sort out what was really going on [with Serbian atrocities in Bosnia] and hope to be at all factual was to find real people who were real victims and ask them to speak. It's kind of anathema to a lot of us who cover governments, who are diplomatic reporters, to go to individuals who have suffered. And I think back to Loretta's story, going to victims and to criminals. Frankly, [going to talk with victims] gave me a sense of independence [because] I acquired enough of a database in my head or in my notebooks. I would talk to one person alone, fresh, for as long as it took to get the entire story. Then I would start checking it out with other people, independently. I would not go to anybody who had been interviewed by any other reporter. I was able to put together my own picture that way. Through that I was able to build up a record of what the crimes were, and there was nobody who could gainsay me at the end of the day because I was convinced it was true. And it just turned out that the facts were correct. Few reporters used that method. So I think there is a way that we can have our independence and do our stories and be confident of them."

"It strikes me that we shouldn't be looking for independent sources but for independent judgment. It has to come from journalists. Look at Loretta's story: Who was the independent source there who gave her the full picture? She put together sources, going in fact finally to the perpetrators, the criminals themselves, and so her story became the independent source and her work became the independent facts. There was no single source who could put her in the picture.... The only independence has to come from us."

Susanne M. Schafer: "This is the essence of journalism. The difference between the Internet and what we'd like to think of as solid journalism is judgment calls."

Lars-Erik Nelson: "I don't have to be independent of my sources. I am a columnist; I find people who will help me or people whose stories intrigue me, and I can advocate their cause for them. So I have less need to keep independent of somebody's agenda than a straight news reporter...."

"[When I covered Prague in the early 1970's], for all that they were wonderful democratic people fighting the good

fight for freedom, they had their petty intrigues and their romances and their conspiracy theories and they would take things too far and would over-dramatize them. You'd have to say [to them], 'Look, I'm basically on your side. You don't own me, but I'm basically on your side. However, I am not your mouthpiece.' And you do have to keep that distance, even when you know they're fighting the heroic struggle."

"There's certainly no pure independence, but there is relative independence of a source.... There are academics who don't have a financial interest in the situation who have relatively greater independence on a story than, say, if it's an arms control story, than an arms manufacturer or a diplomat or somebody whose livelihood depends upon the situation. You can find people who do have a distance and who do not have the financial stake and that gives them a relative independence."

Mark Thompson: "True independence is impossible, and I think Lars's suggestion of relative independence definitely has its merits."

David Barstow: "By gathering at every step as many stupid documents as we could possibly find—old agendas, old budgets, anything and everything under the sun—we wouldn't become the dumb reporter scraping for the most basic information. Actually we would become an authority. We would become so knowledgeable about the inner workings of this entity [the National Baptist Convention] and the political jockeying among the various players who were trying to wrestle control of this organization away from the president that we could come with our questions from a position of strength, not from a position of weakness with these folks.... This is an organization whose public relations director's main purpose was to try to have us arrested at every turn and not give us any information whatsoever."

Byron Acohidio: "We're dealing in a complicated society, trying to cover complicated sources under deadline and competitive pressures, and what Murrey Marder said really rings true: The best thing we can do [in the midst of reporting on these stories] is to pause and think. I'm a believer in public service journalism, in serving the readers...and my belief is that what we can bring to bear on behalf of the readers is our intelligence, the ability to sift all this stuff and at the end of the day connect the dots and help the readers make sense of it."

In reporting the TWA 800 story for The Seattle Times, Acobido began to suspect that "politics" were at work in how the FBI and the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) acted as sources for this story. Each organization acted as a key source—and usually an unnamed source—for reporters at selected newspapers. Acobido surmises that the FBI provided its information to The New York Times; NTSB worked closely with reporters at The Washington Post.

And, as always happens with stories about airline crashes, the corporation who built the plane also wanted to provide reporters with "its spin."

"[The FBI and NTSB] had different agendas for different reasons and wanted to put out different spins. What happened was really amazing. These two leading publications, chasing these two competing spins, drove the coverage....it happens at every crash that you get red herrings and the only entity that benefits from these red herrings is the corporation. [On] July 27th, an unnamed source tells The Washington Post the center tank was 20 degrees too cool. That's Boeing all the way. That's their corporate product liability lawyers. That's wrong, dead wrong. They know that's wrong, but they still plant it."

"[As the story continued] it was bomb, bomb, bomb. Every story was about this bomb for months, which turned out wrong."

James McNair: "This is where I have a problem with the motives of sources. In 15 years on the business desk, I have to say that reporters' independence is under attack constantly by corporations that aim to have news slanted in a certain way, if not ignored altogether.... Material gains await a reporter who's going to go bad any day, but payoffs often arrive in more latent and unexpected ways. I remember once Volvo, out of the blue, I didn't even cover Volvo or auto manufacturing, called me up and asked me if I wanted to test drive some new car for a week.... I took a pass, but one of the sportswriters jumped on that one. It was a pretty good drive...."

"But business reporters give away their independence most often without accepting any forms of gratis or good will that shows in their stories. These are often nothing more than rewrites of a corporate press release, which is a carefully crafted, heavily lawyered statement, notorious for its omissions and distractions. Emphasis is often placed on so-called operating earnings that don't take into account the cost for plant shutdowns or inventory write-offs that in my book have everything to do with operations. But many reporters who are thrust on the business desk without any financial training don't know any better, and when corporations speak of 'rationalization of operations,' reporters don't always know to ask, 'How many workers are going to be laid off?' When corporations hire investment bankers who examine options to enhance shareholder value, that item might be buried or omitted in the story when it's probably the lead: The company is for sale."

John McQuaid: Investigation of global fisheries. "Ultimately we wrote a story which basically no segment or source would totally agree with, neither the regulators nor the fishermen, but which I think described the situation pretty accurately...." ■

When Reporters are Shut Out By Sources

What happens when reporters are shut out by sources whom they believe are necessary to report a story? Several journalists at the Watchdog conference argued that reporters often do their best work when the usual sources aren't available.

Murrey Marder: “When you are shut out, you have to work harder and dig harder. I think that could well serve as the emblem for watchdog reporting.”

William Rashbaum: “My experience is that the best work I’ve done is when I’ve been completely shut out by the agency or institution that I’m covering.... Because when you are shut out, you just have to work harder and you have to dig harder, and that’s when you find, or in my experience that’s when I’ve found, things I wouldn’t have found otherwise or wouldn’t have come out otherwise.”

“The New York City police department is, in effect, a closed institution. But it’s huge. There are 40,000 cops and any number of civilian employees who work there. So when the department shuts you out, and under Mayor Giuliani they have pretty much shut everybody out—almost everybody—you’ve got to dig. But that doesn’t mean that you’re not going to have people at the lower levels who are going to be pointing in the right direction, sharing inside information with you, sharing documents with you.... [To do that], first of all they have to trust you because they’ll lose their jobs or they may find themselves someplace where they don’t want to be.”

“On the Diallo shooting, we were trying to find out the outcome of some of the cases involving the street crime unit cops, the cops that had been involved in the shooting. Their sort of claim to fame, their purpose, was to get guns off the street. We tried to get the police department to tell us how those cases worked out and they wouldn’t. And we ended up finding out that 50 percent of the gun cases that they made were dismissed in court. Because those cases are sealed, it’s hard to determine what the reasons for the dismissals were.

There were a lot of potential reasons. But we did find a number of published court decisions where the searches were bad or the stops were unconstitutional. And we found cases over and over again, in one case there was a supervisor who four times had cases dismissed because of his testimony and several cases with judges writing in decisions that his testimony was not credible. It’s very rare for a judge in New York to actually put that on paper; they may dismiss a case, but to actually write down on paper that a cop’s testimony is not credible, which is short of perjury, short of saying he is lying, but it’s pretty harsh.


“If the police department had answered our question and said, ‘This is how many cases were dismissed and this is what happened with these decisions,’ we never would have gotten that far [in our reporting].” ■

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Stages of Reporting: Finding and Using Sources

Several reporters devoted much of their presentations to describing how they went about finding sources and gathering information from them. In all cases, these reporters did not use anonymous sources and worked hard to ensure that information would be attached to named sources, whenever appropriate. What follows are stages of reporting that show the ways in which sources were approached, interviewed and used in putting the story together.

Loretta Tofani's inquiry into the topic of jailhouse rapes began after she heard an attorney during a sentencing hearing for a young man about to be sentenced for breaking and entering tell a judge, "Your honor, my client was gang-raped in the county jail." She asked this judge how often he heard such things. "Oh, it happens all the time," the judge replied.

1. She began her reporting by asking other judges the same question. They gave her the same answer. But she remained cautious since the judges couldn't remember names of men who had been raped. She did not tell her editor about her queries to these judges. "I really needed to develop this a while before I broached the subject in the newsroom and started asking for time to do this project when I was supposed to be turning out daily stories."
2. She checked police records: No charges had been brought for rape in the county jail during the previous four years. The sexual assault center said the same thing. Jail spokesman also said there had been no rapes.
3. Through a source in the sheriff's office, she was able to get jail guard names and started to contact them at night by going to their homes after putting in her regular hours at the Post. (This source also provided her with their home addresses.) She targeted specific guards who had been involved some years before in a lawsuit against the jail for poor jail conditions. The guards were able to explain to her why the rapes were occurring: They cited understaffing problems, poor jail design, lack of enforcement of rules. These guards told her that rapes and sexual assaults were happening at a rate of about a dozen times a week. They also remembered the victims' names.
4. She looked up victims in the courthouse documents and found their home addresses and started to visit them at home. "Getting the victims to talk to me wasn't so difficult," Tofani said. "The hard part was using the names. I'd go to their homes, and I went about this a little gingerly. I said I was doing a story about the conditions in the Prince George's jail. I didn't say rapes in the first sentence. I was younger then. I looked a little timid and shy myself. They all felt sorry for me and let me in the door. So then we'd talk about the horrible conditions in the jail, the bad food, the horrible toilets, the overcrowding. Then, because the paper had a policy against using victims' names, I always asked them if I could use their names. Again I appealed to their consciences, and with that appeal, in time I was allowed to use their names."
5. After receiving permission from editors to report the story, she initially concentrated on the guards, the victims and medical records. She visited jail medical workers in their homes, after she got their addresses from jail guards. "They did not want to talk to me," Tofani explained. "I actually visited their homes many times and got doors slammed in my face, so I had to try different ways of reasoning with these people who would slam doors in my face. I'd just go back another night and say, 'Look, if you know these things are happening, this is a matter of conscience.' I basically appealed to their consciences as medical people."
6. Eventually she got the medical records of men who were raped: "Getting these really was tremendous credibility for this story; it really backed up the victims' accounts."
7. Also, she continued to visit the rape victims at their homes. "I was tremendously moved by the victims' accounts. I could see their pain and their humiliation, and it was very slow going," Tofani recalled. "I was a young woman and very sympathetic. And there was really no doubt in my mind that they were telling me the truth."
8. She went to the courthouse to look up where the rapists were; they were located in prisons throughout Maryland. "I used different approaches in talking to these men. A lot of it depended on my sense of the person as they walked in the room," Tofani said. "Dwight Welcher was a young man in the prison in Jessup, Maryland, and when he came in the room his eyes were very stern and direct, so I got right to the point. I told him, as he knew, I was doing a story about the Prince George's jail and I was very interested in why he had raped Ralph Bunch Gordon in Section 3A on a specific date. At first he refused to talk to me about it. He just laughed and looked at me. Then I said, 'Look, I'm a reporter. I'm writing a story. I'm not a policeman.' I just reassured him I wasn't only writing about this rape. I was writing about the whole jail and how this was the normal phenomenon. I talked and talked, and gradually he became comfortable and ended up talking about his rape of Ralph Bunch Gordon and with great specificity and the kind of detail that let you know that, yes, he really did it. And he was proud of it, too."

Susan Kelleher teamed up with an experienced reporter, *Kim Christensen*, to try to document information from sources regarding unethical practices by infertility doctors. The doctors were placing eggs from one infertile woman into another, thereby setting women, unknowingly, on a course to give birth to children who were not biologically their own.

“I first got the tip [about this story] from a senior administrator at the hospital who called me sort of out of the blue to talk about some financial shenanigans that were going on there.... It was a pain in the neck to report. A lot of things she was saying weren’t really checking out paperwork-wise. But I did notice that the University of California, Irvine had a really hostile response to my initial inquiries, which was pretty interesting since the health beat is usually a fairly non-controversial beat and they had been very cooperative. So my alarm bells sort of went off.... Then at the end of one meeting with this source, this woman says to me, ‘Would you be interested if there was a case where the woman got the wrong eggs? They were taken.’ I was like, ‘absolutely.’”

Kelleher began talking with people from the clinic “at sort of strange times and in strange places.” She explained to potential sources how she worked. “I can’t go with the story just with what people tell me,” she told them. “I’m going to need records.” [See section on “Verifying What Sources Say” for more on Kelleher’s reporting.] She taped all of her interviews and gave a copy of the tape to the person whom she had talked with to allay their fears of being misquoted: “You’ll have a record of what you say and I’ll have a record of what you say,” she would say. “And if there are questions, I can call you.” Also, bringing the copy of the tape to sources she had interviewed—and with whom she wanted to stay in touch—gave her an excuse to go back to their homes.

Tracking down clinic workers was difficult, as was persuading them to talk. “It was really slow trying to find people. It took about five weeks, trying to find people and going back and getting rejected again and again and again. I hate being rejected. It bugs me. And I hate bothering people at their house, but I would go there and say, ‘Oh, sorry,’ and I think after a while they just saw me as this really pathetic person who was just not going to be going away.”

In time, their reporting reached a point “where we had pretty much confirmed that this had happened.” But they decided to keep working on the story “until we found all the patients this had happened to.” But the University was aware of their work on this story and filed a lawsuit [against the doctors] that, in Kelleher’s mind, “made it look like they were doing their job in just trying to ferret out this information and that the doctors were just so uncooperative.”

Once a lawsuit was filed, and due to competition with the *Los Angeles Times*, the reporters decided to “move ahead with what we’ve got.” They wrote the story the next day and figured “we would go and contact the patients.” Instead, the reporters assigned to this story were called into their editor’s office and told that they were going to contact an ethicist to talk about whether the story should be published.

The ethicist helped the reporters to set up ground rules for how to approach those people who didn’t yet know what these doctors had done with their and others’ eggs. The rules were as follows:

- “We’re going to always go with two people.”
- “We’re going to make sure there’s somebody else at home with the patient.”
- “We’re going to find out as much about the patient [as we can] to see if they have a health condition that might freak them out because basically what we’re telling them is, ‘Hi, you have a child.’ We had records that showed some of these illegal transfers or these egg thefts had resulted in children for other women. And it would be upsetting to people to see that reporters had their medical records.”

With the first patient they went to interview—a woman named Barbara Moore—Kelleher explained that “there would be no article unless she told us whether she had consented or not to this transfer... we basically outlined everything, and they [the couple] just freaked out. We knew that they didn’t consent, but we couldn’t write a story at that point. And we met with them about two days later, and they told us that, in fact, they did not consent to the donation. So we had a big story in that and they had written a letter to the child basically saying, ‘We love you even though we’ve never met you.’ It was incredibly heartbreaking.

“Our next step was to go to the recipient’s house, the people who were raising the child. And to this day, this remains the spookiest thing I’ve ever done because the people were very nice people. They lived maybe about 10 miles away and, as I’m interviewing the father, there is this three-year-old boy playing in the background who looked exactly like the woman I had just interviewed the day before.

“They didn’t believe it and they banished me from the house; they said these people were out to get money from the doctors. I was very respectful of that and left.

“What happened is it wasn’t a story about the egg theft at all; this really was a story about a family, and until we had somebody on the record, with a face, that story was not going to take off. So the families really became the hardest sources to deal with because after a while you get fatigued. You would call people up and listen to their emotional reactions to things—time and time again you would talk to 20, 25, 30 people and tell them this happened, explain the records, and then hear their stories about family and what this meant to them. These weren’t some little eggs in a dish. These were their hopes and dreams for the future.”

David Barstow: “What we attempted to do is to penetrate this story through the use of sources, but to do so in a way that wouldn’t make us beholden to those sources or susceptible to their kind of spin. What we did, essentially, was an all-out assault on every single person that we could possibly find that was connected to this entity. It involved a hell of a lot of knocking on doors and calling people cold and just getting on the ground. Finding the ex-secretaries [of the

National Baptist Convention]. Finding the ex-deacons. Finding the guy who ran for president of the organization and lost a couple of years ago. Understanding the politics of this organization. Exploiting the political differences within the organization."

Byron Acohido: "We have these hard drives where you can stack six years' worth of work, or more. Divide up your files and log all the stories that everybody published chrono-

logically, or whatever system works for you, so that you get this feel of what is out there. If you are not aware of something, then it's like quicksand. The corporate forces and different agendas take over again. It's amazing how the press will repeat spin.... If reporters would just track what's being written, go into other Web sites where they can get information that helps them piece together what the truth is more likely to be, then we would better serve readers and preserve our credibility." ■

Verifying What Sources Say

As helpful or reliable as sources might seem to be, no reporter should accept their version of events without finding documentation to back up what they say. None of the investigative reporters at the conference could have published their stories without searching for records to support what their sources had said.

Susan Kelleher: "People [sources] would always ask, 'Are you going to have to tell anybody that I gave you these records?' And I would say, 'Yeah, if we get sued and I base the story on these records, then yeah, I'm going to have to disclose where they came from. However, if they come to me anonymously in the mail in an unmarked envelope, which I have a habit of throwing away, then it's up to me to validate them, and I will have no idea where they came from because I really don't know.'" [Document below is an example of one Kelleher used in her story.]

Kelleher used another reporting technique in gathering documentation for her story from reluctant sources. "I'd tell people where I was having lunch, and I had a really distinct car at the time, a blue Toyota Tercel with cow-covered car seats and I'd tell them I had a really bad habit of leaving the truck open. That really paid off because I got a mother lode of documents one time that way. I did have to eat at Sizzler, though."

Loretta Tofani: "Check your source's information; find out if the statement is true. But you also have to preserve

your initial gut feeling of, but this is wrong, it shouldn't be routine, rather than accept the source's more cavalier view of 'This is what happens in life.'"

Doug Frantz: "I've been an investigative reporter for almost 20 years, and I couldn't have done my job during those years without relying on sources, on people who took risks to themselves, who risked going to jail. People on the Scientology story risked something worse than jail, which is

the wrath of Scientology. But, also, I could not have done my job if I had only relied on those sources. It is essential that you use a source, particularly when you are dealing with a non-profit, as a point of origin; it's the beginning place, because they are most likely to be disgruntled former true believers, whether they are ex-members of the Red Cross or former Scientologists. And you'll find no person in the world more zealous than a former Scientologist, believe me.... You have to take what they say only as a starting point. You cannot rely on a single word of a single sentence without checking it out yourself." ■

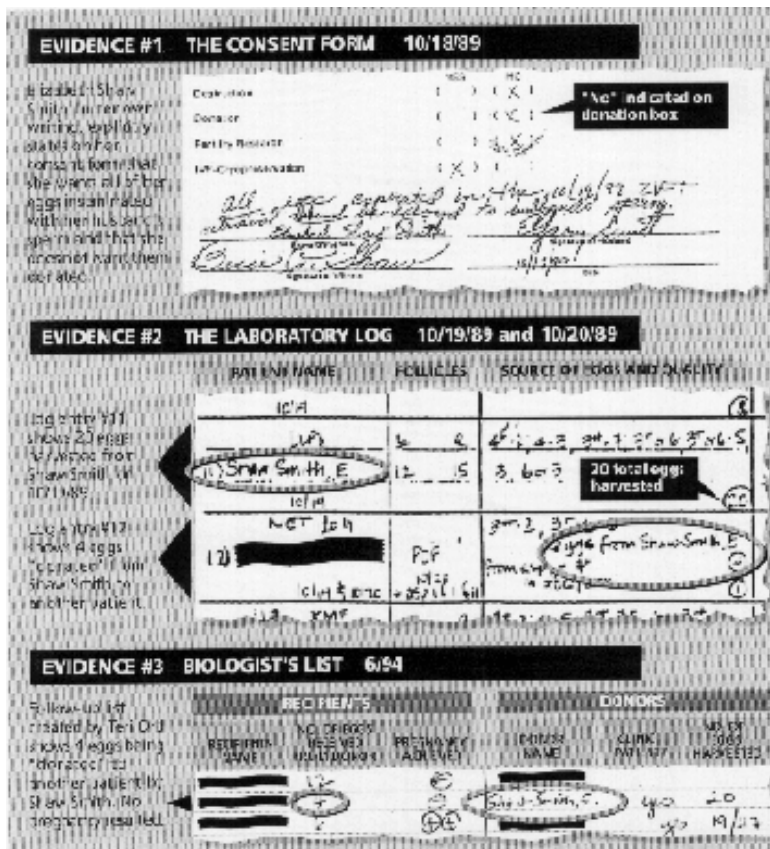


Image courtesy of The Orange County [CA] Register.

Working With Key Sources

In most reporting assignments—perhaps most often in journalists' roles as watchdogs—following leads usually results in finding a key source, someone who can help to build the story's foundation. How reporters work with these sources who often want, at least in the beginning, to reveal what they know in secret, was a topic of interest at the conference.

Alison Grant: “It became apparent after a while that my key source inside City Hall, who spoke to me only on background, was also helping the police. Without either of us ever naming the source, it was clear it was the same person. So for me, it was a way to check what I heard against what they heard.... I met this source in the women's bathroom at City Hall after the first few stories were out. I had never noticed her before, and I didn't know her name. Her only words to me then were, ‘You're on the right track,’ and then she disappeared into a stall. It was like out of a movie.

“I began calling her at home, and she more than anyone told me where to look, what questions to ask, what records to get. We never met privately in person until after the investigation was over, by which time she had retired and we met just once for lunch. It was totally a relationship by telephone. I would see her at City Hall when I went there but we didn't acknowledge each other.... Having contact with her by telephone made it pretty easy to maintain good independence. It was an arm's length relationship to begin with, and since everything she told me was not for attribution, it had to be verified through documents and on-the-record interviews with other people.”

Susan Kelleher: “I think my first big break came when I found the former manager of the [infertility clinic] practice, and unbeknownst to me she was pretty freaked out at the time because the University had its own secret investigation. This is when it was trying to squeeze the doctors out. So she asked me a lot of questions about what I was doing, and I really got uncomfortable. It was like, I don't know if I want to tell this woman the things that I'm looking at.

The Roles Editors Play

Reporters often mentioned the roles editors played in how they reported the story or how the story appeared in the paper. At times their input was helpful; other times it wasn't.

Loretta Tofani: “[When I began writing my story] it wasn't coming together. I felt like something was missing. My editors meanwhile were really pressing me to get the story in the paper. Months were passing. They had a different

“Without compromising other sources, I did tell her. And over a period of probably about three weeks, she finally just cracked. We would meet at a park by her house where her kids would play soccer. And finally one day I had a single record that somebody had sent me anonymously in the mail, and I said, ‘Could you tell me what this means? I have no idea what this means. I know it involves this patient here.’

“So she said, ‘I don't know why you keep pointing to that patient because there's a lot of patients on there.’ I'm like, ‘What? I can't even read this thing.’ Then she told me that there were hundreds of patients involved.”

Doug Frantz's initial source for his Scientology stories was a private detective, Michael Shomers, who had been hired by the Church of Scientology to “dog several IRS officials.” His experiences and recollections were invaluable in shaping the story and leading Frantz to other sources, but his documentation was critical to being able to verify that what he was saying was accurate.

Doug Frantz: “Fortunately for me and for the readers of my newspaper, he [Shomers] had maintained copies of almost all of the documents he generated for the Church of Scientology. So here I had the perfect source, it seemed to me, to start this story. I had a guy who was willing to go on the record, who ultimately disclosed what his agenda was, and who had the documents to back up everything that he said. It was a wonderful find and the best possible way to begin that story.... The next batch of sources I dealt with really were the Scientology defectors.... Their motives were as suspect to me as those of any source or any official within the Church of Scientology because they clearly had an ax to grind. They had their own agenda. It was vitally important that I hear what they had to say and then that I be able to go out and corroborate that.... It's a matter of using the sources as a beginning point and finding out what you can do to corroborate that information. For me, it was essential on that story. It's that essential on every story.” ■

idea for what the story should say. They wanted me to write about jail rapes nationally, with Prince George's as part of the problem. To me, Prince George's was the universe through which we saw everything. So there was a basic difference.”

[Tofani sought out another reporter to talk to about these difficulties.] “I told him everything I had collected, and he was very quiet the whole time. He just listened. At the end of

the day, he said, 'You have to talk to the rapists.' I found this astonishing at the time. 'Talk to the rapists! They're going to admit their crimes? These crimes that they weren't charged with? Why would they admit their jail rapes to me?'

"He said, 'Oh, they'll say something. They'll say they were beaten. Otherwise, people might think the victims are lying.'"

[After six weeks of initial reporting on the story, Tofani wrote a memo to her editors mapping out the major points that would later appear in the series.] "I developed the memo and brought it one morning to the Assistant Maryland Editor, who I hadn't had a great track record with. This was an editor who was mostly interested in suburban zoning disputes and seemed to me to lack guts and passion. But I just hoped for the best, and I made my best case. I told him it was really important, and he just wasn't interested. He said, 'Let's put it on the back burner.' I protested, 'Look, what else is so important? This is what we're here for.' He said, 'No, let's put it on the back burner.'

"I couldn't accept that, and I think this is also part of the [reporting] equation: In the newsroom there are obstacles, too, it's not just sources. There are times when it's necessary to find the next editor. And it's uncomfortable because you have to work with the lower editor, but sometimes there are times when you need to do that...so I went to the Metropolitan Editor, who was Bob Woodward, and made my case again, and he said 'yes,' of course. And he told the Assistant Maryland Editor to give me some time to do the story, not full time, but he had to spring me sometimes from the daily coverage when I asked.

"Woodward then wrote me a memo. I still have it. He said, 'The judges can really blow the lid off jail rapes.' ...but this wasn't really what I had in mind. I wanted a story that of course quoted the officials but also had the human texture to it, the human dimension of what was going to be the effect of the jail rapes. How were these policies really affecting human beings? I really imagined a lot of interviews with the victims."

"Looking back, I sometimes think it was a miracle that the story was published, both because of problems with sources and problems also in the newsroom, because the editors simply weren't interested. So I think any sense that we have of reporters having to maintain some independence in terms of their sources, they also need to maintain independence in the newsroom to get the job done.... It's all about maintaining independence both outside the newsroom and also inside.... The series also could have been derailed many times by well-meaning editors whose instincts or values or sensibilities were somewhat different than mine...the key to overcoming such problems is to maintain one's independence mainly by developing more sources and more friends in the newsroom."

Murrey Marder: "The best stories that you look at are ones in which the reporter, most of the time, was responsible for pushing editors, publishers, make-up men, into greater focus on a story."

Roy Gutman: [He faced the dilemma of how to interest his New York editors in the story of Serb atrocities in the Balkans, at a time when neither the U.S. government nor NATO was concerned about what was happening there.] "How do you get the interest of your editors in something you feel is really central, that you get obsessed with? In the case of the Balkan wars, what got to me the most were a few experiences early on in the war in Croatia. I became aware of a slaughter of policemen that had taken place in a town in eastern Croatia by Serbian paramilitary troops.... The security establishment had no interest in the story, and yet I thought, crimes are happening right in front of me. I figured out that there was one way I could attract the attention of my editors and the public and maybe even the East Coast establishment, and that was by reporting the crimes. The crimes were something that people could and would relate to, even if the Balkans, as Bismarck once said, were a place where nobody wants to sacrifice a single Pomeranian grenadier....

"When I started writing stories early in the Bosnia conflict, I failed, we all failed, all of us reporters who covered Croatia failed to attract the attention of the world to the war crimes that were going on there. When Bosnia began, I think many of us were fairly depressed that there was yet another war, one that had been predicted."

Susanne M. Schafer: "I recall several years ago we went on a trip with Defense Secretary Perry to about 10 Balkan and Eastern European nations in about eight days.... He was the first U.S. Secretary of Defense to get into Albania, and I remember I did a story about one officer there who had trained with special forces in the United States and was coming back and training 600 Albanians in being able to use tactics that special forces did in the United States.... It was an amazing chance to take a look at what was going on in that part of the world. And, of course, very few people were interested in the story, let alone printing such a thing. 'Albania? Who cares?'

"We ran into that periodically. One of the points that Perry had made was trying to formulate a grouping of Balkan defense leaders and to try to get them to understand how the United States worked and what the idea of a civilian-run military was all about because, of course, that was foreign to them, totally.

"Even when you had the chance to go on a trip with the Secretary of Defense, where you could go to a meeting of these defense ministers and talk to people there who were trying to learn those things, many times the editors wouldn't even pay for you to go. 'Why? I mean that's just an inconspicuous, silly part of the world. It means nothing.'

“As a reporter, fighting to even try to tell that kind of story and try to get access to places like that, I think, yes it’s come back to bite people and haunt editors terribly because they do not have the background. They don’t have the understanding of what that part of the world is all about.”

Byron Acohido: “The first thing I asked [myself] was, ‘Orange fireball? Lockerbie? What’s up with that?’ I went to seek experts who knew this stuff, who were on the level of independence detached from this. And I found out that orange glows, which were established [in the TWA 800 crash] didn’t happen when you blew up aircraft. In fact, at Lockerbie, there was no orange glow. [The bomb] broke the aircraft structurally and then it hit the ground. You have to have fuel ignite to get this orange glow.”

Impact of Investigative Stories

Reporters sometimes devote months, if not years, to working with sources, researching and compiling information to prepare it for publication. Though what their stories reveal can be explosive and damaging to the parties involved and provide a basis upon which others can make changes in policy or practice, several journalists at the Watchdog conference described how their articles actually had little effect. Of course, there were exceptions.

Loretta Tofani: As a result of her series, Tofani said that the jail changed its policies, separating convicted criminals from the legally innocent and violent from nonviolent and also hired more guards and enforced rules about guards having a clear view. County residents approved a bond issue to build a new and larger jail. “Many fewer rapes happened as a result,” she said.

[After the story was published,] “It’s like people finally saw it. They all kind of knew it, but they really saw it. It’s like a frame was put on a picture that they didn’t quite get before, and once the people in the community saw it, they started calling up the jail, calling up the county executive, saying, ‘Do something about this. My son was arrested for drunk driving. My husband was in there on trespassing.’ Everybody was afraid suddenly for their husbands and their sons. Before nobody really made the connection. They thought the jail was for these murderers. That part was incredibly gratifying, that people woke up.”

Doug Frantz: “I don’t think they’ve [members of the Church of Scientology] changed at all.... Nobody in Congress is willing to pick up the issue and go with it and ask the necessary questions about this tax exemption, about the circumstances behind it.... I could have made a career out of writing about Scientology, and I chose not to, and my

“So I had to push against the editors who wanted to run the wire stuff [about how there was a bomb involved] up high and not mention this because [at that time] nobody was talking about fuel tanks. But I did, with my editor’s help, three days later, get a lead that said orange flames are more consistent with fuel tank blasts. As a result, that led me to other sources who helped me run with a string of stories about another crash similar to that, and I broke the story about this Iranian aircraft that actually was a sister aircraft that blew up 20 years earlier. In the end, it wasn’t on target, but it was in the right direction.” ■

editors, bless them, agreed.... Not much happened to me. There were private investigators poking around my house and photographing my wife and children...but it wasn’t anything I didn’t expect and it wasn’t anything that hadn’t happened in spades to lots of other people, including IRS officials.”

Susan Kelleher: “I was surprised because nobody really picked up the story and we thought it was an incredible story. The silence around the country was deafening.”

[However, after the story broke, the accused infertility doctors were both indicted and fled the country. Both still practice infertility medicine, one in Chile, the other in Mexico. New laws against the theft of genetic material were enacted.]

Jim Tharpe: [The investigation of the Southern Poverty Law Center revealed that the Center never devoted more than 31 percent of money raised on its programs and sometimes spent as little as 18 percent, whereas most nonprofits devote closer to 75 percent to their charitable efforts. No blacks held top management positions at the nation’s richest civil rights organization, and 12 out of 13 current and former black employees cited racism at the Center.] Despite this, Tharpe said, the story “had very little effect, actually. I think the Center now raises more money than it ever has. The story really didn’t get out of Montgomery [Alabama] and that’s a real problem. The Center’s donors are not in Montgomery. The Center’s donors are in the Northeast and on the West Coast. So the story pretty much was contained in Montgomery where it got a shrug-of-the-shoulders reaction. We really didn’t get much reaction at all, I’m sad to say.” ■

From Russia—

Yevgenia Albats, an independent journalist in Russia, describes what it is like to try to be an investigative journalist in Russia amid forces—applied by both government and business—that work to make this kind of enterprising reporting less and less possible. As she writes, “media outlets become controlled by the elite and powerful who don’t want their power and prosperity to be threatened.” The consequence: For journalists such as Albats, there are fewer and fewer publications that will print what they report.

Two other perspectives on what is happening to the Russian media come from professors who have closely observed changes during the past few years. **Ellen Mickiewicz**, the author of “Changing Channels: Television and the Struggle for Power in Russia,” and Director of the DeWitt Wallace Center for Communications and Journalism at Duke University, echoes many of Albats’s observations as she examines what is broadcast as news on Russian television, who controls the decision-making and how viewers respond. Then, **Virginie Coulloudon**, a former French journalist who directs the research project “The Elite and Patronage in Russia” at the Davis Center for Russian Studies at Harvard University, expands our look at the media in Russia by assessing the situations faced by local regional news outlets. Her conclusion: Russia’s 1998 financial crisis provided an opening for powerful provincial leaders to assume greater control over local newspapers. She writes that, “One thing is certain: The local political leadership will try to assert greater control over the press in an attempt to secure their governing positions.”

About China—

Webster K. Nolan, the former Director of the East-West Center Media Program in Honolulu and a frequent visitor with journalists in China, describes the rapidly changing circumstances for Chinese journalists. Marketplace pressures, such as the unstoppable increase in advertising, are a force that editors must now consider in deciding what to cover and how to report it. Nolan compares much of what is happening now in China to similar trends taking place in U.S. journalism. He finds similarities but also points out contrasts that are rooted in political and cultural differences.

From Spain—

Dale Fuchs, who is reporting in Spain while on a Fulbright Fellowship for journalists, explains why that country’s reporters are so “starry-eyed” in their coverage of the euro. While reporters in other European countries include in their coverage some skepticism about the new single European currency, Spanish journalists rarely touch on this aspect of the story. Fuchs helps us understand why press coverage in Spain is so different. ■

Reporting Stories in Russia That No One Will Publish

Those who own and control the media want to secure political influence, not to uncover political corruption.

By Yevgenia Albats

After Watergate and the work of The Washington Post's Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein that led to President Nixon's resignation, young reporters dreamt of emulating this kind of investigative journalism featured in the movie "All the President's Men."

However, quite often in many other countries—including Russia, where I work as an independent, investigative journalist—the situation can turn out very differently. The upcoming movie "The Insider," rather than "All the President's Men," often turns out to be true. "The Insider" tells the well-known story of CBS's "60 Minutes" famous correspondent Mike Wallace, whose bosses refused to broadcast a piece on Big Tobacco. Those who owned the media outlet were fearful of losing advertising revenues and of getting embroiled in a costly lawsuit with tobacco companies. In short, an investigative scoop was held because of the owner's fear about consequences if the story was broadcast.

In my recent experience, unfortunately, this is a very familiar script. The reasons for this reside in Russia's history and its current political situation. Despite the new democratic elections, Russia has failed to create strong democratic institutions, but succeeded in becoming one of the 10 most corrupt countries in the world, according to the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index. This ought to provide plenty of fertile ground for investigative reporting. However, at the same time, the notion that "free speech" and "uncensored media" create the foundation for the practice of democracy is still not well understood. So what happens is that media outlets become controlled by the elite and powerful who don't want their power

and prosperity to be threatened.

Let me share a few examples of what I've experienced in my reporting:

November of 1996. It was just four months after Boris Yeltsin's overwhelming victory over his communist competitor, long-time communist party apparatchick Gennady Zyuganov. Izvestia, then the biggest and the most respectable national paper which I worked for, asked me to write a piece on my long-time "heroes"—the KGB, the Russian secret police who were notorious for their violations of human rights. The essence of the Russian secret service had changed little after the Soviet Union ceased to exist. I wrote the piece—but 15 minutes before the paper went into printing, the article was called back from the page. Two hours later, my story somehow found its way to my "heroes" on Lubyanka (the place in Moscow where KGB headquarters are located). What had happened became clear a couple of months later. Izvestia had been put up for sale. (In the Soviet Union the paper had been owned, as all media were, by the state; since autumn of 1991 it had been owned by its own journalists.) One of the major investors in Izvestia, for some reason, did not want to attack the secret police. I went public about the case, because when one writes stories such as this on the KGB publicity is the only protection a journalist has from a contract killer. Izvestia fired me. I filed a lawsuit and won, but the newspaper's pages were closed to me.

May of 1997. I am the anchor and author of the TV magazine on press and politics—something like NBC's "Meet the Press"—produced by NTV (Non-government television), Russia's first—and still the very best—independent network owned by the MOST-media. A person whom I interviewed

on the air spoke harshly of the chief lieutenant of one of Russia's most powerful media moguls, Boris Berezovsky, who was then an ally of the owner of NTV. Six days later my TV magazine show was cancelled by the network's bosses, and I was out of a job.

September of 1997. I did an investigative series on the Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov, who is currently a presidential candidate in the upcoming 2000 presidential election in Russia. The series, written soon after American businessman Paul Tatum was killed in Moscow, was far from complementary of the Mayor. In my reporting, I dug into Luzhkov's connections with some Russian businessmen who were subjects of Interpol's interest. (My investigation of this aspect of the case was made with the help of colleagues from two other countries.) I took my story to four major Russian newspapers and weeklies before I was able to get it published in a then-new and independent weekly, Novaya Gazeta. The reaction of the editors at the four other publications was almost hysterical: "Are you crazy? The day after we publish some negative story exposing Moscow's Mayor or his closest entourage, our bills on electricity, water, office rent will double or even triple. We are not suicidal by any means!" They were being brutally honest. Novaya Gazeta did get into trouble as a result of publishing my series: The renovation of its new office space was stopped, apparently under the order of the Moscow city government. I also received a letter in my mailbox—"You deserve a bullet"—along with some nasty phone calls.

March of 1998. I was trying to publish a story that was the result of a three-month investigation I'd done that exposed Russian government and semi-

government bodies' scandalous and dirty deals in trading highly sensitive technologies to Iran. I called it "Our Men in Teheran." Three major newspapers rejected this story. Their arguments can be characterized in this way: "This story is against Russian national interests." "Why?" I would ask. And the editors would say, "Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin, during his 1998 visit to the United States, said publicly that Russia was not and is not involved in any illegal technology trading with Iran and Iraq." Yet my investigation presented hard evidence that the Prime Minister either didn't have proper information or just lied, I argued. "Never mind, the story is damaging to the Russian interests." "Whose interests do you have in mind?" I would then ask, in what was becoming an obvious failure to get any newspaper to publish my story. "Are they the interests of bureaucrats who are putting big bucks into their own pockets because of these deals? Or the interests of the Russian people who are about to lose \$50 billion as a result of sanctions that might be imposed by international financial institutions because of those illegal trades?" There was no response.

September 1998. January 1999. April 1999. I produced stories about different investigations. I took them to the same publications. I had many of the same conversations, resulting in the same outcomes.

I tell these stories not to be pitied, but to offer specific examples of what investigative journalists are up against in Russia these days. But the sad fact is that even exposure of this situation likely does no good. My colleagues recognize that journalism is a highly corporate industry that dislikes—if not to say, rejects—those who expose such details of our profession. After my lawsuit against *Izvestia* was publicized, executives at other news outlets told me the following: "You are dangerous to deal with. You write the story and you want to publish it." "Oh, really?" I would say. "What about other reporters? Don't they want to publish their stories?" Their answer: "Others know the rules of the game and obey them."

The price for such candidness is

well known: You become the only reader of your stories. As a popular saying among Russian journalists goes, "He (she) is the author of unread and unseen (by anyone but the author) famous stories."

I have, however, made my choice: I choose to seek my freedom as an independent journalist.

To me, the continuing erosion of independent media outlets means I am free to do my investigations and to write stories but I am likely to become their one lonely reader.

As much as it sounds paradoxical, the Russian media lost the freedom they had long been seeking as a result of the 1996 presidential elections. This was the election when Boris Yeltsin, Russia's first democratically elected President, beat his Communist opponent and communism, as the ideology of the totalitarian state, was pronounced forever dead in Russia.

Officially censorship was abandoned in the Soviet Union as early as 1989, during Glasnost. However, in reality, the press remained under strict control of the weakening totalitarian state until late autumn of 1991, when the Soviet Union collapsed. The chaos of those first years of the reforms made journalists poor but gave them unprecedented freedom. Both print and electronic media, while struggling for survival, were admired by the public, which itself was seeking freedom from the constraints of a totalitarian state. Reporters did a decent job in exposing dirty deals of the collapsed Soviet state and of the new/old Russian bureaucracy that inherited both the wealth and the troubles of the no longer existent "evil empire," as President Ronald Reagan once called the Soviet Union.

By 1995, however, the first of Russia's new rich had started to invest in media. It turns out that these new owners were looking to make both financial and political profits out of their investments in the Russian media. In 1996, the presidential campaign clearly showed that those who had dared to invest in media were gaining power and political influence. Thus, by late 1996 and into 1997, Russia's so-called "oligarchs"—a half dozen or so super-

wealthy tycoons who, before last year's financial collapse, dominated the country's economy—went hunting for newspapers, magazines, TV and radio stations to buy.

By late 1998, independent national media accounted for 1.42 percent out of all national print and electronic media. Now, one year later (and a year prior to the next presidential election and six months before the parliamentary elections), independent media (those media institutions owned by the public, predominantly journalists who work there) account for a very tiny 0.7 percent.

Since 1996, the Russian oligarchs who acquired the major national media and concentrated ownership in just in a few hands have learned how to use their newspapers, magazines, TV and radio stations to undercut competitors and further their influence in the Kremlin circle, which is led by the sick and unpredictable Boris Yeltsin. Political influence in Russia leads to money: big money, very big money. It allows these powerful people to acquire profitable companies, to receive low-interest credits from government-owned banks, to get insider deals and commercial breaks, i.e. privileges that others without access to the media do not get. In general, political influence that is gained because of media ownership brings millions, if not billions of dollars, that are often channeled into offshore accounts outside of Russia. And maintaining control of the media has become a powerful instrument in obtaining such political influence.

Meanwhile, the price journalists and their profession must pay is a clear one: Journalism, as it is known and respected in democratic countries, is now on death row in Russia. ■

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Russian Television News: Owners and the Public

Owners jockey for political advantage. The public spots bias.

By Ellen Mickiewicz

It's election time in Russia again. This is when the Russian television industry experiences the greatest pressure and when the fragile but enormously important institution of information pluralism is most at risk.

That there is a genuine—though imperfect—pluralism on the national television networks is a profoundly important accomplishment of a badly flawed transition. There are no real guarantees of press pluralism in today's Russia, no watchdogs with teeth. There is only a wobbly market (much weakened by the August 1998 crash) that supports commercial stations competing with and challenging governmentally managed news. When the state and the private owners collude—as they did in support of Boris Yeltsin's 1996 presidential campaign—the competitive information market is powerfully undercut.

Television and Pluralism

First, a roadmap of the Russian television landscape. Four Moscow-based national networks, in order of popularity, dominate the market:

- **ORT** (Russian Public Television, Channel 1), heir to the largest Soviet-era station, is currently a public/private hybrid (51 percent of its shares belong to the government) whose most prominent private investor (and real decision-maker) is Boris Berezovsky. Berezovsky, one of Russia's richest new tycoons, parlayed a car dealership into huge wealth. A close friend of the Yeltsin family, he has served as secretary of the President's defense council and as coordinator of the organization linking former Soviet states.
- **NTV**, the biggest commercial station, reaches about 70 percent of the country and is owned by Vladimir Gusinsky, who rose from amateur theater impresario in Soviet times to founder of MOST bank, the chief source of capital for his media investments. Specializing in news, the station routinely sweeps news and public affairs awards. Its subsidiary, THT (TNT in Russia) is acquiring private stations in the provinces for a locally based network.
- **RTR** (Russian State Television, Channel 2), a state-owned and operated station, has almost total penetration but falling ratings and continual shifts of leadership.
- **TV-6**, the country's first commercial station, now has roughly 60 percent penetration and is building a news capacity. Berezovsky's recent purchase of a controlling interest gives him a commercial property that the government and Duma cannot so easily claim.

Across Russia, some 1,200 stations have acquired licenses to operate, and about half of these are on the air at the moment. Even so, the national networks absorb 83 to 85 percent of the prime-time audience. Especially during the frequent crises (e.g. the war in Chechnya, the August '98 crash) there is near-total dependence on the national networks.

Virtually every Russian household has at least one television set. However, despite attracting huge audiences, the television industry has not escaped the devastating effects of the nation's 1998 economic crash. Since then, advertising revenues have fallen by 70 percent, and even the most competi-

tive stations have been pushed into negative growth. Foreign programs became prohibitively expensive; staffs were downsized or not paid; advertising time was deeply discounted, and profits went up in smoke.

Though Direct Broadcast Satellite and cable are in the Russian market, over-the-air Moscow-based national networks are still what attract the lion's share of the viewing public. It is for this reason that control of television has become a hotly contested prize. The President and parliament battle over who calls the shots at Channels One and Two. So far, the content "monitoring councils" installed by Channels One and Two to propitiate the Communist-nationalist parliamentary majority have been desultory, ineffectual time-wasters, prompting new calls from the Duma for higher-level councils.

In the run-up to elections, the Russian government has restored the press ministry, which controls licensing. The press ministry also moved to assert control by trying to bring the 100-plus regional state-owned stations back under a tight regime, a step many regard as thoroughly unrealistic since many of these stations are now controlled by regional politicians who depend more on their local constituencies than on Moscow. Besides, these stations, like others, must compete for viewers with local commercial stations and the national networks. Thus, even if local state-owned stations were inclined to follow orders from Moscow about what their news programs should say, they can no longer count on a captive public.

On the commercial side, concentration of ownership poses the biggest threat. Cross-ownership of media properties is practically unregulated; broadcast licenses—for the powerful—have

been granted without effective competition.

Still, despite such dubious procedures and in a very short time, television succeeded in enabling the post-Soviet Russian public to access multiple sources and contending points of view in the news. NTV did it with greatest credibility, and during each crisis its ratings climbed. In our 1998 Russian national survey, 59 percent said the

demn the action, while others supported it, and some elected deputies criticized the President, while cabinet ministers defended him.

The reverse occurred when the national networks coordinated their coverage during the 1996 presidential campaign. The first order of the administration's business was to prove that Yeltsin was physically fit to be a candidate, and television was the key.

sidelined by a series of heart attacks concealed by the networks and described as merely a cold. Yeltsin came back on television only just before the final vote.

The networks' partisan collaboration did not nullify some fair-campaign rules. All candidates got free time in randomly assigned slots. Paid political advertising spots were purchased by the President's campaign and most of his competitors in the first round. Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov did live interviews on NTV, answering reporters' hostile questions, but a similar searchlight was never turned on Yeltsin's abundant campaign promises or his precarious health.

Yet it would be a mistake to ascribe too much influence to television and too little to the capacity of voters to make their own evaluations. Sweeping statements that exaggerate the persuasive power of television in this election are wrong except on a critical dimension that probably will not apply to future campaigns: Television presented visual evidence to the nation that Boris Yeltsin really was a "live" candidate and almost killed him in the process.



Russian President Boris Yeltsin dances at a rock concert after arriving in Rostov on Monday, June 10, 1996. *This AP photo by Alexander Zemlianichenko won a 1997 Pulitzer Prize.*

best journalists work at NTV; 29 percent gave OKT as an answer, and only 12 percent said RTR.¹

Television allowed viewers to see what Soviet rulers long had feared and prohibited. Viewers learned that their own dissenting opinions were also held by many others, some in prominent positions. During the war in Chechnya, viewers saw some military officers con-

For many months, he had been an absent or remote figure, cordoned off by officials, and obviously out of touch. Suddenly he was portrayed as the model of a vigorous incumbent, dominating the news with a new initiative every day. The newly energized President led an impressive campaign, and it took its toll. In the two weeks after the first round of the election, Yeltsin was

Owners' Agendas

In anticipation of the 1999-2000 election season, television outlets are increasing in value to candidates and their backers. If they do not control their own properties, they often look for alliances with managements of commercial or state-run stations.

At the national level, the politically ambitious Mayor of Moscow, Yuri Luzhkov, converted the city's television station into a new channel, TV-Center (the city also has a piece of the Moscow radio station and a newspaper group), and has made some alliances with politically compatible regional stations. He also put on TV-Center's board some of the strategists from the '96 Yeltsin campaign, including the

¹ These findings are drawn from a national survey of urban (including very small communities) Russians. I directed the survey, together with the Public Opinion Foundation, under the direction of Alexander Oslon and Elena Petrenko. It was fielded from June 1-10, 1998.

When [Russian viewers] encounter bias in news reporting, they usually watch to the end. But their trust has curdled.

murky figure of Sergei Lisovsky, rock entrepreneur, ad agency director, and suspect in gross (as opposed to ordinary) financial misconduct.

Even though Luzhkov and other media barons can and do use their properties to push their agendas, their programs now have to compete for viewers. Similarly, local officials who are moving to control programming on regional state-owned stations face competition from movies, soap operas and a range of entertainment choices on other channels. Not only do viewers have a choice, but they have also become hardened to the spin doctors' blandishments.

Different owners seek to influence the news to different degrees. It is too early to tell if, in the end, the seamless collusion of 1996 will be repeated in upcoming elections or if the current war between Gusinsky and Berezovsky will escalate. This latter scenario is a distinct possibility if Berezovsky follows through on his stated intention of running for parliament and he and the Yeltsin government maintain their fierce hostility to a possible Luzhkov presidential candidacy.

On the national news networks, owners' bias is seen most openly on weekend "news analysis" shows, featuring opinion and commentary and hosted by each station's most popular anchor. One striking example of this can be observed in the results of our content analysis of network bias (defined by either skewed selection of materials or opinionated newswriting) in coverage of then-presidential contender Gen. Alexander Lebed's 1998 run for Krasnoyarsk governor. Berezovsky's Channel One supported Lebed. The Russian government's RTR opposed him. This content analysis found bias on 100 percent of the week-

end shows on those two channels.

Daily news programs, on the other hand, tend to be less personalized, cover a far greater range of subjects, and provide a much larger universe of news stories. In the content analysis study, bias was found in daily news programs much less frequently on Channel One than on Channel Two. (On Channel One bias was determined to exist in roughly one-fifth of that station's news coverage, whereas on Channel Two, it was found in almost two-thirds of the stories.) NTV's campaign coverage did not display apparent bias on either daily news or weekend news analysis programs.

The weight of election coverage and the economic crunch are falling hard on television. In their straitened circumstances, and with little fear of getting caught, many television stations and correspondents are increasingly willing to "sell" the news. This means that they will deform news into infomercials for corporate or political interests. Some stations are more tolerant of the practice than others, but the likelihood of success of such attempts to "buy" the public outright has to be considered in the context of the way Russians watch the news.

Viewers' Strategies

It's one thing to point out instances of owners' manipulation of news and public affairs programs. It's quite another to assume the bias works as intended. As I learned from work with focus groups in Russia, viewers exhibit an extraordinary degree of skeptical engagement with news messages. This comes as something of a surprise, given the dismissive or even contemptuous view of the public heard from some

Russian television officials, journalists and politicians.

But we should not really be surprised. During decades of Soviet rule, outsiders remarked on how ingeniously ordinary people could wring from the sparse news a trove of information. People needed information to survive. The news was scanned for hints of planned official actions, looming threats, or widening corridors of the permissible. Viewers dissected each frame to see what unintended cues might have crept in. For example, visuals of a moribund Soviet leader could contradict the words he uttered, and footage of foreign locales could inadvertently display a reality Soviet doctrine sought to conceal. Watching the news became like putting a puzzle together, and viewers worked hard to fill in the missing pieces. These habits survive.

Russian viewers are thus well equipped to spot bias, and they don't need a college education to do so. Because the national news networks stagger some of their news programs, viewers dissatisfied with one channel may not find another newscast at the same time. But this means they are able to watch different news programs and compare them. Especially during times of crisis, that is exactly what they do. Russians devote a lot of time and passionate conversation to comparing differing treatments of events. They talk about how television coverage stacks up against the reality they experience on the street and they check out coverage of other Russian regions by talking to friends and relatives. When they encounter bias in news reporting, they usually watch to the end. But their trust has curdled. Two focus group members explain:

- Evgeny: "I do not switch, if there's a theme that interests me.... I'm interested in *how* they do it.... Do they lie well or skillfully; will they lie dazzlingly; will they lie disgustingly, vilely?"
- Katya: "Even if you don't like something, you have to know your en-

emies; that is, you have to know how the other side is presented. That's why it pays to see it and stay abreast of things."

These viewers are angry, but they don't switch channels and ratings are not affected. This disconnection adds to the misperceptions that Russian elites hold about ordinary citizens. These elites apparently do not understand that the public brings to its consumption of news and public affairs programs the willingness and ingrained habit to engage actively with the news.

They may not change the channel and therefore the ratings. Nonetheless, behind this passive strategy is a very active challenge to the news.

Television cannot remake Russia; it cannot eliminate the profound cleavages, solve the unanswered constitutional questions, or alleviate the economic hardships. However, it can and does alter in substantial ways the information environment of ordinary people and elites alike by affording them a genuine, if limited, choice in news coverage. Even in its much-weakened condition, the narrow and imperfect tele-

vision market has been the main prop of news diversity. Keeping such choices alive is the most important public service Russian television can perform. ■

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Russian Regional Media

The nation's financial crisis threatens journalists' independence.

By Virginie Coulloudon

Seeking survival in a fractured economy, many regional newspapers in Russia tried to establish relationships with local businesses and regional banks. They did this in an attempt to avoid succumbing to the dictates of local authorities and powerful industrial groups.

This might have seemed a prudent strategy before the nation's financial crisis in August of 1998. But what happened next worsened their plight. Banks now faced enormous difficulties, including collapse. And in the midst of this economic chaos, political leaders—many of them provincial governors—who favored the return to an oligarchy were able to strengthen their executive power both in terms of governance as well as in the oversight of businesses in their region, including newspapers.

Today, with poor distribution of the national press in Russian provinces, regional newspaper journalists will assume a major role in the coverage of legislative and presidential elections

scheduled for December of this year and June of 2000, respectively. One thing is certain: The local political leadership will try to assert greater control over the press in an attempt to secure their governing positions. For journalists who work at these regional papers, how they perform under this pressure and during these elections will provide a test of whether local journalism in Russia will be able to perform as an independent press. Should they follow too closely the propaganda of the local authorities, they will be perceived as "full members" of the political elite rather than be seen as representatives of a civil society. And by doing so, they will run the risk of losing the confidence of their readers.

Political Pressures on Journalists

Already there are numerous examples of political pressure being exerted on local journalists. Provoca-

tions—and even murders—are no longer uncommon in the provinces where local leaders act in authoritarian ways. The Moscow-based Foundation for the Defense of Glasnost regularly publishes reports about attacks on Russian local journalists and tracks in systematic ways the human rights issues that arise.

In the northern Caucasus autonomous republic of Kalmykia, the Editor-in-Chief of *Sovetskaya Kalmykia Segodnya* (Soviet Kalmykia Today), a newspaper opposed to local President Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, was killed in June 1998. The murder of this journalist, Larisa Yudina, who was considered close to the Yabloko democratic party that is represented in the Russian parliament, was immediately perceived as being politically motivated. A year later, it has become clear that the only motive for the murder was Yudina's investigative reporting concerning illegal uses of the government's budget in Kalmykia. For a brief time, the President was suspected of ordering the

murder and two of his closest advisors have been arrested by the federal police.

During the 1998 election campaign, another incident involving one of the members of the regional press took place in the autonomous republic of Bashkortostan, located in the southern Urals. All of the regional media except one sided with incumbent President Murtaza Rakhimov: The Ufa-based Titan radio station kept its doors open to Rakhimov's rivals. By doing so the radio's Director, Altaf Galeev, exposed the ways in which independent candidates had been denied registration by the regional electoral commission. Galeev's station also elaborated on how the Moscow press was covering the political situation in Bashkortostan.

A month before the first round of voting was to take place, the local authorities started to exert increasing pressures on Titan. They sent the tax police both to the radio station and to the businessmen from whom the station was receiving funds, and they spread the false rumor that the radio facilities would be burned down. Galeev reacted by urging his listeners to demonstrate in front of the radio station. That was precisely the response that the local authorities expected. When the police then tried to scatter the protesters and storm the building, Galeev fired several shots into the air to attract the attention of the crowd. However, by doing this he provided the authorities with the pretext to arrest him.

Galeev was accused of calling for violence and is now facing a prison term of up to seven years. In November 1998, the radio station was closed down. Galeev's lawyers claim that if this incident had occurred in any other Russian region or autonomous republic, their client would have been forced only to pay a fine.

The Federal Role

The regional authorities' ability to rule in such authoritarian ways comes, in part, from regulations passed by the federal government. The Federation Council, the upper chamber of the Russian parliament that is comprised of local governors and heads of the regional legislatures, voted to set up a so-called "Morality Council." This "Morality Council" consists of 12 senators whose assignment it is to monitor journalists' "ethics." But of even greater

One thing is certain: The local political leadership will try to assert greater control over the press in an attempt to secure their governing positions.

importance is an order Russian President Boris Yeltsin issued last July, establishing the Ministry of the Affairs of the Press, TV and Radio Broadcasting, and the Mass Media. This, as Russia's Prime Minister has put it, should contribute to the "elaboration and realization of the state policy in all media services." In a period of electoral campaigns (at the federal as well as the local level), this new body not only can be used as a political tool for personal interests of the candidates chosen by the Kremlin. But, more importantly, it serves as a bad example for local authorities, who are eager to manipulate the press in their region.

At the regional level, this tendency began last year, in May 1998, when Yeltsin mandated that the All-Russian State Television and Radio Company (RGTRK) should be transformed into a holding company in order to develop a coherent information policy on the national level. Coming as this does at the start of the 1999 and 2000 election cycle, Yeltsin's order essentially creates an information network whose obligation it will be to support the state's policy and ideology.

This change will be significant. Since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991,

RGTRK regional branches had stopped abiding by the orders issued by the government, even though they still accepted federal subsidies while at the same time make additional profits by selling broadcast times to local businessmen. During the intervening years, some journalists at these regional outposts became progressively more independent from the central and local authorities, sometimes harshly criticizing and openly opposing the regional governors. Now the state is attempting to regain control over what it regards

as its "property," and it is being assisted in this effort by regional executives.

The recent dictate states that the heads of RGTRK regional branches should be ap-

pointed only after consultation with the governors. This sets up an obvious dilemma for local television companies: Either they abide by decisions to change their leadership, thereby jeopardizing their political and (quasi) financial independence or they oppose these changes, thereby forfeiting their subsidies from Moscow.

The appointments of the new heads of RGTRK local branches—with the backing of the governors—have already led to a series of scandals in various regions. As a rule, the regional bosses have used this opportunity to regain ideological control over the local media. By doing so they hope to both secure a renewed mandate for governing in the forthcoming regional elections and maintain good relationships with the federal political leaders who are most likely to run for president in the year 2000.

One example of this approach occurred in Krasnoyarsk. In return for authorizing the national network to regain control over Tsentr Rossii (Russia's Center), the local RGTRK branch in Krasnoyarsk, Governor Alexander Lebed was promised access to broadcasting time and the removal of the Director of the station, Konstantin

Protopopov, whom he disliked.

A similar situation happened in the Far Eastern Maritime Territory (Primorye). RGTRK chairman Mikhail Shvydkoi sacked Boris Maksimenko, the General Director of the station's Vladivostok branch, and replaced him with Valeri Bakshin. Maksimenko protested the move, claiming that his successor would serve the interests of local Governor Yevgeni Nazdratenko. Shvydkoi eventually decided to appoint Maksimenko Chairman of the station, while Bakshin would remain in the job of General Director.

Not surprisingly, this happened on the eve of the December 1999 gubernatorial local election while Nazdratenko was trying to strengthen his grip over the local media. Although the re-

gion is one of the poorest of the Russian Federation, Nazdratenko has been asking the local parliament to provide greater subsidies to local newspapers and TV channels. His tactics are reminiscent of those applied under many authoritarian regimes. The regional authorities produce numerous free leaflets filled with weather forecasts and other politics-free information, mail them directly to the residents, and subsidize the entire information channels, thus diluting the effectiveness of the opposition's message.

Financing Regional Newspapers

Unfortunately, the local Russian media appear to be trapped in this new circumstance. Alternative funding is extremely difficult to find and, for the regional media, the 1998 crisis has dashed all hopes of financing their own enterprises through advertising. As a survey by the Russian National Press Institute found, many advertising contracts that had already been agreed to in the fall of 1998 were cancelled after the financial crisis. In the

immediate aftermath of the crash, advertising was reduced by 30 to 50 percent.

But the crisis also produced an unexpected consequence for the media. The newspapers found themselves forced to adapt to the new economic environment. And this often meant playing by the rules of the marketplace. Those that owned their own presses could delay an increase in price while continuing to print from old stocks of plates, films and ink. These

The financial crisis brought about another difficulty for regional newspapers: No longer could they afford the cost involved with maintaining access to information.

newspapers appear to have been able to secure several contracts that their competitors could not.

Another example reported by the Russian National Press Institute is also very instructive. The Stavropolskie Gubernskie Vedomosti (Stavropol Regional News) newspaper owns a barter retail store. Since 1995, this southern Russian publication has accepted bartered goods in return for advertising space. Then these goods are resold in its store. This business tactic offers an invaluable service in an economy where cash is scarce. During the banking crisis of 1998, the Stavropolskie Gubernskie Vedomosti was able to offer advertising space to the enterprises that were suffering from sudden money shortages and thus increased their own volume.

The financial crisis brought about another difficulty for regional newspapers: No longer could they afford the cost involved with maintaining access to information. Most of them were forced to cancel their connection to the Internet and Russian and international news services. They are now facing the risk of remaining uninformed about what is going on outside their

region.

Not surprisingly, some of the newspaper owners advocate the creation of a nationwide lobby group in order to obtain tax exemptions from the federal government so they can increase their ability to circulate information among local media and resist political pressure from the regional governors. This may seem like a utopian perspective given the worsening economic situation, the end of small-scale industrial production, and the increasing dependency on political patronage. But if the 1998 crisis strengthened the regional oligarchies that developed around the governors, the local newspapers, and the regional industrial giants, then this assertive reaction on the part of the local media seems to be threatening their strong-

hold for the first time since the collapse of the Soviet regime. Behind the political scene and its endless struggles for power, Russia's local media have launched a new struggle for independence. Should they continue to develop horizontal links among themselves and transform their association into an influential lobby group, they would challenge the arbitrariness of the state and eventually contribute to the building of a civil society.■

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In China, a New and Profitable Journalism Emerges

With profit comes change and questions about future direction.

By Webster K. Nolan

Remarkable changes are taking place in the news media in China, but they are not getting much attention elsewhere in the world. Journalists in China grow up in a culture that expects the news media to serve the interests of the government. Traditionally, they have seen their job in terms not only of reflecting government policy—they would call this “educating the public”—but also helping maintain social stability and promoting economic growth.

Whether or not in their private thoughts they are concerned about the arrests of political dissidents, many journalists have lived through the horrors of the Cultural Revolution, or they have heard their parents talk about the misery it brought. They do not want to see their country go through that kind of turmoil again. In other words, their concerns about the need to maintain stability are real and ingrained.

What does this mean to Chinese journalists? For them, getting to the scene of a flood or a plane crash as fast as possible is not as important as reporting what is being done by the government to battle the flood or improve the safety of air travel. Journalists in China are not trained to seek out the dramatic, controversial, suspect or contradictory elements in a story.

But this tradition is slipping away. Listen carefully to a growing number of journalists in China and you’ll hear a recurrent theme, expressed cautiously and variously, but the thrust is pretty much the same: “We want to be good journalists. We don’t want to overthrow the government or start a revolution. We just want to report the news.”

Where do they get these new ideas? Well, a lot of them have traveled and studied in the United States, the United

Kingdom, and elsewhere in the West. Others frequently read American, British and other newspapers and magazines, or they spend time on the Internet. Over the years a considerable number of Western journalists have also gone to China to train writers, reporters and producers. All of these activities have produced some lasting friendships between American and Chinese journalists. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, many of the top Chinese journalists are eager to send their staff to the West for training, and this certainly implies some kind of endorsement, perhaps even admiration, of the Western approach to news.

But admiration is certainly not uni-

wire service.) What’s interesting about this is that their complaint is not so much political as professional, that is to say, they think they can do a better job, get better quotes and details and pictures, than Xinhua.

A Marketplace Press Emerges

But for all their desire to “just be good reporters,” it’s unlikely that journalists in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) could pull it off on their own. The really fascinating aspect about the news media in China is that the strongest impetus for what we might call a “marketplace press” is coming not from

‘We want to be good journalists. We don’t want to overthrow the government or start a revolution. We just want to report the news.’

versal. Like many Americans, many Chinese are troubled about certain aspects of American news reporting, particularly sensationalism, invasion of privacy, ambush journalism and so on. It’s equally important to note that the Chinese see what has happened to the news media in Russia, and they want to avoid the blatant partisanship and tabloid mentality that plagues so much of journalism in that country.

In China, some journalists, particularly in the south and the coastal areas, chafe at restrictions imposed by Beijing, especially the requirement that they must wait for the Xinhua News Agency version of certain kinds of stories, even breaking stories like the devastating floods last winter in southern China. (Xinhua is the government-operated

the newsrooms but from the business side, from the publishers, and from advertising departments. And it’s not that publishers and the advertising sales forces are burning with a desire for a Chinese version of the First Amendment. It’s simply that they want to make a profit and, to do that, they need advertising; and to get more advertising, they need bigger circulation and audience numbers.

In fact, you might say that advertising is the driving force for change in the news media in China and, in my opinion, it’s unstoppable. It’s one thing for the government to throw a few rebellious journalists into prison, but it is quite another challenge—in many ways, a more difficult one—to deal with the huge and increasing numbers

of very aggressive ad salespeople throughout the country. As one might expect, advertising is creating media competition, particularly in the print press. Consumers are becoming more selective about the publications they read and this, in turn, compels editors and publishers to pay a lot more attention to the demands of the market.

Comparing Chinese and American Journalism

One way to assess the changes taking place in the news media in China is to make a few comparisons with the current state of American journalism. (Of course, not everything about change in China coincides with the American experience.)

- **Mergers and Acquisitions:** In the United States we hear and see a lot of commentary about how large corporations such as Disney, General Electric, Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, Gannett, Knight Ridder and others dominate the news media. Something similar is happening in China but on a much smaller scale. Government-owned and party-owned news organizations are absorbing smaller papers and starting new ones. They're forming what they call "groups," organizations that publish morning and afternoon newspapers as well as specialty publications. They're also going into revenue-producing businesses that have little or nothing to do with journalism. Xinhua recently opened a "mega-bookstore" in Shanghai offering 150,000 titles and two coffee bars. The Guangzhou Daily, which operates citywide kiosks at which newspapers, candy bars and sundries are sold, is planning to establish a chain of convenience stores.
- **Tabloid Journalism:** They've got it in China, too. But, of course, they are not as sensational or sexy as we are. Yet. This is a recognition by the powers that be that the public is not very interested in the dull, gray,

party-line journalism of the past. Readers want more information about fashion, about celebrities, about music and movies, sports and so on. They are also eager to know about the latest corruption scandals. So afternoon tabloids are starting up and flourishing. You can buy them on street corners, which may sound unremarkable to us, but it's only in the past few years that readers themselves actually paid for newspapers in China. The custom was for the work unit or the party cell to make the purchases. That still goes on, but less and less.

- **Marketplace for News:** The new phenomenon of readers buying newspapers shows how market forces are working to change journalism in China. The readers want value for their money. Hence competition. The odd thing, of course, is that it's Communist party or government organizations that are creating these new, flashier publications.
- **Censorship:** Another comparison between the United States and China would be in the area of censorship. We, of course, have the First Amendment to protect the public's right to know. In China, the party and the government, central and local, still exercise strong control over the news media, make no mistake about that. In day-to-day practical terms, for journalists it is more a question of guessing how far one can go. Journalists in China sometimes joke about this: They ask each other, for example, what the party line is today on Japan, deforestation, bank policy and so on. And, of course, journalists are also careful about coverage of unrest among the jobless and demonstrations by political or, more recently, religious dissidents. Few writers want to be

seen as instigators of political movements or mob violence. So there's a strong element of self-censorship in the Chinese news media. In our own country we have some of that, too. Of course, the consequences for going over the line might not be as severe. But I think many of us have either experienced the displeasure of a publisher for offending an advertiser or a prominent member of the community or have known colleagues who have paid a high price for challenging a sacred cow.

- **Civic Journalism:** Another rather curious comparison is so-called civic journalism. It is a question in my own mind whether there is a growing tendency in our own news media toward adopting the sense of civic responsibility as practiced by the Chinese press. That may seem a far-fetched notion here. Still, when you hear American editors talking at conferences about going beyond traditional news coverage to help set a community's agenda, you wonder whether they're moving into the realm of what the PRC media call "ensuring the rectitude of public opinion."
- **Journalism's Watchdog Role:** Finally, to me, one of the most interesting comparisons between our media and the Chinese media is what some call the watchdog role. Most Americans expect journalists

...there's a strong element of self-censorship in the Chinese news media.

in our country to keep a sharp eye on politicians, business, labor and government. Americans are accustomed to

criticism of the establishment, to investigative reporting, and to press exposés about corruption. Is this kind of press reporting possible in China? It may come as a surprise that one of the most popular national television programs in that coun-

try—broadcast on China Central Television, the nationwide government-owned-and-operated network—is a nightly feature called “Focus” that pretty much follows the format of the CBS newsmagazine “60 Minutes.” To be sure, “Focus” is not as doggedly aggressive, clever and irreverent as “60 Minutes,” and it doesn’t use the slick production techniques we see on “Dateline,” “20/20” or “60 Minutes.” But its reports on smuggling, environmental problems, kickbacks to government bureaucrats, police brutality and other skullduggery draw an estimated audience of 300 million, a figure that would make an American network executive drool. What’s more, Premier Zhu Rongji has encouraged government officials to watch the program, a powerful endorsement that has created a multiplier effect throughout the country. The success of “Focus” has stimulated local television organizations to create similar programs. It has also inspired once-unthinkable threats against powerful bureaucrats. “I’m going to tell ‘Focus’ about you” is becoming a public tradition. Sometimes, I’m told, you can see a long line of angry citizens outside the “Focus” office in Beijing, waiting to lodge their complaints. Watchdog journalism in the Chinese media is still sporadic. The nationally distributed Southern Weekend has acquired a reputation for pursuing what in China might be considered unorthodox stories, such as coverage of the high number of suicides among women in rural areas. A senior editor at that newspaper worries that the traditional Communist Party practice of putting the positive spin on news can give rise to a public optimism that might not be warranted and raise hopes that might be unrealistic. In Tianjin, the editors of The Evening News newspaper identify specific problems of

public concern, then ask appropriate government officials to come to their office and explain how they are dealing with the problem.

The Next Stages

Earlier this year, Strategy and Management, a journal that is widely read by thousands of officials and scholars, carried a long, detailed article about social and economic problems related to the construction of Three Gorges Dam, a project started and strongly supported by the still very powerful

The media still pretty much reflect the government view...certainly no newspaper is going to attack the PRC hierarchy, at least not under current circumstances.

former Premier Li Peng. In Chongqing in January, the local media were providing banner headlines about a major corruption story that involved the collapse of a pedestrian bridge that killed some 40 people. Shoddy construction and payoffs to bureaucrats were involved, and the media were unrestrained in their reporting on this tragic scandal.

None of these observations should be taken to mean that freedom of information, as Americans understand it, is flourishing in China. The media still pretty much reflect the government view. There is still a ban on satellite dishes. Outsiders are not allowed to own and publish independent newspapers, much less start television or radio operations. And certainly no newspaper is going to attack the PRC hierarchy, at least not under current circumstances.

Still, significant changes are taking place. The government has cut Internet access rates in half and is offering free installation of a second phone line in residences. Why? The Ministry of Information Industry said the changes were made because “of increasing com-

plaints from consumers.”

As for access to the World Wide Web, the government operates the country’s Internet Service Provider systems and filters out selected material, though on a somewhat puzzling basis. For example, it’s difficult to get the on-line editions of The New York Times and The Washington Post through the official ISP’s but easy to call up the Los Angeles Times or the Chicago Tribune. Most British newspapers, including the Financial Times, are accessible. In any case, a group of American journalists who recently visited China was told by American technical experts in Beijing that anyone with basic knowledge about the Internet can get access to news from the outside without much trouble. And according to an editor at one of Shanghai’s largest newspapers,

by using a government operated Internet service provider called Shanghai Online he can access “any on-line newspaper in the world.”

As any number of editors, producers and writers in China will privately acknowledge, their country has a long way to go in the transition toward what they call “marketplace journalism.” But the media barons in the PRC persist in their drive for profits, which they know depend on attracting big advertising numbers and big circulation numbers, in much the same way that their Western counterparts have built press empires. Meanwhile, access to the diversity of information on the Internet is growing rapidly. These two powerful forces, a market driven media inside China and the increase in news coming from the rest of the world, may falter at times, but in the end they seem unstoppable. ■

Webster K. Nolan is former Director of the East-West Center Media Program in Honolulu, Hawaii, and has traveled frequently in China.

Spanish Journalists Adore the Euro

Wonder why? The roots of this love affair go back a century.

By Dale Fuchs

From the starry eyes and excited tones of these Spanish journalists, you know they are talking about much more than a new coin:

"It symbolizes democracy and modernity," gushes a business writer with Colpisa, Spain's national news agency.

"It anchors Spain to Europe," chimes another journalist.

"It means we've caught the train of history," declares Mariano Guindel, a business editor and columnist at La Vanguardia, one of Spain's leading newspapers. "We have the opportunity to end the century in the rich folks' club, to belong to the group in charge."

The object of their praise is the euro, the new single European currency, which went into effect on January 1 for stock trades, bank loans, credit card transactions, and all other non-cash currency exchanges in 11 countries.¹ Euro notes won't begin to circulate until 2002.

This fledgling currency isn't accustomed to such royal journalistic treatment. Over the years, the prospect of monetary union has sparked considerable controversy in the western European press, from "Say No" campaigns in England to periodic bouts in Germany of Deutschmark-separation anxiety. But in Spain, there has been no public debate, no threats of a referendum, not even a squabble for influence in the newly created European Central Bank. A combination of factors—including unanimous support by conservative and socialist parties—have pushed the issue of monetary union far

from the sphere of cost-benefit analysis and into the fuzzier realm of status symbol and national pride.

While the media in other countries have grappled with issues such as the loss of national sovereignty—for example, political leaders in "Euroland" can no longer devalue their currencies or play with interest rates to quick-fix national economies—members of the Spanish press have breathlessly told a pretty tale. Spain, the poor underdog, triumphs against the odds to fix its economy and, in the end, gets to join the euro club. The cost of that economic makeover, involving rapid privatization of almost every industry, doesn't fit into this version of the story.

...philosopher Ortega y Gasset, foreshadowing today's 'euro-phoria,' is known to have declared: 'Spain is the problem, Europe is the solution.'

"Spain comes out in front," boasts the headline of an article published January 1 by the national newspaper chain El Correo. "Against wind and tide, the euro zone sets sail, and for the first time, Spain is among the 11 countries that begin this unprecedented adventure."

Why is the euro so important to Spain, or at least to its media and the rest of its intellectual elite? The main reason, any journalist, academic or even the local bartender will tell you, is that Spain has an inferiority complex. This is a century-long inferiority complex that goes back to 1898, when Spain lost

its last colonies and gained a national identity crisis (along with its better-known generation of great writers). The handwringing got so bad that philosopher Ortega y Gasset, foreshadowing today's "euro-phoria," is known to have declared: "Spain is the problem, Europe is the solution."

And Spain did have problems, the most memorable of which, it seems, was its bad image. In the words of veteran journalist Jose Antonio Martínez Solar: "Spain was seen by the rest of Europe as a Third World country filled with a bunch of poor superstitious farmers, not even real Christians, who spent all day playing the guitar." Northern sophisticates dismissed their

southern neighbors with five words: "Africa starts in the Pyrenees." The phrase, Martínez says, still stings.

It is no surprise, then, that *Diario 16*, the magazine Martínez founded and the first

independent journalistic attempt of the post-Franco era, debuted with a cartoon of King Juan Carlos saying "Europe, yes!" If anything could aggravate an already low national self-esteem, it was 40 years of dictatorship under Franco. Here was the rest of the continent, rebuilding its economy and enjoying its liberty after World War II, and what was Spain doing? It was strapped to a dictator, getting religion and conservatism forced down its throat, and wallowing in the same poverty it had suffered since the Spanish Civil War. "Isolated" and "abandoned by the rest of Europe" are the phrases many use to

¹Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Holland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal and Spain.

describe the feeling during that period.

Like the baby boomers in America, the movers and shakers in today's Spain belong to the generation that remembers when you had to travel to France to buy censored books. They looked north for models to write their constitution, design their newspapers, and ignite their economy. For this generation, Europe symbolized what Spain did not have under Franco: freedom of expression, prosperity, democracy and socialism. And now the euro, the latest badge of an idealized Europe, symbolizes all this as well.

But in regions such as the Basque Country and Catalunya, the euro has extra meaning: independence from Spain. What we now know as Spain, you see, is really a conglomeration of several "countries," held together by 500 years of centralized, Castilian control. Over the centuries, Spain's centralized government would often repress the regional cultures, prohibiting the speaking of local languages.

Now, enjoying the freedom of Spain's young democracy, these so-called "nationalist" regions take great pains to assert their non-Spanish identity, even struggling to break away altogether from the state, in the case of the Basque Country. The peseta, here, is just one more reminder of Spanish domination. The euro, on the other hand, is unblemished and a sign that these regional economies are tied not to Spain, but to the protective umbrella of Europe.

And so, from Barcelona to La Coruña

to Seville, Spanish newspapers churn out bank- and government-financed special supplements celebrating the euro, the more pages the better. They print colorful inserts on special themes, such as "how to get your business ready for the euro." They design cute graph-

lines, such as "The euro: panacea for the euro-jobless," and "The euro breaks the dollar's world hegemony." In these articles, nobody loses a job; businesses just become "more competitive."

For every dozen or so such articles, one appears with a critical voice, quoting one of Spain's few so-called "euro-skeptics." This is a derogatory term, and ordinary journalists do not want it applied to them. Even though perfectly solid democracies like England and Sweden have rejected the euro for the time being, in Spain such a position is unacceptable. To show skepticism in Spain is therefore regarded as "undemocratic."

"Coming out with an article highly critical of the euro is like, in the United States, coming out in favor of socialized health care and high taxes," says the business writer Ramón Muñoz of the national daily *El Mundo*. "If you say something, your colleagues dismiss you with a condescending smile, like you're weird. No one wants to go against the current."

Don't ask what happens if the economic current shifts, the economy takes a dive, and the euro has to swim upstream. The usual answer: "Only an American would think of such a question." ■

*Dale Fuchs went to Spain in September on a Fulbright Fellowship for journalists to study how the Spanish press covers the euro, and she is now writing features for a Spanish daily, *El Mundo*. In the United States, she covered politics and education and wrote features for a Florida daily, *The Palm Beach Post*.*



This headline reminds Spaniards there are only 30 days until the euro arrives and offers them "everything you have to know," including an emergency guide.

ics showing the price of a meal at McDonald's (3.56 euros) and the cost of a color TV (966 euros). They add agony columns to business sections so that banking experts can assuage the fears of ordinary readers who ask down-homey questions like, "Will the euro make prices rise?" And they give the best play to articles with feel-good head-

lines, such as "The euro: panacea for the euro-jobless," and "The euro breaks the dollar's world hegemony." In these articles, nobody loses a job; businesses just become "more competitive."

“Today it is difficult to pick up a sports section or watch a sporting event on TV without finding some athlete’s privacy being invaded.” This observation rests at the center of **Tom Witosky’s** article that takes a close look at ways in which sportswriters make decisions about what aspects of an athlete’s life merit publication. Witosky, sports projects reporter for The Des Moines Register, sets forth questions that reporters should consider when probing into personal aspects of a sports figure’s life. Witosky’s article leads off a package of stories about sports reporting.

Michael Crowley, a reporter at The Boston Globe, complicates this issue of how journalists mesh what athletes do in their sport with what they do in their personal lives. Crowley dissects coverage of basketball great Michael Jordan and discovers that being a “sports hero” acts as a shield, protecting him against reporting that might show unflattering aspects of life off the court.

In an introductory essay **David Halberstam** wrote for “The Best American Sports Writing of the Century,” he reacquaints us with Gay Talese’s extraordinary portrait of Joe DiMaggio, who was the most celebrated athlete of his time but also a private man about whom little was known. He describes how Talese approached his task of reporting about this “icon of icons.”

Stan Grossfeld, a photographer at The Boston Globe, shares photos of a different sort of icon, Fenway Park, home of the Boston Red Sox. And **Claire Smith**, a sports columnist for The Philadelphia Inquirer, updates the situation for women sports reporters and finds that issues such as locker room access have been replaced by concerns about balancing work and family.

Melissa Ludtke, a former Time correspondent, meshes personal and professional perspectives to raise questions about “news” coverage of John F. Kennedy, Jr.’s plane crash.

Bernice Buresh, a former Newsweek correspondent, points to the continuing absence of nurses’ voices, experiences and research in the coverage of health care, and describes the consequences of such inattention by journalists. **Jean Chaisson**, a nurse, raises some of the vital questions which reporters should be asking nurses about patient care.

Edward M. Fouhy, a former top TV executive and now Editor of stateline.org, tells us what it’s been like for a long-time journalist to hook up with a much younger generation of “techie” to create a useful Web site for journalists covering state issues.

Kevin Noblet, Deputy International Editor at the Associated Press, reminds us that in this era of “new media,” not a lot has changed in the way news agency reporters do their jobs. The technology might be changing, but how the job gets done isn’t so different from years ago. ■

In Sports Reporting, When Does the Personal Become News?

Boundaries seem much harder to find and a lot easier to cross.

By Tom Witosky

I will never forget that morning back in April 1992 when the old master looked at me like I was nuts. Bill Kovach was telling me that USA Today had no business pushing the late Arthur Ashe into disclosing that he was dying from AIDS.

That's right. Kovach, the Curator of the Nieman Foundation and one of strongest defenders of hard-hitting, deep-digging reporting, told me that USA Today had gone too far. Funny, isn't it? I guess all of us have our limits. To this day, it doesn't take much to get me feeling teary-eyed when thinking about Ashe. This man was an icon of what is good about sports at a time when money has trumped integrity and success has become more important than excellence.

Born black and poor, Ashe fought his way over every kind of adversity to become one of the world's most recognized tennis players and a diplomat of the world. Then he became HIV positive—a result of a blood transfusion

including then-President George Bush, into looking at the disease as something other than the "gay plague."

It is worth asking whether any of this would have happened had USA Today not pushed Ashe into a situation in which he publicly disclosed his illness.

Like other arenas of journalistic coverage (most notably politics), issues involving privacy have been a part of sports reporting for several decades. One of the most significant legal cases in the history of American journalism involved football coach Wally Butts, then the head coach at the University of Georgia. The U.S. Supreme Court held that The Saturday Evening Post libeled Butts when it accused him of throwing a football game.

The Post's story had been based on someone thinking that he'd overheard Butts discuss this at a pay telephone. Butts didn't do it, but still the Post didn't have to pay Butts a dime. Butts was determined to be a public figure, according to the Court. Football

tor at USA Today when the Ashe story broke, feels strongly that there are boundaries, but defining just where these boundaries are can be difficult. Policinski would set the boundary line as being at a point that is as far as reporters can go in obtaining "a good story with legitimate news value."

"Arthur Ashe was a public figure who was sick and was going to die," said Policinski, who is now with the Freedom Forum. "The fact that it was from AIDS really didn't enter into the news judgment. We would have gone after it if it had been cancer."

Today it is difficult to pick up a sports section or watch a sporting event on TV without finding some athlete's privacy being invaded. During this year's Wimbledon tennis coverage, the story a lot of viewers will remember was not one that took place on the court, but rather the "news" being reported about Alexandra Stevenson's father. Turns out that she had been raised by her mother, former Philadelphia sportswriter Samantha Stevenson. But it was not until she reached the semifinals of Wimbledon that the media revealed that her father was former basketball star Julius Erving.

Here's how it happened. The Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel found a birth certificate that listed Erving as her father. Eventually, he confirmed he was her father, had provided financial support to her and her mother, and met his daughter just one time. Not so long ago these kinds of stories were grist for the tabloid mill, but nowadays they quickly surface in the mainstream press. When this "news" became public, Stevenson's mother angrily denounced

Today it is difficult to pick up a sports section or watch a sporting event on TV without finding some athlete's privacy being invaded.

during surgery in 1983. He died on February 6, 1993, from complications that resulted from AIDS. It is ironic that Ashe's greatest legacy might be the dignity he displayed as he was dying from AIDS and his ability to convince many who were reluctant to regard this disease as a public health issue to view it as such. Ashe forced powerful people,

coaches, it seems, are immune to libel.

But should sports reporters probe deeper into a player's or coach's life away from the athletic arena? Are there acknowledged limits to coverage of the personal lives of sports figures at a time when President Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinsky was front-page news? Gene Policinski, who was Sports Edi-

the disclosure as "an unethical piece of journalism" and declared that "it should not have happened."

Stevenson's reaction appears a bit incredulous given her own forays into breaking similar stories. Only one month earlier she had broken a story in *The New York Times* about Damir Dokic, the father of top tennis player Jelena Dokic. Stevenson reported that he had been arrested for drunk and disorderly behavior at a tennis tournament in Birmingham, England.

Did the Stevenson coverage represent "a good story with legitimate news value" or does it provide another example of the sort of voyeurism that has become all too prevalent today?

Given how some tennis parents seem incapable of remaining in the background, it's an easy judgment call to suggest both stories were inside the line of legitimate news. Both Damir Dokic and Samantha Stevenson have used their children's athletic prowess to draw public notoriety to themselves. To claim a privacy right after you participate in news conferences touting your daughter's abilities or subject others to boorish public behavior is almost laughable.

Some athletes, such as NBA bad boys Dennis Rodman and Allen Iverson, invite scrutiny of their personal lives because of their behavior off the playing field. Rodman, one of the best rebounders in the game of basketball, has always willingly put himself in the public spotlight, whether it has been on the basketball court or holding a news conference dressed in a wedding gown. Similarly, Iverson, now one of the top point guards in the NBA, has never refused to shake off his "gangsta" image that began when he played collegiately at Georgetown. Admittedly, other athletes are pulled into the not-so-pleasant limelight by events that take place in their personal lives, such as an athlete who "fathers" several children out of wedlock, another who is arrested for drunken driving, or a coach who abuses his wife or girlfriend.

There are other circumstances where the question about whether coverage is deserved is not so clear. An athlete's

sexual orientation is one of those areas. *Sports Illustrated*, in one of its many stories on the world champion U.S. women's national soccer team, couldn't resist raising the question about lesbians on the team by quoting defender Kate Sobrero's wonderfully oblique retort to a male follower who asked if she was a lesbian. "No," she replied. "But my girlfriend is."

While a great quote and insightful about Sobrero's poise and grace, the question about her sexual orientation seemed gratuitous.

Another is private behavior that never becomes part of the public record. Julius Erving didn't deserve having his relationship with Samantha Stevenson disclosed because he fulfilled his responsibilities to support his daughter. Unfortunately for him, Samantha Stevenson made herself part of her daughter's story. Her willingness to throw stones while living in a glass house is what made her daughter's story fair game for other reporters to pursue.

Then there are the "rumor stories." Several years ago, Wisconsin football coach Barry Alvarez had to deal with publication on the Internet of scurrilous rumors about his personal life. These rumors resulted in a situation in which nearly every news outlet in the state set out to determine if they were true. No reporter was able to confirm them, but for weeks journalists delved into every part of the coach's private life searching for anything to substantiate the rumors.

Alvarez won't talk about this episode, but these kind of situations are becoming more and more common as Internet sports bulletin boards are becoming more infested with gossip and innuendo. There isn't a sports editor or reporter who doesn't read those bulletin boards, fearful that something vicious and personal will be posted and force them to investigate, even though the "news" has more likelihood of being a snipe hunt than it does of producing a legitimate story.

How should sports reporters and editors deal with these kinds of decisions?

What follows is a series of questions that I think would be useful to ask.

1. Would failure to report the story indicate a bias on the part of the newspaper or outlet?

For years, writers and editors seemed more interested in recounting the legends about sports figures than reporting the more complicated stories about the real people who played these games. Often they would look the other way when athletes misbehaved. Clearly that attitude has changed, even though there remains criticism from readers and listeners who don't like their "heroes" to be portrayed with their human foibles. Yet it is my firm belief that no sports reporter should place himself or herself in the position of having to explain why he or she did not write a potentially embarrassing story about an athlete if the news was judged to be relevant, important and legitimate.

Simply put, athletes, coaches, sports figures and owners who play at top competitive levels are public figures. As a result, in today's media marketplace what they do on and off the field seems likely to find its way into the stream of news. And this will probably happen whether or not the "news" has any direct bearing on how these people perform in their jobs. This circumstance is bemoaned by those who worry about what happens when more and more people's privacy seems senselessly jeopardized. But in such a highly competitive news environment, expect more, not fewer, such revelations.

2. Is this a good thing?

This question seems no longer relevant. With myriad media outlets, there are always going to be reporters and editors who believe strongly that disclosure is important either because it will enhance ratings or circulation or because it merits journalistic scrutiny. Some newspapers and electronic media aren't ever going to shy away from these kinds of stories. The rest may wait a day or two, but eventually the pressure to match what has been dis-

closed becomes too great even for those bothered by the intrusion into the privacy of a sports figure's life.

If reporters and editors shy away from their tough job of striking a balance between fair reporting and legitimate invasions of privacy, then their credibility as gatekeepers of the news will be damaged. The most important obligation we have to the public is to be an objective observer of the sports industry and its participants, rather than to act as a cheerleader for them.

3. Is the "news" about a sports figure in the public record?

Private behavior becomes public once the cops are called or a lawsuit is filed. However, reporters and editors

need to assume their responsibility for illuminating the various sides of the story instead of rushing to judgment by publishing a headline that might sell more papers but unfairly injure the athlete's reputation. Given the huge amount of money many professional athletes make, it is more than possible that they are being set up or falsely accused.

4. Is the behavior or incident of such significant importance that it provides an indication of the person's judgment and character?

NBA star Charles Barkley has insisted for many years that he is not a role model for any youngsters except his own children. The problem is that

Barkley's insistence doesn't alter the fact that top athletes have always been viewed by children as heroes and probably always will be.

Given the press scrutiny that their personal lives and decision-making are subjected to these days, the challenge for sports figures will be to perform as well outside the playing arena as they do in it. One thing is clear: In this new era of sports journalism—particularly with the Internet playing such a pivotal role—it will become "news" when they don't. ■

Tom Witosky is sports projects reporter for The Des Moines Register and 1992 Nieman Fellow.

Muhammad Ali Was a Rebel. Michael Jordan Is a Brand Name.

In celebrating Jordan as a hero, are we merely worshipping capitalism?

By Michael Crowley

Michael Jordan's retirement from the NBA in January was not just a sports story but an international news event. His farewell press conference was carried live on CNN, his face graced the front page of *The New York Times*, and when a White House event overlapped with Jordan's announcement, even Bill Clinton noted that "most of the cameras are somewhere else."

Obviously, the hysteria had a lot to do with Jordan's unrivaled mastery of the game. But the Jordan phenomenon is much bigger than his scoring titles and six championship rings. Jordan has transcended his on-court achievements to become something more: a ubiquitous corporate pitchman who hawks for giant companies like Coke, McDonald's and Nike, an enter-

tainer whose role in the movie "Space Jam" helped it gross \$450 million—in sum, he is the world's biggest celebrity.

But he is even more than a celebrity. He is something much rarer: a hero. Jordan is almost universally adored, not just as a great player but as a man of honorable character. In a recent survey of Chinese students Jordan tied with Zhou Enlai as "the world's greatest man." The old Gatorade slogan "Be Like Mike" may be out of circulation, but the sentiment remains: Jordan is the ultimate role model.

Yet it might be worth pausing, in the midst of all this adulation, to ask just what kind of hero we have chosen. Some sports legends—Muhammad Ali, Jackie Robinson, Arthur Ashe—were respected as much for their personalities and ideals as for their athletic prow-

ess. And while he can match and perhaps exceed the athletic accomplishments of men such as these, Jordan doesn't even compete when it comes to having a lasting, noncommercial impact on society.

The truth is that Jordan's is not an especially interesting personality. He tends to be bland, never spontaneous, sometimes petulant, and often arrogant. He is ruthlessly competitive, although not in the same comically endearing way as Ali. And Jordan has so far been utterly disinterested in discovering the potential that a man of his fame, wealth and stature possesses to make the world even a slightly better place.

Ultimately, what Jordan represents aren't so much values as the capitalist principles of relentless competition and

the bounty of total victory. He is a monument to the self. And with the stock market soaring and political participation plummeting, perhaps he is the icon of our time.

With virtually no dissent, the American media—and not just sportswriters—have unquestioningly accepted the Jordan mythology. Dozens of news commentators have proclaimed Jordan the greatest basketball player of all time, hands down, as if Wilt Chamberlain somehow doesn't count because he played before the advent of ESPN. But the hagiography extends beyond the question and coverage of Jordan's athletic abilities. It often seems that Jordan's consistent ability to win has worked to inflate our estimation of his character.

Because Jordan was nearly perfect on the court, there seemed to be a desire to find perfection in his character as well. "What made Jordan special was his demanding code of personal excellence," The New York Times declared. Even a writer as wise as David Halberstam, for instance, can't resist calling Jordan the "most charismatic" player the game has seen—apparently ignoring the affable likes of Charles Barkley, Magic Johnson, Walt Frazier and others, and embellishing Jordan's bland persona.

When Jordan flashed a less amicable side—when he reportedly called New York Knicks coach Jeff Van Gundy a "fucking hockey puck," for instance—the press tended to chuckle and dismiss it. Critical assessments of Jordan seemed to be off-limits. And why was it that only Time magazine and one Milwaukee newspaper ran a story about a woman who filed a paternity suit against Jordan last year?

Admittedly, Jordan has taken his lumps in the media, most notably when stories emerged several years ago about his gambling habits. But it's plainly evident that members of the media never really questioned whether Jordan is everything an American hero should be.

Looking Beneath Jordan's Commercial Persona

Although he was deservedly praised as a decent guy with a common touch with lesser mortals, Jordan's personality has always been rather bland. Far less colorful than several of his contemporaries, Jordan inevitably spoke in throwaway clichés and hollow jock jargon. At his brief retirement press conference, Jordan was his typically banal self, using variations of the word "challenge" 20 times. He may have illuminated our understanding of the sport with deeds, but never with words.

And although the NBA and his corporate patrons, including the Disney corporation, created a gentle, smiling and gracious persona for Jordan, this wasn't always the case. Jordan was, undoubtedly, polite to the media and his fans, graceful and composed in public. But he had a darker side, one explored in Sam Smith's 1992 book "The Jordan Rules" (Pocket Books).

Because Jordan was nearly perfect on the court, there seemed to be a desire to find perfection in his character as well.

Smith depicted Jordan as selfish, arrogant, obsessed with statistics, and disparaging to his teammates, whom he once referred to as "my supporting cast." Over the years he never hesitated to yell at teammates who failed to pass him the ball. As recently as a 1998 NBA Finals game, Jordan shouted at Bulls forward Scottie Pippen for not passing him the ball—after Pippen had drained a game-tying three-pointer.

His Airness is also a famously thin-skinned fellow. Criticism is often cause for massive retaliation, as Sports Illustrated learned after it published a 1993 article mocking his ill-fated stint as a baseball player. Jordan stopped talking to reporters from the magazine for years; some editors even believe that Jordan intentionally leaked word of his retirement just after that week's edition of SI had gone to press.

Jordan's sharp edges seem to grow from his intense competitive drive, which has been the object of much awed admiration. But it was often excessive by any standards. Never famous for sportsmanship, Jordan was one of the nastiest trash-talkers of his day, and he loved to humiliate his rivals. As his former coach Doug Collins once said, "He wants to cut your heart out and then show it to you." Nor was he gracious in losing. He was known to petulantly sweep the pieces off a board game when things weren't going his way. Halberstam writes that in college Jordan frigidly refused to speak to an assistant coach who had beaten him repeatedly in pool and even cheated at golf. "If you challenge him," Toronto Raptors coach and former player Darrell Walker told The Toronto Star last year, "he can be a very vindictive person."

This apparent pathology may explain the taste for high-stakes gambling that is the one real blotch on Jordan's sterling reputation. Jordan admitted in 1992 to paying \$165,000 in poker and golf debts to a pair of unsavory characters, one of whom was later murdered. And a former golfing partner wrote a book claiming that Michael had lost \$1.25 million on the links in 10 days.

(A penitent Jordan admitted betting with the man but said the figures had been exaggerated.) Rumors still linger that Jordan's debts were a factor in his startling first "retirement" in 1993—some suggest that the league insisted he lay low for a while.

Jordan's obsession with victory—however meaningless, be it in golf or cards—is hailed as an inspiring example of his personal excellence. Yet even his father wondered about this side of Jordan. "My son doesn't have a gambling problem," James Jordan once said. "He has a competition problem."

Keeping His Distance From Social Issues

Despite his ever-growing wealth and influence, Jordan has never shown

much interest in shaping the world that lies at his feet. He carefully dodged any political issue that might have jeopardized his family-friendly image. When asked in 1992 about the Rodney King riots in Los Angeles, for instance, Jordan lamely replied: "I need to know more about it." He refused to take a side in the tight 1990 North Carolina Senate race in which Jesse Helms, despised by many blacks, was challenged by a black man, Harvey Gantt. Approached by Gantt's campaign, Jordan declined to get involved, reportedly offering this explanation: "Republicans buy sneakers, too."

That statement is quintessential Jordan. Jordan has remained devoutly apolitical. He has never used his platform to pursue social or political change; indeed, he's gone out of his way to play it safe. This is, of course, precisely how the corporations he endorses want it. Politics and successful marketing don't mix. (Jordan has recently been quietly supporting Democratic presidential candidate Bill Bradley, but that appears to be a favor to Jordan's former coach and Bradley pal Phil Jackson.)

Informed punditry may be too much to expect of pro athletes. Yet Jordan has also dodged matters over which he has a more direct influence. As inner-city leaders decried the \$150 price tag on his Nike Air Jordan sneakers, which are targeted at the kids who can least afford them, Jordan never spoke up.

or sweatshops, [Nike executives] have to revise the situation." Yet even after acknowledging the specter of "slavery," Jordan never made the trip.

Yes, he has done his share of good works. Jordan has donated millions to charity and to his alma mater, the University of North Carolina. Every year he visits with dozens of dying children whose last wish it is to meet him. If there's a heaven, he will surely be rewarded there. But there are still places of hell on Earth and much more Jordan could do with his money and power. Yet he has made no deeper effort to take advantage of his unique cultural pedestal.

Jordan's avoidance of social issues hasn't escaped criticism. Several well-known pro athletes—including such black champions as Arthur Ashe, Jim Brown and Hank Aaron—have knocked Jordan for being politically aloof. "He's more interested in his image for his shoe deals than he is in helping his own people," Brown said of Jordan in 1992.

Asked in January whether he would become more politically active now that he's retired, Jordan answered: "I can't save the world by no means." But there's plenty of room between saving the planet and doing nothing. Jordan might, as Brown has, insist on more blacks in sports management. Or, as Jesse Jackson does, he could press for more corporate hiring and investment in black communities. Or he could

either. But it's not unheard-of for modern-day athletes to take political stands. His outspoken Bulls teammate Craig Hodges once showed up at a White House ceremony in a dashiki with a letter for George Bush on the plight of the inner cities. "I can't go and just be in an Armani suit and not say shit," Hodges later told *The Village Voice*.

In 1993, NBA forward Olden Polynice staged a hunger strike to protest U.S. policy toward his native Haiti. Though they were second-tier players, both Hodges and Polynice drew national media coverage nevertheless. Imagine what Michael Jordan could do with a single television ad or press conference! As Jesse Jackson told *The Washington Post* in 1996: "If [sports stars] can sell these wares with the power of their personas, they also can sell civic responsibility with the power of their personas."

And the fact remains that Jordan is not the same as Tiger Woods or Mark McGwire. No one else has achieved his global stature, his corporate clout.

In the end, perhaps Michael Jordan simply reflects our times in much the way that Muhammad Ali epitomized the values of the 1960's. Just as Ali was a symbol for the social and political energy of his day, so Jordan stands for the apathy and commercialism of our times. Ali was a rebel. Jordan is a brand name. After all, a recorded message at Jordan's personal office informs callers that "the majority of Michael Jordan fan mail and autograph requests will be acknowledged by Nike, Inc."

So perhaps in worshipping Michael Jordan we are celebrating nothing less than capitalism itself. The winner takes all, and we cheer wildly. Perhaps society will never idolize underpaid idealists and clumsy altruists the way it elevates sports titans like Michael Jordan. But whatever happened to the old maxim that winning isn't everything? ■

Michael Crowley is a reporter for The Boston Globe.

Just as Ali was a symbol for the social and political energy of his day, so Jordan stands for the apathy and commercialism of our times.

By contrast, in 1996 NBA forward Chris Webber publicly feuded with Nike about the cost of shoes it sold in his name.

Better known is Jordan's shoulder-shrug over Nike's allegedly exploitative labor practices in Southeast Asia. Jordan first said it wasn't his problem, but later said he would travel to Asia, explaining that "if it's an issue of slavery

sponsor ads reminding kids that school is a safer route to success than basketball. Or he could speak out against handguns with the moral authority of a man whose father was killed by one.

In fairness, Jordan is no exception among his contemporaries. His equivalents in other sports—Tiger Woods, Ken Griffey, Jr., Mark McGwire—aren't known for their political engagement,

Who Were You, Joe DiMaggio?

He was an 'icon of icons' about whom little was known.

By David Halberstam

In October 1965, Gay Talese, a young writer recently departed from the more confining pages of *The New York Times*, suggested to his editors at *Esquire* that the next piece he wanted to write was about Joe DiMaggio. DiMaggio was by then the mythic baseball hero to two generations of Americans, a figure of epic proportions, albeit an almost completely unexamined one, and Talese wanted to do a portrait of DiMaggio some fourteen years after his last game. What happens, Talese wondered, to a great figure after the cheering stops, and what kind of man was DiMaggio anyway? He knew the legend but not the man, and DiMaggio had always been treated by writers as a legend rather than a man. Off he set for San Francisco, Fisherman's Wharf, and the DiMaggio family restaurant. It would turn out to be the perfect union of reporter, magazine, and subject matter at a critical time in the history of nonfiction journalism....

What came through in Talese's work was a kind of journalism *verité*, reporting profoundly influenced by cinema *verité*—the reporter as camera. American nonfiction journalism was changing at an accelerating rate in those days, and *Esquire* in the early sixties was very much the leader in the changes taking place, the magazine where young restless writers wanting to challenge these archaic professional formulas were coming together under the talented leadership of two exceptional editors, Harold Hayes and Clay Felker....

In addition the subject, DiMaggio, was perfect—because of the almost unique degree of difficulty he presented to the writer, for in truth he was a man who could not be reported on with any degree of accuracy under the old rules. The premise of what both Talese and

Hayes were pushing at, and what would eventually be called the New Journalism, demanded a new journalistic realism, and at its best it stripped away the facade with which most celebrities protected themselves as they presented themselves to the public. In this new kind of journalism just coming of age the journalist was able to see these celebrities as they really were, not as they had so carefully presented themselves over the years.

And perhaps no celebrity was a better subject for that kind of reporting than Joe DiMaggio. At that moment he remained not merely in the world of sports, but to all Americans, a kind of icon of icons, the most celebrated athlete of his age, the best big game player of his era and a man who because of his deeds, looks and marriage to the actress Marilyn Monroe, had transcended the barriers of sports in terms of the breadth of his fame. But in journalistic terms, he remained a man about whom a great deal had been written but also, about whom very little real reporting had ever been done, and about whom very little was known.

Because the Yankees almost always won and because DiMaggio was the best player on those dominating teams and played with a certain athletic elegance (in the media capital of the world no less), and because it was a decidedly less iconoclastic era, he had always been treated with great delicacy by an adoring New York and thus national press corps. The essential portrait of DiMaggio which had emerged over the years was of someone as attractive and graceful off the field as he was on it. DiMaggio had rather skillfully contributed to this image—he was extremely forceful and icy in his control of his own image, as attentive and purposeful in controlling it as he was

in excelling on the field, and he quickly and ruthlessly cut off any reporter who threatened to go beyond the accepted journalistic limits. Those limits were, of course, set by Joe DiMaggio. At the same time he was deft at offering just enough access—access under which he set all the ground rules—to a few favored reporters and he was particularly good with a number of columnists who were unusually influential in those days, most notably Jimmy Cannon, then of the *New York Post*, who often hung out with him. If you were influential enough, you were on occasion allowed to pal around with him, but if you palled around with him, you could not write about what he did or said when you palled around together. Over the years Cannon and a handful of others had created an image of a graceful, admirable, thoroughly likeable DiMaggio. No one had ever been allowed enough access to dispute that image.

Yet the truth among those who knew him relatively well was somewhat different: he was said (privately by people who did not want to go on the record) to be an unusually self-absorbed man, suspicious, often hostile, and largely devoid of charm....

Talese in time showed up to meet with him. DiMaggio, it turned out, was not happy to see him despite his earlier promise, and for several days did not return his phone calls. After almost a week of waiting, his calls still unanswered, Talese set off for the DiMaggio family restaurant. What happened then—DiMaggio's almost lethal rejection of him—is what makes the piece so powerful—DiMaggio, dodging him in the restaurant and then calling him on the phone—both of them still inside the restaurant: "You are invading my rights. I did not ask you to come. I

assume you have a lawyer, you must have a lawyer, get your lawyer!" All of this was shouted at him by one of the most famous and most admired men in America. It is the reader as well as the writer who feels buffeted and beaten up at this point, the reader who, like the writer, has dropped in on a much admired hero, ready to like him even more but finds that he is a very ordinary and not particularly likeable man; it is the reader who has his face slapped in the piece. The particulars seem to flow from that first scene, DiMaggio angrily handing back the letter he had written about an interview they had agreed on, the letter still unopened. Talese, it should be noted, did not bend under DiMaggio's assault. He managed to ask for permission to hang out with Lefty O'Doul, an old DiMaggio pal and the most independent of the men around him. DiMaggio assented, and through O'Doul, Talese finally began to connect to DiMaggio and his inner group. What we end up with is an evocative portrait of a great ballplayer long after his last game is over, and we have a powerful sense of his loneliness and his essential separation from almost everyone around him....

...I still believe this is the best magazine piece I ever have read.... Talese's...impact on his contemporaries was simply stunning, and here I speak not merely for my generation but for myself. I can remember distinctly reading the DiMaggio piece—it was the spring of 1966 and I was still working in the Paris bureau of The New York Times after being expelled from Eastern Europe—I simply devoured it. By the time I finished reading it I had decided to get out of daily journalism. That one piece, it struck me, was worth everything I had written in the past year. Within a year I had left the Times to become a contract magazine reporter for Willie Morris at Harper's, an editor who was trying to emulate what Harold Hayes and a number of other editors were then doing with what had been up until then a rather stodgy magazine.

It strikes me that the Talese piece reflects a number of things that were taking place in American journalism at the time—some twenty years after the end of World War II. The first thing is that the level of education was going up significantly, both among writers and among readers. That mandated

better, more concise writing. It also meant that because of a burgeoning and growing paperback market, the economics of the profession were getting better: self-employed writers were doing better financially and could take more time to stake out a piece. In the previous era, a freelance writer had to scrounge harder to make a living, fighting constantly against the limits of time, more often than not writing pieces he or she did not particularly want to write in order to subsidize the one or two pieces the writer did want to do....

The DiMaggio piece took some six weeks of legwork. By contrast some of his lineal successors picked up the form but not the substance of what he did; they did not put in the man hours, and as such their work was always notably thinner, and seemed to lack the density and thus the grace of his work. ■

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Restricting a Photojournalist's Access

The Red Sox tried to stop pictures of Fenway Park from being published.

By Stan Grossfeld

Fenway Park, the oldest ballpark in the major leagues, is bordered by five Boston streets, and one could make a case that the ball club thinks of its house as the Pentagon of Boston sports. Perhaps that is why those who own the team—the Red Sox—that plays inside its walls were so protective of it, to the point of taking away access we normally have as journalists.

"Fenway—A Biography in Words and Pictures" initially was conceived as an article for The Boston Globe's Sunday Magazine. Under those conditions, the Red Sox granted considerable access

so that with my camera I could record unique views. However, when the project became a book for Houghton Mifflin, Red Sox management decided that they were uncomfortable with an "unauthorized" biography of their home and asked the publisher not to publish the book. They argued that the commercial sale of images of the park belong to them. And they didn't want any sentimental reminder of Fenway around at the time they announced plans for a new ballpark.

To its credit, Houghton Mifflin—a Fenway Park luxury box client of the

Red Sox—went ahead with the project. This meant that I had to figure out ways to take photographs despite restrictions put on my ability to take pictures inside the park.

Upon publication, the Red Sox refused to allow any book interviews to take place inside the ballpark. Even if we couldn't talk about the book at Fenway Park, the Sox management did. The Red Sox use an excerpt from our book in their official pamphlet to promote their proposal for a new ballpark to replace Fenway Park. Red Sox CEO John Harrington also quoted from the

book when addressing the national media at an All Star press conference at Fenway Park. This event took place on the day his public relations staff told "CBS Morning News" that its reporters and cameras would not be allowed in Fenway for a book interview.

Although the Red Sox objected to a

photograph of catcher Scott Hatteberg using the ancient urinal in the runway between the dugout and the clubhouse, and at least one star player wondered why he didn't receive money for having his picture in the book, the Red Sox management purchased copies and gave them out as gifts. ■

Photographer Stan Grossfeld and sportswriter Dan Shaughnessy both work at The Boston Globe and are the authors of "Fenway—A Biography in Words and Pictures," Houghton Mifflin, 1999. Grossfeld is a 1992 Nieman Fellow.



Photos by Stan Grossfeld from "Fenway—A Biography in Words and Pictures."



Women Sportswriters Confront New Issues

No longer focused on locker room access, work and family challenges prevail.

By Claire Smith

The sports world, which likes its entertainment untainted by real-world issues, seldom accepts progress without a prod. Its participants, frighteningly disconnected from the world around them, too often don't even realize the currents, issues and changing times roiling society.

This is why I had to smile at the way in which a handful of black baseball players wrestled with baseball's record of intolerance after Al Campanis exposed the game's dirty little mindset on race in 1987. Campanis, then the General Manager of the Dodgers, shocked the sports world by opining on national television that blacks lacked "the necessities" to hold certain management positions much the way they lacked buoyancy, ergo no black Johnnie Weismullers.

The '87 season that was to serve as a placid but benign celebration of Jackie Robinson's breaking of baseball's color barrier was awash with controversy from day one. This much I knew as I stood in a major-league baseball stadium waiting to begin my sixth year covering the New York Yankees for The Hartford Courant.

Dave Winfield, the Yankees' all-star right fielder and future Hall of Famer, called to me prior to the season opener. Whispering conspiratorially, Winfield—an African-American—informed me that he and the other black players on the team had been discussing the Campanis incident when they reached what apparently was a startling conclusion. The players realized, Winfield said, that not only was I a woman, but African-American as well! The newly discovered distinction would assuredly earn for me a greater degree of cooperation from "the brothers," not to mention a scoop or two, Winfield declared with great solemnity and solidarity.

I had to smile. For the first time ever, being African-American had finally overshadowed my other lonely outpost: standing sentry as one of the few women reporters to work in the major-league press boxes. In 1987, there were precious few women covering major-league baseball; you could count them on one hand. When I left the national baseball beat in 1998, my departure brought the number of women holding that job to zero. However, women in increasing numbers do cover Olympic sports, college athletics, tennis and men's and women's basketball.

I have never claimed to be in the first wave of either African-Americans or women to cover professional team sports in America. Wendell Smith, Sam Lacy and other members of traditionally African-American news organizations started the long, tortuously slow journey from the colored sections of the bleachers to the press boxes the moment Robinson took the lead on the field for the Brooklyn Dodgers.

As for women, the walls came tumbling down in the 1970's when the courts agreed with the contention that professional sports teams had no right to deny women journalists equal access. Pioneer reporters such as Mary Garber had covered sports for decades while handicapped by arcane rules limiting their contact with male athletes. Syndicated columnist Elinor Kaine and Melissa Ludtke of Sports Illustrated were the first to successfully argue for their right to walk through locker room doors in order to fully do their jobs. Tracy Dodds, Diane K. Shah, Jane Gross, Melanie Hauser, Mary Schmidt followed, trailblazers who, like Robinson, changed perceptions in the workplace and in life in extraordinary fashion just by insisting they be treated in ordinary but fair fashion.

Today, there are by some counts

well over 500 women working in the once male-dominated worlds of sports media as well as for pro teams, leagues and sports-related industries, though still relatively few of these women are beat reporters covering major league teams. Each year hundreds attend the national convention of the Association for Women in Sports Media (AWSM), which was founded in 1987.

The fact that women have come of age in these traditionally male industries isn't so much seen in the fact that an organization such as AWSM exists, but rather that locker room access (and the attitudes and behavior of the athletes) is no longer the dominant subject at AWSM gatherings. The receding hot-button topic of the 1980's has been replaced by issues such as juggling work and family responsibilities, managing finances, and attempting to secure quality of life in the midst of what this line of work demands.

The career path of a sportswriter usually means traveling with teams and spending more time in hotel rooms than at home. And for young women who enter this profession there can also be the culture shock of learning to socialize and coexist in a male-oriented world without losing their sense of self.

I found that insisting on the right to retire to one's room on the road often saved my sanity, even when it came at the expense of scoops such as when I missed one of Billy Martin's many late night barroom incidents. Just as I made it clear early on that I didn't hang out in bars, later in my career I've made it obvious that my family life comes first.

Male beat writers with families usually have built-in child care in the form of a wife. Working mothers, especially those of us who are single, have two full-time jobs, both rewarding, both demanding. The job and the children

continually pull in opposite directions, a tug-of-war without end. Many women leave the more arduous beats, if not the profession completely, because they can't fight this battle any longer. Many of my peers chose a route similar to mine, striving to write a column or do magazine work—jobs with more downtime from travel and night games, the enemies of normal life and families.

AWSM's forums give women a chance to explore such issues and accept without guilt career choices that others might not ever understand; my mother still wonders what went wrong because I left *The New York Times* for *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. Nothing went wrong. Everything went right, because I have more quality time with my 11-year-old son, something much more important than location of my byline at this stage of my life.

Unfortunately, the complex issues of today have not completely replaced the other lingering issue: life on the sports beat for women reporters. The difficulties first faced by the pioneer female reporters who were literally barred at the door still exist in some latent forms. Still, press boxes too often remain a mostly male bastion. There are still pockets of resistance among athletes despite the fact that leagues have long-established access policies that allow for designated interview times after cooling-off (read that disrobing) periods. Just this past spring, Reggie White, a former defensive lineman with the Green Bay Packers, wrote in *The Wall Street Journal* that female journalists should not have access to the locker rooms of male athletes.

His article gained notoriety when it reached all the way to the National Basketball Association. New York Knicks guard Charlie Ward seemingly questioned the long-established policies of one of the most traditionally open-minded leagues when he passed out copies of White's comments to his teammates. Ward later denied he was campaigning for a change in the NBA's access policies. Rather, he said, he felt a need to discuss the issue during a players' prayer meeting because, Ward said, as a Christian he felt uncomfortable dressing in front of any woman

who was not his wife.

Ward, who has access to areas of locker rooms that are off-limits to reporters and is also the beneficiary of all those cooling-off post-game minutes, nonetheless fed a misconception as old as the issue of women in the locker-room debate. He attached a sexual connotation to journalism assignments. (Sleeping with sources is no more the goal than it should be an issue.) The day the first reporter left the press box to seek the raw emotions of athletes following victories or defeats, locker rooms ceased being just changing rooms and sanctuaries. Rather, clubhouses became a common ground where teams, players and the media conspire to sell a product, be it a game, a newspaper or a broadcast, by putting a human face on sports.

Women reporters, simply stated, want and demand the opportunity to report on human dimensions of sports just as their male counterparts do. But, do women reporters bring a different approach, whether covering the Washington Redskins or the White House? Is every affront gender-based or would that politician, pitcher or big-screen star be just as likely to blow off a male as he would a female reporter? Are there different rules for professional conduct then those that apply to "The Boys on the Bus?"

Any attempt to supply absolute answers to such questions flirts with stereotyping, something that should be anathema to women who have had to fight such prejudices from the moment we stepped into the clubhouse.

That said, two subtle differences have always fascinated me: the greater cooperation received from minority athletes and the good working relationships that are often found among reporters and the athletes' wives.

When I first began covering baseball I always assumed that the good rapport with the Dave Winfields of the sport might be because I was black. Too many women of all hues have since pointed out this greater degree of cooperation, leading me to suspect that this has less to do with my race. No one could really explain this feeling until the former football great, Ronnie Lott,

addressed the issue at the first AWSM convention. Many black athletes commiserated with the female reporters who covered them, Lott said, because blacks understood what it was like to walk into a room and be instantly hated.

As for the wives of athletes, Gretchen Randolph, wife of former Yankees second baseman Willie Randolph, once dispelled the notion that players' wives were all resentful of the women who covered their husbands' teams. Rather, she said, she found more understanding for the players' family and for herself among women. Men, she said, would call at all hours, often without apology, whereas women reporters who called would often inquire as to whether they were disrupting dinner or apologize about the lateness of the hour. Most important, Gretchen said, were the questions about how she and her children were faring, an indication that they mattered to the reporter. Gretchen Randolph's explanation said a lot about self-worth and how others influence it.

Just as girls growing up today can envision themselves as world champion soccer stars so, too, more and more aspire to sports writing jobs that were not imagined as possible by previous generations of women. But even as they dream, the realities of this job—the travel, the constant deadlines, the unpredictable hours, and workplace demands—continue to challenge this second tier of women pioneers. These issues might not make headlines, as locker room access did, but they are the same challenges women confront today in all professions. In fact, what is somewhat comforting is that unlike the 1970's, when our male colleagues didn't wrestle with the issues we did, nowadays many of the men are searching for some of the same answers that we are in trying to balance family life with professional obligations. ■

Claire Smith, the mother of one son, joined The Philadelphia Inquirer as a sports columnist in 1998 after covering major-league baseball for 17 years for The Hartford Courant and The New York Times.

Can Anybody Find News Here?

In Hyannis Port, nobody could. But 'news' was delivered, anyway.

By Melissa Ludtke

When I was a child, President Kennedy and his family lived nearby. In the summer, I could always tell it was Friday night by the sound and sight of a fire engine roaring down the street to prepare for the President's arrival. I knew that in a few minutes the helicopter carrying him would touch down on the lawn outside his parent's house. Many times, even if my dinner was on the table, I'd head out the door and run down the street so I could be there when he arrived.

Sometimes the President would toss a football to children gathered behind the short white picket fence that marked the closest spot from which we were allowed to watch. Or as he came up the private road he'd be driving a golf cart loaded with kids from his extended family and we'd run alongside as they went to the candy store a block away.

I can remember that as a child these moments seemed special, even on those occasions when all we did was watch his helicopter touch down.

This past July, when that President's son, along with his wife and sister-in-law, died on their way to this destination, this short white picket fence again became the boundary for those who wanted to witness what was happening at the other end of this small private road.

This time, however, those who came to bear witness arrived not on bicycles or foot. These witnesses arrived in huge trucks displaying enormous satellite dishes and towering antennas. Out of the trucks came portable video cameras with powerful telephoto lenses, and big fat microphones, and miles of colored wires that followed the human occupants like snakes as they found their way to a spot at the side of the short white picket fence.

In all, about 50 of these giant trucks



Huge TV trucks parked near the Hyannis Port pier to transmit words and images to the world. *Photo by Melissa Ludtke.*

set up business on the narrow streets of this village, their engines humming loudly and their lights blaring brightly as days kept turning into nights. Their size made it difficult for the people who lived in this village to pass by. And along the short white picket fence, hundreds of people with badges dangling from around their necks to signify membership in the community of journalists kept 24-hour-a-day vigils as they waited for something to happen at the other end of this road.

On Sunday afternoon, the day after the plane disappeared, my usual mid-afternoon walk to the pier unearthed another cluster of cameras, lights and microphones. Dug in on the beach—as close as it was possible for them to be to this private pier—were people holding video cameras jockeying for spots with photographers dangling multiple cameras, some with lenses that must have been as long as my arm. As I

walked back from the end of the pier, I could not avoid staring into this sea of cameras and imagining what it must feel like when they are raised in unison and their loud clicking motor drives switched on as photographers strained to get “the picture.”

It didn't take long for me to see the results of this pier-side vigil. Back in my living room, on the TV, was video of several members of the Kennedy family walking up the pier, their heads down, eyes averted from the cameras, returning from a sail. The next day newspapers had photos from the walk. I am not sure what any of this told any of us except perhaps that these family members were sad.

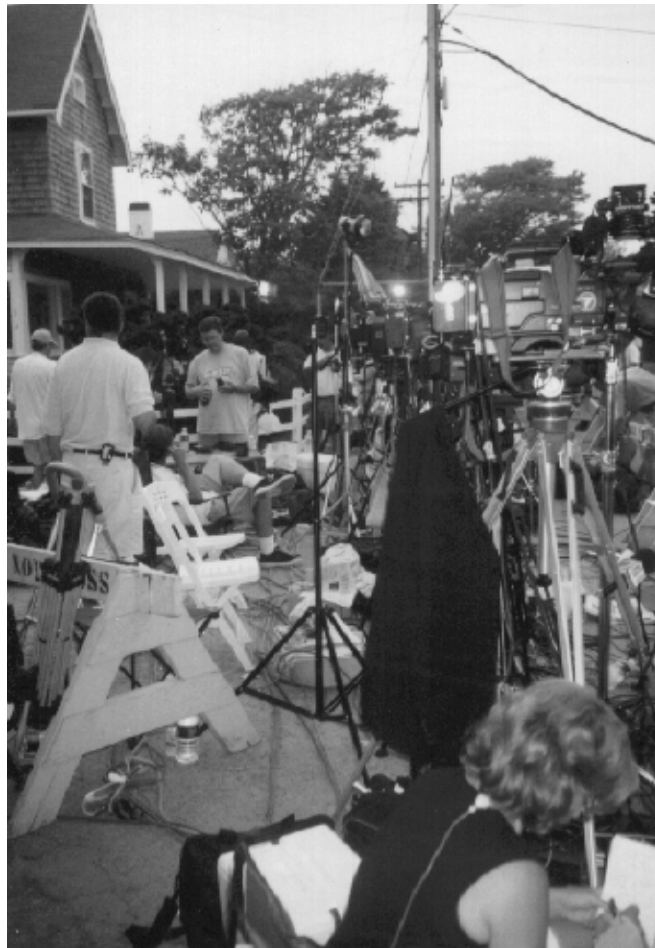
And so it went in Hyannis Port for nearly a week while news directors and editors back home decided there would be news emanating from this road. But what “news” would their on-site reporters find here when family mem-

bers made it abundantly clear that grieving would be done in private? From early on, it should have been apparent that there would be no personal testimonials recorded near this short white picket fence. And when word did come from the family, the statement was widely circulated by Senator Kennedy's office. If there was news to be had about the rescue-turned-recovery operation, then that information was going to surface about 20 miles away, where the National Transportation Safety Board and Coast Guard held briefings to explain what their search was revealing.

But still the cameras, producers and revolving cast of on-air "talent" remained next to the short white picket fence, now crowded behind police barricades on a public street that their presence made impassable. Network news "stars" came and went so they, too, could use, as a backdrop for their words, this silent road where Kennedy homes now had window shades drawn against spying eyes of telephoto lenses.

Impressive as this technology might be that can transport an audience directly to a scene such as this, if what viewers take away are impressions from reporters who have no news to impart, then is having this technology reason enough to use it and pretend its product is news? Or are pictures of Kennedy homes, and occasionally their occupants coming and going in cars or gathering for a private mass under a tent in their yard, enough in this era of celebrity journalism to qualify as an emerging definition of "news"? Or is the unquestioned commercial success of instantaneous voyeurism enough to convince reporters that "the people's right to know" (or more accurately these days, "the people's right to see") always trumps "the individual's right to privacy"?

In her book, "The Right to Privacy," (co-authored with Ellen Alderman)



Members of the press set up camp next to the short white picket fence. *Photo by Melissa Ludtke.*

Caroline Kennedy helps us to at least understand what it is that we, as journalists, pit our Constitutional right to free speech against when stories such as this one surface. In her book she writes about a Harvard Law Review article, written by Louis D. Brandeis and Samuel D. Warren. It put forth a revolutionary legal concept, the origins of which were prompted by Warren's outrage when details from a family wedding appeared in the gossip columns. The arguments these two men set forth, Kennedy informs us, are credited with creating "the right to privacy," a legal right that can be used in state courts but should never be confused with any Constitutional right. Warren and Brandeis defined their new legal term as "the right to be let alone."

Prophetically, what these two men worried about in this article as the 19th Century was ending has come to pass during the 20th. Society, they warned,

would become more complex and technology more intrusive and, as these two things occurred, the need to protect individual privacy would become even more urgent.

Certainly this is so. We feel it in every aspect of our lives. We are concerned when we hear about someone's financial and medical records landing in unscrupulous hands. Or when we learn that private messages sent electronically have been read by a strange set of eyes. Or when someone steals from us words spoken on a telephone. These circumstances alert us to the fact that something we might not have realized was so precious might be in the process of being taken away.

Maintaining what is personal as private is becoming one of the huge challenges each of us faces as technological advances threaten to obliterate walls that once seemed secure around us. And this challenge exists as well for those of us whose job it is to record the events of our time and convey images and news about them back to viewers and

readers. Part of having the freedoms we do—those rights that the press in this country should and do possess—means that professional judgment should be applied so that we demonstrate wisdom and responsibility in protecting the precious from what can, too quickly, turn pernicious.

Writing in *Nieman Reports* in 1948, the First Amendment scholar Zechariah Chafee said, "The press is a sort of wild animal in our midst—restless, gigantic, always seeking new ways to use its strength." Responding to those words nearly 50 years later, Caroline Kennedy writes, "When the [press] uses its strength to uncover government corruption or lay bare a public lie, it is the country's watchdog. But when the animal roams into our cherished private sphere, it seems to turn dangerous and predatory. Then we, Americans, turn on the press. We want a free press, we say, but not *that* free."

Americans already inform pollsters that they are turning on the press. Trust in it is eroding. Even journalists, when asked, reply that standards are slipping. In a 1999 survey by the Committee of Concerned Journalists, more than two-thirds of the journalists queried described as a "valid criticism" the belief that there has been serious erosion of the boundary between reporting and commentary. Most members of the press agree, however, that what distinguishes their profession is its contribution to society, its ability to provide "people with information they need," according to the Committee's report.

But in today's marketplace—where news competition comes from cable upstarts which have no journalistic heritage and management at every station keeps watchful eyes on the news department's bottom line—working journalists privately lament news decisions, but follow orders to set up camp at places like the short white picket fence. Then they talk, even when they have no information to pass along that people need to know.

Nevertheless, the bosses back home are heartened when ratings come in. People watched, the numbers tell them, in greater volume than might ever have been imagined. Switch away from this scene, with its quiet backdrop of ocean and the occasional glimpses of famous, sad faces, and viewers turn to find similar images somewhere else. Such was the lesson once again learned during that week's coverage.

Yet not everyone thinks that this lesson, taught by numbers, is the one most essential for news executives to learn. Letter writers to *The Boston Globe* provided a different teaching tool. "It is now time for the media to leave the famous compound," one observed. "There is no news there to be had. Repair the damage, depart the grounds, leave the Kennedys alone. Their private moments, now and forever, are by definition not newsworthy." Another correspondent linked

blame to cause: "The networks will hide behind the people's right-to-know argument, but the truth is that they have exploited a tragic accident for their own benefit. And why should we be surprised?... For them, it's just another sensational day at the office." And a third wrote, "According to the press, there is a vested public interest in camping out en masse in front of the Kennedy family home and in using telephoto lenses to capture private moments."

So how is it that journalists who care about what they want to be and do can reconcile what their profession might be becoming in its willingness to quench the public's thirst for celebrity and do so in the name of "news?" Clearly, individual journalists, when

...at those many moments when there is nothing to say, resist the urge to talk and, consequently, say nothing.

faced with such an assignment and bills to pay at home, are unlikely to argue that "news" lies elsewhere and that is where they want to be. For each one who might try, 10 others would be on their way to the short white picket fence to take his or her place.

Perhaps the way to reconcile the unpleasant but seemingly mandatory encampments of the press is to work harder to separate in this coverage what can accurately be called news from all that is otherwise broadcast. For lack of a better term, call it "entertainment." For despite its portrayal of sadness, in a strange way that is exactly what the media's visual intrusion into private mourning has become. And at those many moments when there is nothing to say, resist the urge to talk and, consequently, say nothing. As poet Andrei Codrescu observed on "Nightline" on Monday evening of that week, "Yes, I'm sad, but I wish they, we, could just be quiet."

And quiet it was at the other end of that road in Hyannis Port until one morning when the sound of a helicopter could be heard as it prepared to

descend onto the lawn in front of that home where the President's landed nearly four decades ago. Suddenly, video cameras were turned on and the satellite dishes on trucks to which they were tethered were put into action. Reporters jockeyed for position so they could talk as the helicopter landed behind them. Soon Senator Kennedy and his sons were walking across the lawn and into the helicopter and as quickly as it had come, it was gone.

But where was it going? Why had it come? Reporters near the short white picket fence didn't know. But that absence of knowledge didn't stop them from talking, turning speculation into what during this week had been, too often, confused with news. On one local station, journalists seeing this image from Hyannis Port sparred mildly over the exact nature of this trip. Later, after reporters made calls to verify information, we'd be told that this was taking

the President's brother and nephews to the place where they'd be given the body of his son.

One mourner in New York told a TV interviewer, "The media brought us into their family." Certainly that is true. Arguably, no family has as skillfully employed the media as a way to communicate ideas and shape their legacy. And out of that use surfaces awareness that there might be, at times, a price to be paid in return, a price that might involve loss of privacy and an exploitation of their images. And throughout this week, that seemed a price that this family knew that it was paying, even as they found ways—with a burial at sea, a private memorial mass—to restore some of the protective walls that all of us should be wary of taking down. For, in the end, these walls protect us all. ■

Melissa Ludtke is Editor of Nieman Reports and a 1992 Nieman Fellow. Her book, "On Own Own: Unmarried Motherhood in America," was published in paperback this year by University of California Press.

The Missing Voices in Coverage of Health

Nurses' experience and research is vital to, but absent from, these stories.

By Bernice Buresh

Earlier this year a University of Pennsylvania research group reported that a noninvasive intervention could prevent the repeated hospitalizations of high-risk elderly patients, improve their overall care, and save taxpayers millions of dollars.

Sound like a candidate for a good health story? The editors of *The Journal of the American Medical Association* thought so. They chose it as the top item for the packet of news releases sent out to reporters about articles in the February 17 issue of *JAMA*.

But this story didn't get the kind of play *JAMA* studies often do. It did not go entirely unnoticed—it went on the Associated Press wire, National Public Radio did a report on it, and a handful of newspapers gave it a paragraph or two. The Philadelphia *Inquirer's* Michael Vitez developed the *JAMA* study into a piece on the care needs of the rapidly expanding number of elders who live with multiple chronic illnesses, and the *Inquirer* ran the piece on the front page. By and large, though, the media were uninterested.

There may have been several reasons why other journalists ignored the study. Perhaps old people aren't an appealing subject even though their care has a tremendous impact on health care costs, the allocation of social services and the demands on family caregivers. Maybe there was a lot of competing news that day. But as someone who has watched this happen time and time again, I can't help but think that the determining factor was that the university researchers were nurses and the intervention they tested was nursing care.

This conclusion stems from many years of writing about nursing and monitoring the coverage of this profession. Nurses are so consistently over-

looked in news coverage about health and health care that it is hard not to think that prejudice is at least partly responsible. In a study I led nine years ago, my colleagues and I found nurses and nursing to be all but absent in the health coverage of three of the nation's top newspapers. Not surprisingly, physicians accounted for almost one-third of 908 sources who were directly quoted in the stories we analyzed. However, sources from government, business, education, nonprofits, even patients and family members as well as nonprofessional hospital workers also were quoted more often than nurses. The voices and views of nurses came through in only 10 of the 908 quotes.

A broader study commissioned in 1997 by the nursing honor society Sigma Theta Tau International found little improvement. Named for the late Nancy Woodhull, a news executive and expert on women and the media, the recent study, like ours, found numerous examples of nurses being passed over in favor of other sources—even

Nurses' invisibility in the news is noticeable in all aspects of health coverage. My analyses indicate that one-fourth to one-third of health news reports are devoted to coverage of research findings. That's a conservative estimate if you also count the spinoffs—backgrounders, columns and features—prompted by research studies. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to identify a column, television health program, or health section that regularly includes findings from nursing studies in its reportage.

Lack of attention to nursing research is a serious oversight because much of this burgeoning field is devoted to the most significant health care issue of our time—the care and treatment of those with chronic illness. Thanks to the many biomedical, surgical and acute care advances of the last half century, instead of being quickly killed by serious illness, large portions of our population live for lengthy periods and into advanced age with chronic diseases or conditions. These include cancer, heart

Nurses are so consistently overlooked in news coverage about health and health care that it is hard not to think that prejudice is at least partly responsible.

when it is clear that nurses would be the most logical sources. For example, a *Chicago Tribune* article (September 14, 1997) focused on lay midwives and the legal prohibitions which prevent them from practicing in Illinois if they don't have a nursing degree. The article's sources included lay midwives and a physician but no practicing certified nurse midwives.

disease, arthritis, high blood pressure, birth abnormalities, osteoporosis, diabetes and so on. Increasingly the "diagnosis and cure" medical model is inadequate in this environment. Ongoing care and management of these conditions is needed, and that care is the crux of nursing research.

A case in point is the *JAMA* study. Penn nursing researchers randomly

divided 363 sick and frail elderly hospital patients into two groups. The control group received routine discharge planning and, if referred, standard home care. Those who were in the second group were visited within 48 hours of being admitted to the hospital and then every 48 hours during the hospitalization by an advance-practice nurse who specialized in geriatrics. Once the patient was discharged, the same nurse visited him or her at home at least twice and was available in person or by phone for the next month. These nurses focused the patients' medications, symptoms, diet, activities, sleep, medical follow-up and emotional status. They collaborated with physicians to adjust therapies, obtained referrals for needed services, set up support systems, and helped the patients and their families adjust to life at home.

The outcomes tell us a lot about the efficacy of this approach. Six months after discharge, 20 percent of the group with master's-degree nurses was hospitalized again compared with 37 percent of the control group. Only 6.2 percent of the group monitored by nurses had multiple hospital readmissions, compared with 14.5 percent of the control group. When they occurred, hospital stays were much shorter for the first group—1.5 hospital days per patient compared with 4.1 days for the control group. Health care costs for the group with transitional care were \$600,000 less than costs for the control group. Medicare was saved an average of \$3,000 per patient. At a time when the mounting costs of health care are routinely covered on the business pages and on television news, the fact that evidence such as this was ignored is peculiar.

Patients and their families know how devastating cycling in and out of a hospital can be. As Mary D. Naylor, associate professor of nursing and the lead author of the study said, "We're still relying on hospitals to respond to what we know are, in many cases, preventable readmissions. Our system of care is not responsive to the needs of the older community." Nursing research identifies responsive care. Yet health writers seem to have little ac-

quaintance with nursing research. One 25-year veteran of the medical and health beat who reads several medical journals told me he couldn't think of the name of a single nursing journal. Another health editor responded to a colleague of mine who raised the subject with, "Nursing what?" Even when nursing research receives the imprimatur of medicine by appearing in a top medical journal, it is still likely to be ignored.

As journalist Suzanne Gordon pointed out in her recent book, "Life Support: Three Nurses on the Front Lines," when coverage focuses exclusively on medicine, it reinforces the notion that illness is an event rather than a process. When journalists cover health innovations only as medical interventions they create a simplistic and inaccurate picture of health care. If journalists were to ask nurses how new treatments really affect patients they would have a truer picture of not only the efficacy of these treatments, but of the needs that patients have for care before, during and after medical encounters. While medical researchers and physicians develop these new treatments, nurses administer many of them and monitor their immediate and ongoing effect on patients. Nurses are the ones who know what impact these medical advances have not only on patients' cells, tissues and organ systems, but on their lives.

For patients and policymakers, a gaping informational hole remains even from the vigorous coverage of managed care. As a recent Kaiser Family Foundation study confirmed, reporters have brought the denials of treatments, medications and experimental procedures under managed care to the public's attention. They have exposed the HMO's that have tried to prevent physicians from candidly discussing a patient's condition and appropriate treatment options. They have attended to the patient backlash as well. Even nursing won a moment in the news as part of managed care coverage. A rash of stories reported that hospitals were "downsizing" and "deskilling." But few journalists examined what these cutbacks meant in terms of patient care.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette medical writer Steve Twedt is one who did. He spent a year researching this question and talking to nurses, nursing researchers, patients, families, aides, physicians, attorneys and policymakers. "In hospital after hospital across the country," Twedt wrote in his resulting 1996 four-part series, "nurses with years of experience are being replaced by unlicensed aides who get only minimal training before caring for patients." His investigation, he wrote, produced "example after example of hospital patients throughout the nation who were injured or killed by the mistakes or negligence of aides performing duties they weren't equipped to handle." His most troubling conclusion was, "Despite the profound impact on patients, no one is systematically monitoring this sweeping change in health care."

It has similarly escaped the notice of journalists that proposed remedies to the problems of managed care do not address nursing care. The so-called patient bills of rights in state legislatures and Congress focus on medical care. With limited exceptions (childbirth and mastectomies), these bills do not constrain insurers and hospitals from restricting patients' access to nursing care. The bills that do address nursing care—those that mandate minimum levels of nurse staffing in hospitals and nursing homes—have gotten very little attention.

Reports on the effects of Medicare cuts in the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 are also too narrowly focused. For example, Bob Herbert in his New York Times column (April 15, 1999) discussed the disastrous impact reduced Medicare payments are having on teaching hospitals and their ability to educate future physicians. Nursing was not mentioned once in his description of the dire effects the cuts are having on staff levels, hospital treatment and care, and professional education.

Yet teaching hospitals are nursing institutions as much as they are medical institutions. Hospitals are the primary site of nursing education. Nursing education suffers when hospital revenues drop. In fact, one of the ma-



An image from the past when white caps gave nursing its aura. *Reproduced from originals in the Center for the Study of the History of Nursing, School of Nursing, University of Pennsylvania.*

For missed stories of this decade has been the effect of the dismissal of clinical nurse specialists and other hospital nurse educators on nursing education and practice. Nursing education has taken a direct hit in other ways, not the least of which is the reluctance of good candidates to enter a field that is being decimated and abused by market-driven health care.

Not surprisingly, the country now faces a serious nursing shortage. Although this has been reported largely as a demographic aging-of-the-nursing-workforce phenomenon, it is much more complex and interesting as evidenced by the frenzied recruiting hospitals are engaging in even while, in some cases, continuing to lay off nurses. To be sure, it is not easy to cover nursing. Although some nursing organizations and nursing schools have knowledgeable media specialists who understand the needs of journalists, in general nursing research studies and innovations in nursing practice don't arrive in the newsroom in prepackaged print or electronic form. It takes work to ferret out significant stories.

Then there is the problem of getting nurses to talk. Reporters need to understand that most nurses are employees of large institutions, and many are afraid of retribution if they say anything. Even a very small percentage of

those theoretically protected by unions will go on the record. Then, too, some nurses feel so rejected by the press they have given up trying to interest journalists in developments in their discipline.

With 2.6 million members, nursing is our largest health care profession. There are many reasons to cover nursing, including the fact that press scrutiny tends to keep any important field on its toes and accountable to the public. Like medicine, nursing should be covered warts and all. One more thing to think about. Editors should lose the nurse nostalgia bit. Not long ago *The Atlantic Monthly* inserted sentimentalized images of nurses complete with angels' wings into a book excerpt on contemporary nursing, and *Working Woman* illustrated a nurse employment trend piece with a decades-old picture of a lineup of nurses in starched uniforms and caps. What editor today would illustrate a medical story with a doctor wearing an otolaryngeal mirror strapped around his head? Registered nurses haven't worn white caps since the 1970's, yet such pictures abound. These images lose their romantic appeal when you realize that you wouldn't want a nurse with 19th Century or even 1950's education and training to take care of you any more than you would



A contemporary image of nursing. *Photo by Stan Grossfeld, The Boston Globe.*

want a surgeon with training limited to those periods to operate on you.

It's time for the journalistic community to recognize nurses for what they are—flesh and blood professionals who, unlike angels, need to be paid for the extremely hard and critical work that they do and who, like their patients, are endangered in our health care system. By reporting on the vital roles nurses play in patient treatment

and care and by seeking out their perspectives in any coverage of health care, journalists would add critical dimensions to the ongoing debates about what health care is going to be like for Americans in the 21st Century. ■

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Newsweek. She taught journalism for many years at Boston University and has been a Knight Journalism Fellow at Stanford and a fellow in the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. She is President of the Writers' Room of Boston, which provides affordable, quiet and secure workspace for writers.

Nursing Stories Journalists Fail to Cover

A nurse raises vital questions that reporters should be asking.

By Jean Chaisson

I am a professional nurse. I live in a nation that spends astronomical amounts of money on health care. I work within a health care system that has the ability to provide excellent preventative measures, diagnosis, treatment and care to people. But all of this depends upon patient access to not only doctors who can prescribe treatments, but to skilled nurses whose care is essential to recovering and maintaining the well-being of patients.

Yet where in the news media and public debate do we find attention to the fact that this country has systematically curtailed expert nursing care? To cope with growing health care costs, insurers have incrementally changed what constitutes grounds for hospital admission as well as appropriate parameters for discharge, and at the same time ignored the role that skilled nurses in a hospital setting can and do play in patients' treatment.

Patients who would have been admitted to the hospital 15 years ago are now routinely denied admission. Those cared for in the hospital are more acutely ill than ever before, and they are often discharged while they are still in need of nursing care. Because of their greater degree of illness, patients today need more attentive nursing care.

Yet, in hospitals we often have too few nurses to manage their care on busy nursing units. This has made it difficult for me and thousands of other nurses like me to ensure that patients get the care that they deserve, the best care that we know how to provide.

This is what it is like to be a nurse in the hospital today. As I help an elderly woman from the wheelchair into a hospital bed, my assessment is quick and easy—moderately severe dehydration, fever, productive cough, dizziness, nausea. I immediately hang intravenous fluids, treat the fever and nausea, and move her to a room adjacent to the nurses' station where she can be observed frequently and receive help quickly if she tries to get out of bed. Her attending physician comes in and shares his frustrations. "She's been in the emergency room twice over the past weekend. It's probably just bronchitis, but I begged them to admit her this time because I was afraid if they sent her home again, she would die," this doctor told me.

When did we, as a system, start to ignore the all-too-evident needs of patients when they fail to fit into tidy medical admission categories? How much professional nursing time will be spent, not on treating this woman's

very real health problems, but on ensuring that the wording in the chart will help the hospital to be reimbursed for this care? The answer: too much!

I spend 40 minutes in conversation with a wakeful patient in the middle of the night. Admitted because she hemorrhaged after treatment of a recently diagnosed tumor, she is unable to sleep while she wonders what will happen to her family now that they have entered the unfamiliar and uncertain terrain of cancer. How will her young children cope with her illness? How can she help her husband manage his anger, depression and grief at this catastrophe? Her nurses and physicians have aggressively managed and stabilized her physical condition over the past two days, but nobody has had a chance to help her understand what this will mean to her life. Our conversation helps her to understand her current and future treatment plans, to articulate the questions that she needs to ask her oncologists, and to start planning for family supports.

Comforted, she is able to sleep.

Continuing my rounds, I find another patient well into a severe asthma attack. After arranging for treatment of his crisis and transferring him to a critical care unit, I am left feeling over-

whelmed. With so many patients who are so very ill, how many places can I be at once? Several months later, when I read the cancer patient's obituary, I know her need for my care was as great as the respiratory patient's. I am grateful that I was able to help her sort through the tangle of emotions and fears that prevented her from resting that night. Yet I also know that if I had evaluated the other patient sooner, he might have been stabilized without the necessity of intensive care.

I recall the sinking feeling of finding a patient, weakened by illness, on the floor next

to his bed. He has fallen while trying to get to the bathroom unassisted—he did not want to bother me, knowing that I am very busy. As I carefully lift him back to bed and evaluate for possible head injury or hip fracture, I realize that it has been over 30 minutes since I last passed here—how long ago did he fall? While I am bathing him and changing his soiled hospital gown prior to sending him for emergency x-rays, I realize that a diabetic patient's evening insulin dose will now be at least 45 minutes late, and wonder if yet another patient's pain medication has worn off. I know that it will be another 20 minutes before I can check in on him.

Nowhere does the poverty of access to nursing care become more evident than when I am attempting to prepare a family to take home a frail parent. There is always a lot of teaching and preparation to be done, a lot for a family to learn: how to manage the medications; how to help with walking, balancing, bathing; how to tell when the disease is getting worse, and whom to call



Today, fewer nurses are available to meet patients' many needs. *Reproduced from originals in the Center for the Study of the History of Nursing, School of Nursing, University of Pennsylvania.*

in an emergency. The visiting nurses from the home care agency will be in to see and evaluate the patient, and home health assistants will come in several times weekly, but the brunt of the responsibility will rest on the shoulders of sons, daughters, nieces, nephews and grandchildren—anyone who can pitch in and help.

Now, even as I assure the family that the home care nurse will be out tomorrow to evaluate the situation, I wonder how many visits will be allowed? With the latest cutbacks in reimbursement for the care of our sickest and frailest

patients, ongoing professional evaluation and support that has enabled families to care for their elders at home is being terminated soon after discharge from the hospital.

As I read an article in my local paper about patient deaths, it seems to me that inadequate staffing may be a factor. I am frustrated to once again see that obvious questions are not being addressed: How many nurses were on the unit that night? How many patients were they caring for? How sick were those patients? How much necessary care, monitoring, surveillance, could not be attended to despite the best efforts of nurses who probably did not sit down once all night?

The article zeroed in on automated alarm systems, questioning whether they were they functioning or adequate. It makes me wonder how the reporters can fail to realize that an alarm can only trigger a prompt assessment. If the nurse is not available to respond, then the alarm is useless. Why did these investigative journalists fail to ask nurses what might have happened to result in these patients' deaths?

The fiscal realities that drive the impoverishment of care are very real. But our citizens have never declared that the professional nurses whose care provides comfort, dignity, education and safety are luxuries that we can no longer afford. It's just happening, and nobody—least of all journalists—seems to be paying attention. ■

Jean Chaisson has 19 years of experience as a registered nurse in hospital care. Since 1984 she has been a clinical nurse and nurse specialist at a major Boston teaching hospital.

Here are some Web sites to help reporters:

American Association of Colleges of Nursing
<http://www.aacn.nche.edu/media>

American Nurses Association
<http://www.nursingworld.org/rnrealnews>

National Institute of Nursing Research
<http://www.nih.gov/ninr/InTheNews.htm>

University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing
<http://www.nursing.upenn.edu/news>

What Happens When Journalists Envision a Web Site and Techies Try to Build It?

Generations clash. Cultures collide. And promises cannot be kept.

By Edward M. Fouhy

When Eckhard Pfeiffer abruptly resigned as President of Compaq, the top company in the world in personal computer sales, we learned one reason for his troubles: getting the software that managed Digital's factories (Digital Equipment Corporation, which Compaq had bought) to work with the software that runs Compaq's factories.

When I read that account in USA Today, I thought that if these two computer giants can't figure out a way to get their act together, no wonder we've had so much trouble with our Web design firm. I had a mental picture of programmers from Compaq trying to make sense of the computer code written by their new colleagues at Digital—and failing. That's because this is what it's been like for stateline.org, the new Web venture I've been putting together with my colleagues for the past nine months. Once again, it seems, the promise held by computers and the people who program and, in this case, build them, outruns their ability to deliver what we might think they can.

And therein lies my tale of Web journalism. If computers are leading the country into some vague, post-industrial future and Web architecture, a fancy term for software, is the industry of the 1990's as well as Wall Street's current darling, there's something wrong with this picture. In fact, it turns out there is something terribly wrong when the point of the enterprise is to create a place where serious journalism can be practiced. It's as though we come from different tribes; we the jour-

nalists, them the programmers. Our language, our customs and habits all arrive with us from different planets.

A bit of background is in order: Since last January 25 stateline.org, a creature of the Pew Center on the States, has been published every day. It's essentially an information service for state house reporters and anyone else who wants it. Our target audience includes policymakers and engaged citizens, defined as that small band of citizens who take a serious interest in public policy debates. Those debates increasingly take place in state legislatures,

thanks to devolution fever that has swept Congress since the Republican takeover in 1994. About 1600 readers visit us daily. We attract them with thorough, careful reporting on major problems facing state legislatures: education, taxes, welfare reform, utility deregulation and health care. We read 140 newspapers each day on line. We excerpt their coverage of state government, link to their Web sites, add our own reporting and publish it all at 11 a.m. each day.

We are deadline addicts: All eight of us journalists are refugees from news-

THE PEW CENTER on the STATES

stateline.org

Friday, July 16, 1999

Littleton Soccer Moms Affect Gun Debate
By Clare Nolan, Senior Writer

the GUN Debate

When California Governor Gray Davis signs a bill limiting buyers to one handgun a month, gun-control advocates will have scored their first victory stemming directly from the massacre in Littleton, Colorado. The Littleton murders combined with a hardening of public attitudes against guns in the nation's cities and suburbs have, temporarily at least, propelled gun control to the top of the political agenda for the first time in six years. Follow the latest news on gun control and the NRA agenda in this stateline.org report. *full story*

Doctors Call For Moratorium On Hepatitis B Vaccine
By Sunny Kaplan, Staff Writer

An Arizona group of physicians has called for a moratorium on controversial hepatitis B immunizations for schoolchildren pending further study of possible dangerous side effects from the vaccine, and accuses school districts that require the shots of "practicing medicine without a license." In a separate development last week, the U.S. Public Health Service and the powerful American Academy of Pediatrics recommended that the first dose of hepatitis B vaccine be postponed from birth until two to six months of age because it contains the mercury-based preservative thimerosal, which can be toxic if small infants receive too much of it. *full story*

Today's Top State News -- updated each weekday at 11 am Eastern time

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papers or network television. Our Managing Editor, Gene Gibbons, is a veteran wire service reporter who spent the last 12 years as chief White House correspondent for Reuters. What sets us apart from the thousands of other sites on the Web is not only our experience in journalism but also our vision of what people are looking for on the Web. We think it's our ability to give readers the tools they need to tailor the information we provide to meet their deadlines or their information needs.

- Interested in education in Indiana? With two mouse clicks we'll bring you up to date on every significant story on schools and education policy in the Hoosier state.
- Want to compare the tax burden in Wisconsin to that in Maryland? We can do that as fast as your Pentium chip will allow.
- Want to be notified every time there is something significant to report about the great social experiment with welfare reform?

We are the one stop state policy shop. You can drill deep into our information well or take what you want off the surface. But all of that fast break

information rendering is, it turns out, not so easy for a computer to put together.

Our site is not your average newspaper-on-the-Internet. That, I have learned, is what programmers, another name for the techies who write the code that make computers do what they do, call a static site. You put it up and the computer literate come and read it. Not much interaction, no tailoring the information to individuals' special needs. Not so different from what journalists have always done. The only difference is that on the Web the news doesn't get wet on rainy days.

What we designed (with the help of three of last year's Nieman Fellows) is, in techno-speak, a database-driven site. Our consultant, who helped with the site design, almost fell off his chair laughing when I told him what I wanted to create and added, "It ought to be easy."

Now I know why he laughed.

Call it rule number one: Nothing is easy and certainly nothing is cheap when it comes to the creation of on-line journalism at this point in the development of the Web and at this level of complexity. Our troubles fell into two categories. The first is attitude and the second is software. By attitude I mean the youthful brio that occasion-

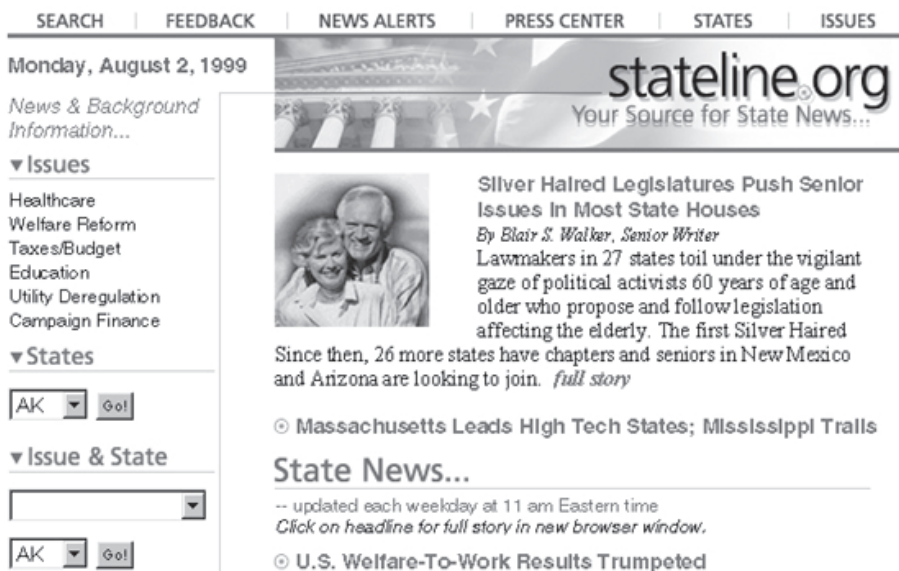
ally morphs into arrogance which characterizes so much of the Internet. I'm old enough to have been around when television news was new and most of us who were attracted to it were young and liked to try new techniques because they had never been tried before, or because no one knew what viewers would watch, or because we knew we would get a rise out of our elders just by doing it.

The Web is like that. No one knows where it's going, or how it will look when it grows up. It's only five years old. Maybe it will turn out to be just another giant shopping mall, or maybe it will be a medium that really deserves all its hype. Maybe it truly will help to connect people and serve democracy as well as commerce. But for now it's a giant, sprawling, infuriatingly disorganized, untidy place where millionaires are created overnight; where consolidation is ongoing and firms are bought and sold in a flash, and where 22 year olds who can write code are earning \$55,000 a year.

You can be sure of one thing: This is not a place where journalism and the ethics that govern it find a natural home. There's a Wild West atmosphere to all of this, and impatience with anything that's not digital. Anything part of the past is perceived as having little merit. And to the casual observer, the visual power of various news sites can obscure the fact that the information they provide can be wildly inaccurate and unscrupulously biased. It's a world governed, if it's governed at all, by Nike's slogan, "Just do it."

Like the Web itself, our programmers are young and energetic. You have to be to write the lines of code that make things go. But I have a mental picture of intense men and women working into the night, fueled by a steady diet of takeout pizza and Diet Cokes like the first programmers I ever met at M.I.T.'s Media Lab a decade ago. The difference is now they charge \$125 an hour.

Our Web design firm disdained the kind of normal business practices most of us learned a long time ago because they help lubricate the normal friction



A later stage in designing the site. Images courtesy of stateline.org

in any business relationship. Getting this firm to negotiate a contract, for example, was a major undertaking. So was convincing a technocrat that an invoice for more than \$70,000 containing just five words to describe the work being billed for that handsome sum fell short of acceptable business practice.

And then there is Cold Fusion. I thought Cold Fusion was something followers of the Reverend Sun Myung Moon tried to sell to unwary travelers at airports in the 1980's. Turns out it's a name for software used to manage big, complex, database-driven Web sites. It should have been easy to make it become the engine that drives our site. But it isn't, and the techies don't know why.

"We're meeting with the vendor and we're sure we can work it out," they said.

That assurance was months ago. Must be a long meeting.

Still, our Web site works or most of it does most of the time. Our readers don't complain. Most love us for what we're publishing. They don't know the ideas we have in our heads that we can't execute. They don't know all the features we had hoped to add and haven't been able to. It's as though we had designed a 747, but the plane we take off in every day is more like a 707. It gets you where you want to go, but not in quite the style or comfort we imagined our visitors would be traveling in or thought we paid for.

The lesson I've drawn from all the agony of the last nine months? Journalism in cyberspace may have solved distribution problems: The report arrives every day no matter the weather, and it's never necessary to retrieve it from

the bushes where the boy heaved it. But imposing standards is a full-time job. Techies, like the Web itself, are value neutral. They promise more than they deliver and don't always grasp why some things we ask for are important in upholding the tenets of good journalism. Everything costs more than they said it would.

Nothing is as easy as you think it ought to be.

And without vigilance, the news standards on which all of this ought to be built can start to slip away. ■

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Is 'New Media' Really New?

For news agency reporters, technology changes but not how the job is done.

By Kevin Noblet

I'm soaking in the tub at my home in Santiago, Chile, when my wife hands me the portable phone. It's the broadcast desk of the Associated Press calling, wanting some Q-and-A for radio. I wonder if the echo from the yellow wall tiles and glass shower door is noticeable and will spoil my report, but I decide to stay put. I need to clean up and, just as much, I need the rest.

"Testing. Testing. Does this sound OK?" I ask the producer. He's sitting in a recording booth in Washington, D.C. I don't tell him exactly where I am. I just try not to slosh around too much.

"Just great."

"Really?"

"Really. It's great. Let's start...."

That was back in 1988, when I was the Associated Press's Bureau Chief in Chile, where the regime of Gen. Augusto Pinochet was surrendering

[News agencies] still remain, in some senses, in the shadows, easy to overlook despite our key role in the traditional news industry—and our equally important role in the so-called New Media.

power to civilians in a riveting political process with lots of national angst and a fair amount of tear gas. My primary duty was putting out AP's written report, an around-the-clock affair since the agency provides stories not just to thousands of American newspapers but to thousands more papers, television and radio stations elsewhere around the world. From Santiago we did this in two languages, English and Spanish. I

also oversaw our photographic service, directing our Chilean photographers, often writing their captions and transmitting their photos. Sometimes I'd even make prints for them and, on rare occasions, take a photo myself. And since the AP also provided sound to radio stations, I helped out with that.

Back then, nobody talked about multimedia, or new media. Those terms, a hot currency now in the indus-

try and in journalism schools, had yet to be coined, just as the World Wide Web had yet to spin itself over all of our lives. But some of us, especially those of us in the AP and some other news agencies, were already well acquainted with the challenges of juggling the demands of several news media and with the expectation of instant delivery in each.

A decade later, as the new media become the big issue everywhere, from Wall Street trading floors to journalism school lecture halls, some of us are asking ourselves—quietly, because we know it could make us sound like old cranks when we do it—what's really new here?

Certainly it is not the concept of quick, almost constant updates. I'd been with the AP eight years, and overseas for four, when I did that direct-

from-the-bath broadcast. And I'd long been accustomed to the difference between my work and that of the newspaper correspondents, who would head off

for dinner or bed after filing their one story of the day. I stayed at my desk or my laptop until midnight doing updates for late editions of morning papers, and then filing a final "turn" of the story for early editions of afternoon papers. Then, in the morning, I'd be back at it, "freshening" that story with the day's first events, and then again at noon, and so on.

This is standard procedure for agency reporters around the world and, of course, was long before even the advent of CNN. In larger bureaus, such as London, Moscow and Tokyo, a large staff can divide the labor into shifts. They also can specialize to a degree, in economics reporting, say, or in sports. But in smaller bureaus, such as Hanoi, Abidjan, or Santiago, to name just a few, it's up to one or two reporters to handle it all of the time and to help out in all different kinds of media.

Four years ago, the AP joined the

news video industry, adding yet another dimension to our jobs. While experienced, professional television camera operators and producers were hired and assigned around the world, the AP writers already in place had to work with them, sharing cars and planes. AP correspondents had to start "thinking visually," as well as in words, radio and still pictures. It was not unheard of for a writer to be asked, in a real pinch, to carry a high-8 camera and take some video while on assignment, just as TV producers and still photographers are sometimes asked to provide written stories when a writer isn't around. (And they sometimes come up with the day's best stories.)

At the AP, we've come to take this collaboration, and the "multitasking" it often requires of us, for granted. I was reminded that not everyone does

Yet in the steady drone of panel discussions, op-ed commentaries, journalism articles and so forth, it is remarkable how rarely any reference to news agencies is made.

when I read Kari Huus's account, in the Winter 1998 Nieman Reports, of her work as MSNBC's correspondent in Jakarta, Indonesia. Huus wrote: "Had I been with a newspaper or magazine reporter, I would have been taking notes and planning to go back to the hotel to write only when my weekly and daily print deadline was upon me. Had I been working in television or radio, I would have been shooting with a particular news slot in mind. But writing for the Internet, making the usual editorial calls—when and how much to file—is more complicated. The medium's strong suits—speed and versatility—mean the scope of choices is enormous."

Agency journalists rarely find themselves with all of the demands that Huus did, simultaneously carrying a video camera, still camera, recorder and notebook. But in many respects the new media world Huus found her-

self in is the same old world for agency journalists. One proof of that assertion is found in the technology she describes using to deliver her words and images—digital cameras and recorders, which were largely developed for, and first put to use by, the news agencies. For years now we've also been toting satellite telephones and other high-tech gear used to transmit news from the world's most remote locations.

Of course the Internet has its own special qualities, including, as Huus aptly points out, a direct connection to the public. The feedback, intense and immediate, that she describes getting from viewers and readers is something I never received in my years reporting from abroad. There was always a long time lag as letters moved through the international mails. She is right to wonder about the im-

lications of an instant public response and the whole concept of "interactive" news. Agency journalists get feedback, but it usually comes first from the editors

who monitor our services at newspapers and TV and radio stations. They've never been shy about calling right away to point out what they perceive as a problem in the coverage—an error, a hole, a contradiction between one agency's story and another's. Cards and letters from the public come more slowly, and less frequently, because we're one step removed from it. We reach the public only when our stories are carried by a newspaper, TV or radio station, so consequently those news outlets are the ones that often get the attention.

When The Dallas Morning News publishes an AP story, or ABC-TV carries it, the public is inclined to see that story as a product of The Dallas Morning News, or ABC-TV, even if it carries that (AP) logo or, in the case of TV, if it is attributed to us. The lack of a direct connection is now starting to change, with the advent a couple of years ago of

The Wire, the AP's news Web site. We don't offer it directly to the public, and it can only be reached when a newspaper or broadcast outlet contracts with us for the service. But the public responds directly with E-mailed comments, which then are relayed to writers and editors.

But we still remain, in some senses, in the shadows, easy to overlook despite our key role in the traditional news industry—and our equally important role in the so-called “new media.” Take a close look at any news Web site, be it run by a newspaper or television channel or a hot new Internet startup. You will see that the bulk of the stories and images it is offering for consumption is news that is being updated throughout the day and night which comes from the so-called traditional news agencies. It's the same old agency reporting that used to feed only into a newsroom ticker and then when the world became computerized went into the newsroom mainframe. Only now it has a new look and, of course, with nifty linking of words, sound and video.

I do sometimes wonder how in their discussion of new media issues journalists can forget about this. Yet in the steady drone of panel discussions, op-ed commentaries, journalism articles and so forth, it is remarkable how rarely any reference to news agencies is made. But of course, some journalists themselves are not much more familiar than the public with what the news agencies are producing or the practices they are employing. (I'd humbly suggest that they might pursue a greater familiarity with how we work for answers to some of their questions on how, for instance, to deliver news quickly and, at the same time, try to ensure balance and fairness and avoid breathlessness or hype.)

Don't get me wrong: I'm not at all unhappy with innovation, or jealous of new media. The truth is I'm thrilled, and nearly all my news agency colleagues are delighted to see our news reports appearing within seconds on hundreds of news Web sites. And we're excited about what many new techno-

logical advances are allowing us—reporters and editors alike—to accomplish. From the most distant, disconnected corners of the plant—Antarctica, for instance, or the Brazilian rainforest—we are able to send stories and images over the Internet. Satellite phones shrink in size and price every year, and now laptop-sized models can be used to transmit words and photos from, say, a jungle outpost or from a city cut off from the world by war. Larger systems still are needed to transmit video by our TV crews, but those are becoming more compact, too.

Not only can a reporter send a story from that remote location, but an editor can send it back minutes later with changes for review by the reporter. Then editor and reporter can get on the phone to discuss finer points of structure, context and word choice, and the need for an in-depth follow-up or sidebar or details for a graphic. I've had these discussions with reporters as they sat out on some African walking trail or in a slum alleyway 6,000 miles away from my desk at AP's New York headquarters.

My guess is that not all reporters would always say they are thrilled at becoming so accessible to their editors. But it does enable us to put out a quicker, better written and more informed report. It has enabled us to reach and cover stories that would not have been covered nearly as thoroughly or quickly. The 1994 genocide in Rwanda, for instance, and the refugee crisis that followed it would have gone largely uncovered, or would have been covered with a significant delay, without the satellite phones that AP could bring to Kigali and to Goma and many places in between. The war in Chechnya also would have gone largely uncovered: There were no phones at the front.

By working in several media, we are able to create an impact that words alone, or even words and still photos alone, could not have, not just on The Wire Web site but almost more importantly, in the venue we are most familiar with: the newsroom. We can create a kind of self-reinforcing cycle when

we send a TV, photo and writing team to the same story. In TV news centers, editors pick up their morning paper, read the AP story and ask, “Do we have that?” while across town, in the newspaper newsroom, an editor is watching AP's television footage of the same story and asking, “Do we have that?” The exhilarating result: blanket coverage, all across that town and, often enough, across the world of a story nobody may have otherwise given much notice.

The trick, of course, is not to let the exhilaration, and the intense pressure, of juggling several fast-moving media distract us from the same old core concerns that good reporters and editors always have had: Are we being accurate and fair? Are our sources of information reliable, and should we double-check? Is the story in context, and does it supply the context a reader needs to understand it? Have we told the story clearly and well? Some things are staying, and should stay, the same.

Today a story crossed my desk from a reporter of ours in Shanghai about a Hong Kong businessman's plan to deliver the Internet to Chinese through their televisions, using a simple and inexpensive joystick instead of a costly PC with keyboard and monitor. Bill Gates was in China several months ago, investing in a project along similar lines. Maybe it will succeed, or maybe some other scheme will come along first. No doubt about it: The world is undergoing some head-spinning changes and the news industry will change, too, because of them.

But as our heads spin with the possibilities of global and instantaneous delivery, media variety, interactivity and so on, we can help keep our balance by asking that cranky-sounding but basic and always valid (especially for journalists) question: What's really new here? ■

Kevin Noblet is Deputy International Editor at the Associated Press and a 1991 Nieman Fellow. (See Nieman Notes, page 81, for more on Noblet.)

Words & Reflections

“What difference does it make that a family newspaper stays in the family?” This is the question posed by **Alex S. Jones**, author (along with Susan E. Tift) of the forthcoming book, “The Trust: The Private and Powerful Family Behind The New York Times” and “The Patriarch,” a history of the Bingham family’s publishing dynasty. He is also in the fourth generation of a newspaper family. His essay—along with an excerpt from “The Trust,” describing Punch Sulzberger’s decision to publish the Pentagon Papers—explores how journalism can be affected by ownership.

Maria Henson, Deputy Editorial Page Editor of the Austin American-Statesman, looks at the life of Charlotte Curtis, the first woman on The New York Times’s masthead. In her review of Marilyn S. Greenwald’s biography of Curtis, Henson notes that Curtis “paid a price for her ambivalence toward the women’s movement in losing the friendship and respect of female colleagues.”

Sharon Green, Senior Cultural Editor for National Public Radio, reviews Yale University political scientist Martin Gilens’s book about roles the media play in shaping public perception about poverty, welfare and race. She finds his scholarly examination of news imagery of race and poverty compelling, and his guidance to journalists—based on his findings—important.

Michael J. Kirkhorn, Director of the Journalism Program at Gonzaga University, looks at ways in which U.S. broadcast journalists responded to Cold War propaganda in his review of Nancy E. Bernhard’s book on these issues. “We shouldn’t be surprised to learn that network journalists and executives lent or sold themselves to the agencies of anticommunist government propaganda during the early years of the Cold War,” Kirkhorn’s review begins.

Elizabeth Leland, a part-time reporter for The Charlotte Observer, read the published letters of Larry L. King and came away amused by moments when he engages in “wonderful storytelling” (including incidents during his Nieman year). But her interest waned when he turned to recording “minute details about what he’s writing or how much he’s drinking.”

Harvard Law School professor **Elizabeth Bartholet** and **Lori B. Andrews**, professor at Chicago-Kent College of Law, each have written books about public policy issues related to the formation of families. Each has focused on legal and social aspects of how families are organized and function and the rights of children within them. Bartholet writes primarily about adoption and child welfare, whereas Andrews explores the rapidly expanding realms of reproductive technologies. Each author is widely quoted by journalists. In separate articles, Bartholet and Andrews set forth difficulties they confront in trying to maintain the integrity of their research and their perspective in the midst of what today’s media appear to demand.

The Inestimable Value of Family Ownership

As corporate newspaper ownership increases, independent decision-making is lost.

By Alex S. Jones

My wife, Susan E. Tifft, and I have spent the last seven years writing a multigenerational biography of the Sulzberger family called “The Trust: The Private and Powerful Family Behind The New York Times.” Before that we wrote a biography of the Bingham family called “The Patriarch.” Both the Bingham and the Sulzbergers published newspapers of extraordinary quality, and both were family dynasties with great traditions. Yet the Sulzberger book is the story of a great success, and the book on the Bingham tells of a very unhappy failure.

Why? And, perhaps more important, what difference does it make that a family newspaper stays in the family?

In 1986, the collapse of the Bingham hit the nation’s newspaper-owning families like an icy wind. There aren’t a lot of us anymore, and we few who remain feel like remnants of a world rapidly passing.

I am in the fourth generation of a family that has owned The Greeneville (TN) Sun for 83 years, and my father and two brothers still run the paper. During my childhood, I cannot remember a single dinner that wasn’t interrupted by a call for my father, almost always from someone who was furious. In the 1950’s, we went to meetings of the Tennessee Press Association with dozens of other families like ours. Now there are only a handful of owner-families who attend. From our perspective, the grim reaper has cut down all but a few survivors, and those of us still standing fear it’s just a matter of time until he comes for us.

When my father read an account of how the Bingham had self-destructed as a family and were selling The Courier-Journal and The Louisville Times, he was ashen at the thought that the

same thing might happen to us. The Bingham tragedy was a great cautionary tale with a profound message: A family newspaper is—above all else—a *family* business.

A.O. “Punch” Sulzberger, the head of the nation’s most powerful newspaper clan, captured the gist of the lesson in a quip that made the rounds at the time. In the midst of the furor over the Bingham story, Punch was attending a board meeting of a newspaper organization. When he went to find the men’s room someone asked, “Where are you going?” He replied, in a deadpan voice, “To send flowers to my sisters.”

It would be wrong to think that the overwhelming consolidation of newspaper ownership in the last 40 years was rooted in family strife. It is a natural evolution for businesses to change hands, and newspapers have always been bought and sold. My family acquired The Greeneville Sun from another family that had been in the newspaper business in Greeneville for more than half a century. At that time, the Sun represented a way to make a decent living, but it was hardly a ticket to wealth. What has changed is that technology allowed newspapers to become quite profitable, and suddenly families weren’t selling to other families, but to corporations that could pay far more.

The Bingham were not one of those families that cashed out just for the money; they had done extensive estate planning calculated to keep their papers in the family for at least another generation. And they could have done so had Barry Bingham, Sr. and his wife, Mary, decided to favor one of their warring children over the others. But they could not bring themselves to do that and—in hopes of peace—elected instead to sell and divide the proceeds.

While the Bingham may have been

an unhappy family, they were exemplary newspaper owners. Barry Bingham, Jr., who was furious at his father’s decision to sell, is a man who cares enormously about journalism ethics and would likely have been a powerful voice for stringent journalistic standards in today’s equivocal environment had he remained at the head of the family business. He did not, and journalism is the poorer for it.

The Sulzbergers demonstrate what is possible in a different family environment. The family has its stresses, its strains and its frictions. There are many more people to keep happy than in the Bingham clan, and most members of the family have no direct connection with the Times. A sale would make everyone fabulously rich. In other words, the Sulzbergers might seem to have far more going against them than did the Bingham.

Indeed, there was every reason to think that the transition of power from Punch and his three sisters—the third generation—to their 13 offspring could have been a disaster. The way the family had always handled important decisions was for the older generation to deliberate and simply hand down a ruling. It was considered rude to even ask questions. Punch had waited quietly for his parents to tell him whether he would be made publisher of the Times. And when his sister Ruth was made publisher of The Chattanooga Times—where Adolph Ochs, the family patriarch, made his start—no one had even discussed it with her.

To Punch’s son, Arthur Sulzberger, Jr., and the other members of the fourth generation, this was not an appropriate model. But instead of going to war with their seniors, they asked their parents to support a painstaking effort to reinvent the way the family oper-

ated. The result was a process in which the fourth and fifth generations of the Sulzberger family, including all spouses, formally declared that the good of The New York Times comes before their ambitions and interests. Remarkably, they seem to mean this.

And just as exceptionally, Punch and his sisters have gracefully—and almost completely—stepped aside. Two of the three sisters have retired from the board, which prompted genuine pain. One sister, Marian, said giving up her board seat was like losing a limb. Seldom has an older generation of ownership relinquished so much control with so little bitterness and hard feeling. As a result of the good will and sacrifice of both generations, family covenants assure that the Times will stay in Sulzberger hands for another century.

What difference does it make that the Times remains in family hands?

One short anecdote tells the tale.

In 1987, the Times was riding high and business was booming. Then came the stock market crash, which devastated New York, and a widespread newspaper recession squeezed the whole industry. During the next four

years, the Times lost about 40 percent of its advertising lineage—a staggering hit. Yet, in each one of those four years, the news budget for The New York Times increased. It is at moments such as this when the family matters. There is almost certainly not another newspaper in the country that would have made the judgment that the quality of the news was worth that burden on the bottom line. This is especially the case when papers are owned by corporations fixated on short-term profit and loss. While The New York Times Company is serious about profit, it is even more serious about what the family terms “value.”

Similarly, it was Punch who decided to publish the Pentagon Papers in 1971. [See an accompanying excerpt on this episode from “The Trust.”] He consulted neither his own board nor the pundits of Wall Street, although what he did put the whole company at risk. Indeed, his own lawyers refused to defend the Times when the Attorney General tried to stop publication of the classified documents. Punch simply made the decision he thought proper and never looked back. He had the

support that counted: that of his sisters and his mother, Iphigene Ochs Sulzberger, who was Adolph Ochs’s only child. The family.

It is certainly true that corporate ownership has made some newspapers better than they were under family control. But I’d gladly trade the formulaic predictability of a McDonald’s hamburger for the hope of something sublime at a roadside diner, despite occasional cases of heartburn. And when the chips are down, I would rather trust a family with the critical job of running a town’s newspaper than I would a big, anonymous corporation. Maybe decisions would not be any better, but at least you’d know whose dinner to interrupt. ■

Alex S. Jones co-authored “The Trust: The Private and Powerful Family Behind The New York Times,” with Susan E. Tift. They share the Eugene Patterson Professorship at Duke University. Jones is also Host and Executive Editor of “Media Matters” on PBS. He is a 1982 Nieman Fellow.

Punch Sulzberger’s Pentagon Papers Decision

Excerpt from “The Trust: The Private and Powerful Family Behind The New York Times,” by Susan E. Tift and Alex S. Jones, published by Little, Brown and Company, 1999

On a blustery Friday in late March 1971, Neil Sheehan, a Washington correspondent for The New York Times, and his wife, Susan, a writer for The New Yorker, arrived in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and checked into the Treadway Motor House near Harvard Square, registering as Mr. and Mrs. Thompson. Hours later Sheehan called Bill Kovach, the Times’ Boston bureau chief, from a pay phone. “I need some help,” he said. After weeks of negotiation, Sheehan had persuaded Daniel Ellsberg, a researcher at MIT’s Center for International Studies, to let him see a top-secret historical study of America’s

involvement in Vietnam. The forty-seven-volume work had been commissioned in 1967 by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, who had grown increasingly disenchanted with the war and had ordered a historical study to trace the roots of the United States’ engagement. Lyndon Johnson had known nothing about the study, and of the fifteen copies distributed at the time of its completion in 1969, only one went to an official in the Nixon Administration: National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger....

Twelve weeks later Punch [Sulzberger] gave the green light to publish what came to be known as the

Pentagon Papers, despite having been advised by the paper’s lawyers that the Times might be sued and driven into financial ruin and that he himself might go to jail. The far greater worry, by his own reckoning, was that readers might judge the Times to be treasonous. Punch had weighed all these factors carefully, but once he finally made up his mind, he became immovable. When Louis Loeb, the paper’s outside counsel, refused to defend the paper’s actions in court, Punch dismissed the man who had represented the Times, and the Sulzberger family, since 1948, and sought legal advice elsewhere. “We are going to look back on these days as

some of the most exhilarating in the history of the Times and...in the history of American journalism." Punch wrote managing editor Abe Rosenthal after the Pentagon Papers episode was over, with the Times more secure than ever in its greatness.

The same could be said of Punch. The publication of the Pentagon Papers was his grand, defining moment, a moment in which he took his bearings from his heritage and his own values and instincts, and steered the paper safely and surely toward the "right" decision....

Punch was deeply anxious about the consequences of his decision, but he had no real qualms that his choice was correct. He had not consulted his mother or his sisters, but simply informed them of his decision shortly before publication. Likewise, the Times' directors had no idea ahead of time that the paper was about to put itself at risk. The board doesn't discuss editorial matters," Punch explained....

It took Sheehan a month to sort through the papers and prepare his presentation. In a meetings with the Times's top editors, he briefed them on the origin and scope of the Pentagon study. All agreed that this secret history of the Vietnam War should be published.

...in a conference room off the Times' third-floor newsroom, [Abe] Rosenthal, Scotty [Reston], and other top editors told Punch about the Pentagon report for the first time. "The more I listened, the more certain I became that the entire operation smelled of twenty years to life," Punch would recall more than two decades later. At the time, he said little. "I'm not sure we should publish this stuff," he muttered to Sydney Gruson as they went back upstairs. "The question is not whether we should publish it," Gruson replied. "The question is how we'll publish it. That's all."

A few days later Punch convened a conference of editors, senior executives, and lawyers in the Times' boardroom to discuss what should be done. With Adolph looking down from his

portrait above the fireplace, the meeting quickly turned tense. Louis Loeb argued passionately against disclosure of secret information. By publishing classified material, the paper not only would be in violation of the Espionage Act, he warned, it would violate its own tradition of responsible journalism. Executive vice president Harding Bancroft, a former legal adviser in the State Department, agreed: to publish would be to invite economic and political ruin.

The editors lined up unanimously on the opposing side. The Times had published classified documents many times in the past, they pointed out. After all, hadn't Scotty Reston won a Pulitzer Prize for his stories on the Dumbarton Oaks Conference, which were based on privileged information? Of the lawyers present, only [James] Goodale, the Times' general counsel, allied himself with the editors. If the stories were presented carefully, he said, higher courts would never sustain an injunction or criminal conviction against the Times.

After listening to the debate, Punch told Rosenthal to continue preparing the material but that he had not yet made up his own mind about whether the Times should publish it. Though Punch almost never interfered in the news judgments of his editors, in this case, he said to Rosenthal, he and he alone would make the final decision....

Meanwhile, the battle for the soul of Punch was in full cry. About three weeks after the acrimonious meeting in the boardroom, a delegation from Louis Loeb's law firm, Lord, Day & Lord, convened with Punch and three of the paper's senior executives; this time no editors were invited. Accompanying Loeb was senior partner Herbert Brownell, an éminence grise of the Republican Party. As Eisenhower's attorney general, Brownell had drafted the presidential executive order establishing the system for classifying documents. In the publisher's back sitting room he solemnly predicted that if the Times printed the Pentagon history, Punch and others would probably go to jail and the Times would be damaged beyond imagining. "He scared

the bejesus out of me," recalled Punch. Goodale, who was present, urged Loeb and Brownell to at least look at the documents before they made such a rigid judgment, but they refused, claiming that even to read them constituted a crime. Loeb then invoked a name certain to resonate with Punch. He was absolutely certain, he said, that Arthur Hays Sulzberger would never publish such material.

For weeks Punch had wrestled with every aspect of the dilemma, knowing full well that the decision before him was actually a series of decisions. First he had to choose whether to publish anything at all; then, how much material; and finally, in what form. Each element provoked a roiling debate. His gut told him that Goodale was right: even if the government went after the Times, the courts would ultimately leave the newspaper alone. "I did not believe that the risks were what Herb Brownell had told me," he said. "I didn't think they were going to come and lock me up, but I thought they could fine us one hell of a lot, and we didn't have all that much money."

One of Loeb and Brownell's strongest arguments was that by disclosing top-secret documents, the Times risked losing its credibility with readers. Punch, however, was equally concerned about losing credibility with his editors, who had told him that not publishing the account would forever bring dishonor on the Times. "After all, [the report] should be in the public domain because it was history, and it was not secret; it had been illegally stamped SECRET," said Punch....

Early on, Punch had told Rosenthal that he wanted to read what was intended for publication before making his final decision. In late May Rosenthal, with barely contained glee, wheeled a grocery cart containing the relevant documents into Punch's office. Until then, remarked Punch, "I did not know it was possible to read and sleep at the same time." He found the material so turgid that he began to wonder whether it was worth the expense of releasing it.

The tentative publication date of June 10 was fast approaching, and Punch still had not given a clear signal

of his intentions. While he ruminated, he found himself returning again and again to the question Turner Catledge [then Managing Editor] had posed years ago over drinks in his back-office Club, the place where Punch had gotten his real journalistic education: Who are you writing this paper for? "That cleared it up, pretty much," acknowledged Punch. "We weren't writing for the benefit of the government; we were writing for the benefit of the reader, who is entitled to know."

That still left the thorny issue of whether to publish the classified documents themselves or merely quote or paraphrase them. The day before he was to render his final judgment, Punch dispatched his stalking horse, Sydney Gruson, to see if Rosenthal could be persuaded to alter his position about printing the documents verbatim. Gruson made his pitch in the early evening while driving Rosenthal home.... "No documents, no story," said Rosenthal, who felt so strongly that he had privately resolved to resign if Punch did not agree. Gruson relayed the message back to Punch.

On Friday morning, June 11, Rosenthal and Frankel gathered in Punch's office to hear his decision. Neither editor had gotten much sleep; both were in a fog after weeks of worry and hard work. With a serious, deadpan expression, Punch made his pronouncement: "I've decided you can use the documents"—at which point there was a slight pause, and then he added—"but not the story." In their glassy-eyed state, it took Rosenthal and Frankel a moment to get the joke. So there would be no question about his position, Punch had prepared a formal memo that stated: "I have reviewed once again the Vietnam story and documents that would appear on Sunday, and I am prepared to authorize their publication in substantially the form in which I saw them." The secret history was to appear as a series of articles over several days rather than in a single issue. If the federal government secured an injunction to stop publication, the Times would honor it....

After two days of publishing the "Vietnam Archive," the Attorney General's office threatened the paper with a lawsuit.

Bancroft called Loeb, who advised the Times to obey the attorney general, but when Bancroft seemed inclined to agree, Rosenthal demanded that Punch make the final call. At about 2:00 A.M. London time, Punch was roused from an untroubled sleep at the Savoy Hotel. In New York, his voice was broadcast over a speakerphone, and as Goodale recalled, "Punch sounded like 'I wish I weren't publisher of The New York Times. I wish this would go away.'" Punch asked what everyone thought, and as Goodale listened to the various opinions, he sensed that the publisher was especially influenced by the arguments of Bancroft and Loeb and that he was going to halt publication. Defiance of the attorney general would almost certainly mean a court fight starting the next day. The Times had done its duty and published the first two installments, and there was every incentive not to tangle with Washington over classified documents. Finally, Punch asked Goodale whether continuing to publish would increase the paper's liability. "Not by five percent," he replied.

With that, Punch indicated, albeit with great ambivalence, that the paper should continue publication. "He really never was comfortable with the whole thing," Goodale said later. "He was generally persuaded that it was a crime." When Rosenthal returned to the third-floor newsroom, the 150 people waiting to hear the publisher's verdict erupted in cheers. Punch's decision to proceed with the series was in many respects more courageous than his original one. No longer were the stakes theoretical, and the penalties were potentially grave....

On Tuesday, June 15, the third installment of the Pentagon Papers appeared, along with a front-page account of [Attorney General] Mitchell's telegram, his telephoned threat to Brownell, and the Times' response. "The most satisfying headline I've ever seen in the Times is the one that read 'Mitchell Seeks to Halt Series on Viet-

nam but Times Refuses,'" Rosenthal told Time magazine. Later that day, as expected, the attorney general went to federal court and persuaded a judge who had been sitting on the bench for only five days to issue a temporary restraining order to halt further publication of the Pentagon Papers.

Although Punch had made it clear that he was willing to defy the attorney general's request, he had made it equally clear that he would abide by the courts. The New York Times suspended publication, marking the first time in the nation's history that a newspaper was restrained in advance by a court from publishing a specific article.

...The attorney general's attempt to muzzle the Times accomplished what the Pentagon Papers themselves had been unable to: it provoked the outrage of the national media and focused attention on what the purportedly explosive documents actually revealed. As important, the relationship between the press and government became the subject of public debate, with the nation's most respected and Establishment-minded paper leading the charge. Punch and the Times staff suddenly found themselves regarded as heroes in certain circles....

Punch flew back to New York the day after the restraining order was issued. At an airport press conference, and in the many interviews he gave over the next few days, he eloquently argued the Times' case. "This was not a breach of national security," he explained. "We gave away no national secrets. We didn't jeopardize any American soldiers or marines overseas. These papers...are part of history." As for charges that he had published classified material, he remarked, "I think that is a wonderful way, if you've got egg on your face, to prevent anybody from knowing it; stamp it SECRET and put it away." When he was asked who had made the decision to publish the Pentagon Papers, Punch gestured to his chest with his pipe and silently mouthed, "Me." ■

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A Woman at Odds With Her Times

Charlotte Curtis is portrayed as a controversial pioneer in journalism.

A Woman of the Times:

Journalism, Feminism, and the Career of Charlotte Curtis

Marilyn S. Greenwald

Ohio University Press. 275 Pages. \$26.95.

By Maria Henson

On June 20, 1986, a decision arguably 14 years in the making at The New York Times took effect: “Beginning today, The New York Times will use Ms. as an honorific in its news and editorial columns. Ms. has not been used because of belief it had not passed sufficiently into the language to be accepted. The Times believes now Ms. has become a part of the language and is changing its policy.”

Gloria Steinem had hounded her friend and Executive Editor A.M. Rosenthal for years to change the policy so that women no longer appeared in the Times as strictly “Miss” or “Mrs.” When Rosenthal sent her the memo he had written to the staff about the policy change, Steinem framed it. The first day “Ms.” appeared, the famous feminist and several women went to the Times to deliver a bouquet of flowers to Rosenthal in appreciation.

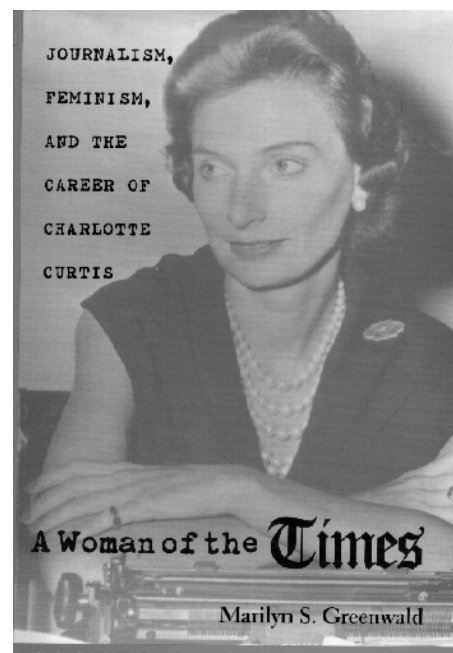
The policy change occurred no thanks to Charlotte Curtis, the first top female editor at the Times and the first woman whose name appeared on the masthead. Here’s what she thought of the Ms. idea in 1972:

“This afternoon the Managing Editor is going to have a meeting to take up the matter of Ms., pronounced miz, the new title for ladies. The liberated

ones want to be called Ms. I don’t. I like being called Miss. When we did a story about Betty Friedan, the feminist, we called her Ms. And her mother, who appeared in the same story, we called Mrs., because she doesn’t want to be Ms. either.

“It’s going to be like blacks. In the transition days of black liberation, there were blacks, Negroes, and colored people. There still are. It will probably be the same with women. Women will aggressively want to be Ms. Some will equally aggressively insist on Miss or Mrs. Anything that’s pronounced miz sounds like poor blacks in the South, and that’s very distasteful to me.”

In “A Woman of the Times,” author Marilyn S. Greenwald describes the contradictions in the life of Curtis. She praises her for paving the way for other women at the Times but acknowledges that Curtis paid a price for her ambivalence toward the women’s movement in losing the friendship and respect of female colleagues. Today, Curtis is not a name widely remembered, as the author notes, because she was not a self-promoter and worked at the Times (1961-1986) before it was common to see journalists transformed into celebrities on television talk shows and cable. I would add that she might be more



widely remembered had she taken a vocal role in the feminist movement both inside and outside the newsroom.

Curtis tried to have it both ways. She wanted to break into the old boys’ network at the Times, and she did so through innovative writing and editing and savvy friendships with the men at the top: Clifton Daniel, Managing Editor; A.O. “Punch” Sulzberger, Publisher, and Harrison Salisbury, foreign correspondent, author and the first editor of the op-ed page. (When she was demoted in 1982 after eight years as Op-ed Editor, she wrote a friendly and self-deprecating memo to the publisher, thanking him for his support and the “prettiest office” in the building, then

...Curtis paid a price for her ambivalence toward the women’s movement in losing the friendship and respect of female colleagues.

signing off “Big smooch, Charlotte.” Frankly, the note sounds too smoochie for my taste.)

During her career, she did not rally to the aid of women in the newsroom who balked at salary disparities and barriers to their advancement. When women journalists filed a sex discrimination lawsuit against the Times in 1974, Curtis didn’t participate. In fact, she never thought she was discriminated against in the work force and had little interest in the women’s movement even during her tenure as editor of the women’s section. Years after the suit was settled out of court in 1978 (the Times publicly acknowledged no wrongdoing but promised to promote several women and paid back wages to the plaintiffs), some Times women were still steamed at Curtis.

Greenwald writes about the copy editor under whose name the suit was filed and who, despite the years, remained offended by Curtis’s decision: “[Betsy] Wade called Char-

lotte a ‘quisling,’ which she defined as a label for a Hitler collaborator meaning a ‘sell-out,’ a ‘rotten bastard’ and ‘[one who] usually gets shot.’”

The contradictions in Curtis’s life date to the beginning, to her childhood in Columbus, Ohio. She was born in 1928 to wealthy parents, physician George Morris Curtis and Lucile Atcherson Curtis, a suffragette and the first woman to apply for the Foreign Service exam after women won the right to vote in 1920. One would think given the legacy she inherited from the female side of her family that Charlotte Curtis would have carried the feminist banner high. From her grandmother, she had been taught that with persistence she could achieve anything she wanted. But as a graduate of Vassar in 1950, she was expected only to marry the right man, settle down and have a family.

Curtis did marry but was divorced in 1952. That was just not done in Columbus in those days, but she did it anyway, defied convention and threw herself into her \$40-a-week job as a society

reporter at The Columbus Citizen. As Greenwald puts it, “It was a life of coffee drinking, smoking, and, for some, heavy gambling and drinking. Charlotte had been a tea drinker her entire life.” She was a union officer for the Newspaper Guild at the same time she served as an officer for the Junior League. She was schooled in proper society ways, but she didn’t pull punches in her writing; she scorched the powerful, her peers, with her caustic asides.

No one was surprised when she left Columbus for a job in the Times’s women’s section in 1961. There she continued her coverage of the high and mighty, which columnist Liz Smith says was Curtis’s “own kind of ‘New Journalism.’” My favorite dispatch is

Curtis gave a voice to people outside of the paper who were ordinary people with ordinary problems.

from a story Curtis wrote four months after she arrived at the Times in which she skewers a New York hat maker: “He admits he is a genius and the greatest couturier-milliner in the world, and he has tried to forget that he was once a boy from New Rochelle named Hans Harburger.

“And when he talks about himself, which is most of the time, he puts up a colorful and audacious smoke screen of clever phrases, shocking tidbits and big names. ‘I am Mr. John,’ he says over and over again. ‘Mr. John is the dean of the industry. I. Magnin rolls out the red carpet for Mr. John.’”

In the book, Punch Sulzberger calls Curtis “to some extent the Maureen Dowd of her day.” The accounts of her reporting in the 1960’s support this theory. As Greenwald notes, both columnists “use details and her story subjects’ own words to illustrate their personalities and to make them look foolish,” and both inject class criticism into their reporting. Greenwald also gives Curtis as Op-ed Editor credit for creating a path for Anna Quindlen,

whose columns in the 1980’s and 1990’s featured observations about the everyday life of 30-something women and not commentary solely focused on politics of the day. Curtis gave a voice to people outside of the paper who were ordinary people with ordinary problems. She didn’t reserve the op-ed page exclusively for “official” commentators and experts. She published columns by world leaders alongside commentary by Yoko Ono and Erica Jong. This was a notable change from the direction set by Salisbury, her predecessor who, as the first editor of the op-ed page, emphasized “official” voices on that page.

Greenwald concludes it is difficult to gauge Curtis’s long-term contributions and legacy. I agree. I wanted to share the author’s unbridled admiration for her subject but decided the book made a strong case that Charlotte Curtis’s allegiances were first to herself, then to the men in the inner circle at the Times,

and finally to her female colleagues. I shared the conclusion of some of her Times co-workers who, Greenwald writes, “felt that the woman’s caucus ran a distant third in her heart,” at a time when many women journalists were supporting one another.

Curtis died of cancer in 1987. She died a pioneer. Her influence was seen both in the breezy reporting style that became acceptable in some sections of the Times and in her stewardship of an op-ed page that offered broader appeal. Given she was the first woman on the masthead, however, hers was not the magnificent legacy readers might imagine. Instead, Curtis’s contributions “should be seen as one link of a chain that led to change....”—at least that is the author’s generous conclusion. ■

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Media's Role in Changing the Face of Poverty

A Scholar Examines the Convergence of Race and Welfare in the Media.

Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media and the Politics of Antipoverty Policy

Martin Gilens

University of Chicago Press. 296 Pages. \$25.00.

By Sharon Green

One of the toughest things about being journalists is separating ourselves from prejudices that shape us as people. To pretend that those prejudices don't exist or that they don't act as a filter on our perceptions is either unrealistic or dangerous or both.

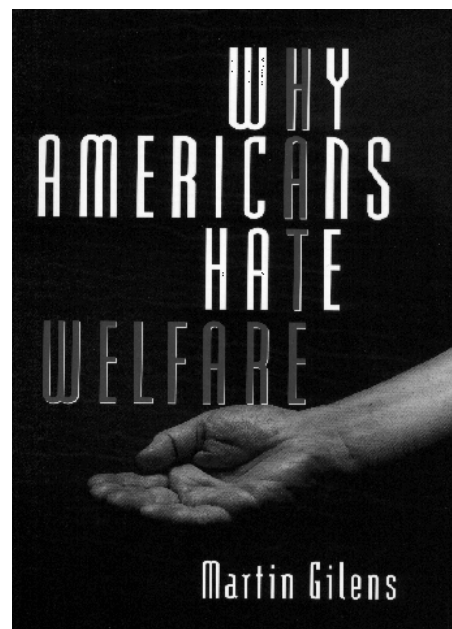
So it is necessary to note that as a journalist who also is black I was predisposed to hear the basic premise of Martin Gilens's book, "Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media and the Politics of Antipoverty Policy," because my expectations and experience indicate that racial attitudes and media imagery influence public perceptions, in general. However, this book raises questions about the ways in which race and media shape perceptions about the poor, in particular.

In spite of my predisposition to support its premise, I was happily surprised by the content of the book and impressed by how little of it was devoted to the ideological ranting or simplistic distortions that too often pass for political debate. Gilens, who is associate professor of political science and a fellow at the Institution for Social and Policy Studies at Yale University, dissects a variety of well-documented explanations for public resentment of

welfare: the credo of individualism; middle class self-interest; suspicion about the true neediness of welfare recipients, and white perceptions that the black poor don't value a work ethic. Each aspect is important to the complex web of perceptions Americans have about welfare, and Gilens declares his intent to subject each of them to "empirical scrutiny."

The result is a scholarly analysis gleaned from original research by the author and from studies conducted by others over many years. (As Gilens states, the book began as a dissertation and he and his wife had two children while he was writing it.) The complexities and ambiguities that are so often subsumed by the politics of race and poverty are, in Gilens's book, able to surface and to be brought into sharper focus.

Insights Gilens offers about racial attitudes are particularly compelling. But before he gets to that presentation, he challenges the widely held view that the public hates the *principle* of welfare; the very idea of giving taxpayer-funded assistance to poor people. He collates the findings of dozens of national opinion polls that show both strong public support for cuts in welfare spending and affirmation of the



government's responsibility to assist the poor. Gilens writes that the public is "of two minds"—cut welfare *and* provide the poor with specific services such as job training, education, child and elder care.

How can Americans want both of these policies? Gilens helps us understand.

He writes that this seeming contradiction is rooted in the political concerns of ordinary Americans about "who gets what" and "who deserves what." In their minds, the deserving poor are worthy because they are perceived as hard working, despite their impoverished status.

On the other hand, welfare—which Gilens defines as "means-tested, cash payments to able-bodied, working age

[Gilens] challenges the widely held view that the public hates the *principle* of welfare; the very idea of giving taxpayer-funded assistance to poor people.

adults”—has garnered a bad reputation in the public mind. Welfare is associated with the “undeserving poor,” those perceived as unwilling to support themselves, preferring to sit home and collect a check, unwilling to work hard. It is also a widely held belief that it is the undeserving poor who get “welfare,” and it is at this point that negative attitudes about black people become a factor.

As Gilens writes, “race-based opposition to welfare stems from the specific perception that, as a group, African Americans are not committed to the work ethic.” The lazy black. It is a pernicious stereotype as old as slavery. Gilens contends that biased media coverage of poverty may have energized this enduring negative stereotype and helped to link it, in the public mind, to welfare. Most journalists, he writes, appear to consciously reject the stereotype of blacks as lazy. But “in the everyday practice of their craft... these same journalists portray poor blacks as more blameworthy than poor whites.”

He cites numerous earlier studies that demonstrated how media coverage influences public perceptions of the poor, the overall impact of visual elements in news stories, and the “significant impact” on beliefs and attitudes of racial imagery in news coverage. Gilens’s own research focused on more than 1200 carefully defined poverty stories in *Time*, *Newsweek* and *U.S. News & World Report* during 42 years, from 1950 to 1992. For television, Gilens counted the number of poverty stories that were broadcast on ABC, NBC and CBS nightly news between 1969 and 1992. But he measured the racial representation of poverty in TV coverage only for 1968, 1982-83 and 1988-92.

Poverty didn’t receive much attention from the newsmagazines during the 1950’s, and when it did pictures of poor whites accompanied the stories that were published. Coverage in-

creased during the early 1960’s. Again, most of the images of America’s poor were white. But the early 1960’s also marked the beginning of what Gilens calls “the racialization of poverty” in news coverage.

From 1964 to 1965, the percentage of blacks who appeared in pictures of the poor jumped from 27 to 49 percent, at a time when the actual percentage of blacks among those whose income placed them among the poor was about 30 percent. Gilens reports a similar imbalance during subsequent decades and he argues that “distorted coverage found in newsmagazines reflects a broader set of dynamics that

Most journalists, [Gilens] writes, appear to consciously reject the stereotype of blacks as lazy. But ‘in the everyday practice of their craft...these same journalists portray poor blacks as more blameworthy than poor whites.’

also shapes images of the poor in the more important medium of television news.”

As the picture of poverty progressively has darkened, according to Gilens, the tone of poverty coverage has grown more negative. Gilens found that since the mid-1960’s, stories about welfare mismanagement, inefficiencies and “The Welfare Mess” have featured pictures of blacks. More sympathetic stories, such as those describing how the national economic downturn threw middle class workers into poverty, used pictures of whites.

Gilens sets forth a number of likely explanations for this situation. For example, poor black people tend to live in distinct neighborhoods that are within easy reach of urban-based news outlets from which much of the nation’s reporting emanates. But he cites a study that shows only six percent of all poor Americans are blacks living in urban ghettos. What accounts then for his finding that black people were pic-

tured in 62 percent and 65 percent of newsmagazine and television poverty stories at a time when African-Americans made up only 29 percent of the American poor?

He writes, “the overly racialized images of poverty and the association of blacks with the least sympathetic subgroups of the poor reflect news professionals’ own racial stereotypes, which operate as an unconscious influence on the content of the news they produce.”

This accusation is hard to hear. But the book is not a rant against the media, nor does it patronize the poor, the public, or even politicians. It’s a classi-

cally academic effort to examine why the public thinks the way it does about the poor and what these perceptions and attitudes mean for policies aimed at helping them. “Why Americans Hate Welfare” is tightly focused on

a narrow aspect of public policy (welfare), but important insights result. Gilens does the numbers exhaustively, packing the book with surveys and statistics and supporting them with extensive citations. It’s a dry read occasionally, but it is also an important reference book for journalists who, in Gilens’s words, “are exposed to the same stereotypes and misperceptions that characterize society at large.” ■

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The Cold War Generation of Patriotic Journalists

What happens when journalism becomes government propaganda?

U.S. Television News and Cold War Propaganda, 1947-1960

Nancy E. Bernhard

Cambridge University Press. 245 Pages. \$59.95.

By Michael J. Kirkhorn

We shouldn't be surprised to learn that network journalists and executives lent or sold themselves to the agencies of anticommunist government propaganda during the early years of the Cold War. This was a generation of patriotic journalists. Their loyalty during the Second World War, as well as their hatred for fanaticism, prepared them for this next crusade.

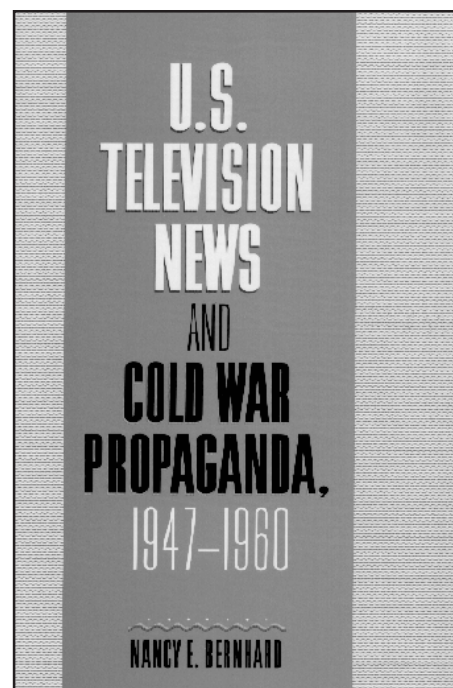
The threat to peace and security posed by the Soviet Union followed so quickly on the heels of the defeat of the Nazis and the Japanese that nothing more than the turning of a page was involved for journalists to transfer their loyalties to this new circumstance. An edge of resentment was added by the fact that the threat of Soviet expansion and subversion was regarded as the betrayal by a wartime ally of the promise of peace to which so many had been sacrificed.

An inspiring sense of common purpose during World War II thinned the membrane between press and government. In the years following the end of the war, loyalty to country and cooperation with government agencies were habits of the mind that could be readily exploited. There also was an ideological undertone. A strong dislike for Soviet communism was an American journalistic instinct that went back to the reporting on the Soviet revolution and the civil war that followed. For many American journalists, the Cold War became a full-throttle acceleration of anticommunist sentiments that had been idling in the journalistic mind since 1917.

Thoroughly researched and forth-

right in its conclusions, Nancy E. Bernhard's book, "U.S. Television News and Cold War Propaganda, 1947-1960," documents the extent of the collaboration between government and broadcast news organizations during those years. She analyzes these relationships at the level of institutional cooperation where, under the headings of "national security state" and "Cold War consensus," network bosses and government officials participated in a variety of practices designed to act against the communist threat. Among these practices were the imposition of anticommunist viewpoints on news coverage, the control or suppression of detracting reports, and the invention of programs at home and abroad that played upon the "red scare" and promoted American efforts to counter Communism.

Bernhard's research justifies sweeping conclusions. "In the mid-twentieth century," she writes, "the political economy of the mass media was intimately tied up with the articulation of Cold War policies, and objectivity became grounded in fervent anticommunism." In describing the dwindling belief that in the crusade against Communism truthfulness should be a distinguishing feature of U.S. propaganda, she writes that by 1948, Congress, the Departments of Defense and State, and the three networks agreed that "All information had military implications." Bernhard goes on to assert that, as a consequence, "The Cold War made propaganda an integral part of American foreign policy and took as its casualty confidence that the United States would triumph in the marketplace of ideas."



Bernhard proceeds to demonstrate how the same impulse influenced domestic television programming as it, too, spread propaganda and ignored dissent. One of her many examples was a television program called "Battle Report-Washington" that had a sizeable national audience from 1950 to 1953, when the United States was at war against North Korea and China. This program, featuring interviews with government and military leaders, was produced in the White House and broadcast by NBC for the purpose of giving "the people of the United States a firsthand account of what the Federal Government is doing in the worldwide battle against Communism." Its belligerence makes Ronald Reagan's remark about the "evil empire" sound sedate.

Bernhard reports that the program's guiding figure, a White House official named John Steelman, referred to Communist leaders as "the fourteen barbarians," "power-drunk atheists" and "bloodthirsty barbarians."

Bernhard does not spare the venerable figures of American journalism. CBS News's redoubtable Edward R. Murrow enjoys an honest moment or two, but he was a member of a State Department panel on overseas information and is seen at one point playing patty-cake in an interview with Secretary of State Dean Acheson instead of asking probing questions.

Political columnist Walter Lippmann makes a sinister—considering the evidence offered here, perhaps too sinister—appearance as a principal journalistic figure in the investigation of the political murder of CBS correspondent George Polk in Greece in 1948. As he prepared to return to the United States to accept a Nieman Fellowship, Polk was finishing a story that would have embarrassed grafting members of the Greek government. He was shot dead after an interview with a Greek official who had played a large part in obtaining "massive" U.S. aid funds for the royalist government and now was depositing money in a New York bank. Greek Communists were blamed for the killing, but Royalists allied with the United States against Communism are now regarded as the likely culprits.

Lippmann, "one of a distinguished group of American journalists who claimed to represent the rights of a free press....," chaired a committee formed to investigate the killing. Bernhard shows him conferring closely with former Office of Strategic Services (the CIA's predecessor) Director William Donovan, whom Lippmann had appointed to conduct the investigation. This, along with lack of aggressive follow-up by the committee, leads Bernhard to infer that Lippmann might have participated in a cover-up in which Communists were blamed for the murder. "How deliberately they [Lippmann and Donovan] conspired to conceal the Royalist motives for the murder remains unknown," she writes.

A question of continuing importance

that Bernhard raises has to do with the actual substance of journalism's independence from political influence. She finds press independence so negligible that it barely merits mention. This mutable sentiment, which fades fast in the presence of opportunity, appeals to patriotism, cronyism or intimidation, has only one defender in this book, the truly redoubtable I.F. Stone, who attacked Lippmann and others for participating in the Polk "whitewash."

A less tangible question raised by Bernhard has to do with the pliancy of news in high-pressure situations. She suggests that when apparent crises require compromise with government, news can become an illusion—a sort of calculated wishful thinking disguised as reporting. But it was long before 1947 that the stage was set for this interplay of news and wishfulness in the coverage of Soviet affairs. Lippmann, who was arguably the century's most influential political journalist, was also a valuable press critic, and early on he saw that coverage of Soviet Communism would strain the integrity of American journalists.

In 1920, the *New Republic* published Lippmann and Charles Merz's landmark press criticism revealing deep faults in *The New York Times's* reporting on the Bolshevik revolution and the civil war between czarist and revolutionary forces. "From the point of view of professional journalism," they wrote, "the reporting of the Russian Revolution is nothing short of a disaster.... On the essential questions the net effect was almost always misleading...." Yet there was no government interference that could be blamed for the antirevolutionary bias found in this reporting and no conspiracy to deceive American readers. Instead, Lippmann and Merz recounted a "boundless credulity, and an untiring readiness to be gulled, and on many occasions...a downright lack of common sense...." The chief censor and chief propagandist, they concluded, "were hope and fear in the minds of reporters and editors" who "wanted to ward off Bolshevism."

Ten years later H.R. Knickerbocker won a Pulitzer Prize for reporting on

the growing Soviet mobilization for war. Knickerbocker's series, called "The Red Trade Menace" and published in *The Philadelphia Public Ledger* and *The New York Post*, was the outcome of a two-month-long 10,000 mile tour of the Soviet Union. His conclusions were ominous. On November 17, 1930, he reported that the Soviet Union was "a land at war." He found there "an atmosphere of militant struggle, a nation under arms living figuratively but effectively under martial law....," ruled by leaders whose fear of attack and isolation "has come to approach a phobia." Terror, he observed, "has become a permanent institution."

These perceptions continued through World War II, as American journalists expressed admiration for the sacrifices of Soviet citizens but not for their government. In an incomplete meditation at the end of a chapter halfway through her book, Bernhard tries to understand why so many prominent Americans from different backgrounds uncritically accepted the drastic premise that truth, dissent and liberty had to be subordinated to the requirements of what one writer called "the most titanic struggle in which this nation has ever found itself involved."

Bernhard writes that "This puzzle lies at the heart of the Cold War consensus.... Even when studying its most self-conscious designers, we find it tricky to separate deliberate manipulation from avowed doctrine from embedded culture. This seamlessness might suggest authentic belief" but, she suggests, in an atmosphere contaminated by propaganda, the assumption that all of these people might actually have believed what they espoused feeds on itself. How, then, did such a strong consensus emerge?

One reply to this question is cynical. For those involved at high levels, whether broadcasters or government officials, the Cold War served as an equal opportunity crusade. Everyone benefited by acting on degrees of anti-communist belief, whether calculated or authentic. To the question of why they all "internalized their own rhetoric"—or seemed actually to believe what they said about the Communist men-

ace—it might be suggested that ideological zeal required it. In the circles Bernhard describes, anticommunism was insistent and intolerant. Those who might have initially wavered became true believers because ambivalence or lurking doubts were not acceptable.

This is a provocative book. It's tempting to ask whether it offers any lasting lessons. In retrospect, the Cold War

seems to have required the coinciding of so many elements that nothing duplicating it can be imagined. But if Soviet anticommunism required systematic propaganda at home and abroad, and if that propaganda was wildly successful, as it was, then it's fair to assume that controversial global political strategies might require more of the same. ■

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A Journalist Reveals Himself in Letters

Irreverent, churlish, boastful and, sometimes, larger than life.

Larry L. King: A Writer's Life in Letters, Or, Reflections in a Bloodshot Eye

Edited by Richard A. Holland

Texas Christian University Press. 404 Pages. \$27.50.

By Elizabeth Leland

It's 1969; Larry L. King is starting his Nieman year, paying an exorbitant \$390 a month for a one-bedroom apartment, and bored with most of the speakers.

"Dear Lanvil," he writes his cousin back in Texas, "...I find myself often despondent, really dragging my chin, feeling that I am not getting all out of this that I should, asking myself what a 41-year-old fool is doing interrupting his budding career for a year. The answer, on my good days, comes back: 'Cause you ain't had no schoolin' Fool, and 'cause you so fucking iggernent.' On bad days, I have no answer. I feel a bit insecure, a bit out of the main stream, and I'm not as well-recognized here as in New York precincts in the matter of Personal Fame, and all this chomps on my Big E Ego."

King leads a revolt, taking away the role of selecting speakers from Curator Dwight Sargent. One of King's first invitees is William Styron. In a letter to a friend in Texas, King recounts how Styron ends up in the emergency room after inhaling "a bit of Mexican boo smoke" in King's apartment.

"Shortly (maybe 3 in the a.m.) he

describes himself as feeling peculiar. He flops on the couch and bespeaks of death. He commences quoting poetry. He falls on the floor and his wife cradles his head in her arms, and they speak passages to one another of what I think was Shakespeare.

"Whereupon Styron bolts upright, proclaims with a wild gleam that he can 'see the other shore' and rushes off towards the outdoors, where the temperature is then around zero degrees, without no coat on—possibly to shake the hand of Jesus, who knows?"

King's letters home to Texas are part of an often hilarious, occasionally poignant, sometimes tedious 404-page collection, "Larry L. King: A Writer's Life in Letters, Or, Reflections in a Bloodshot Eye."

King (who wrote "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas," not the Larry King of television fame) has written 13 books, eight plays and countless magazine articles. But he says he enjoyed writing nothing so much as letters.

They are irreverent, churlish, boastful, sometimes larger than life, like King himself. They show the passions—fear, hope, anger, joy—of a man who

craved writing so much he left his wife and young children, who rose from a struggling freelance writer to national prominence as a contributing editor at Harper's Magazine working for another Southern writer-turned-editor, Willie Morris.

"A Writer's Life in Letters" includes wonderful storytelling that hints at King's greatness, but it's buried in minute details about what he's writing or how much he's drinking that only a true fan would appreciate. After plodding through his letters, I wish I'd spent the time instead reading some of King's earlier works: "The Old Man," his most famous piece in Harper's, written after the death of his father; "Confessions of a Racist," runner-up for the National Book Award, and "Blowing My Mind at Harvard," a piece he wrote for Harper's about his Nieman experience. ■

Elizabeth Leland, a 1992 Nieman Fellow, works as a part-time reporter for The Charlotte Observer and full-time mom to Jack, 5, and Abbie, 3.

Reporting on Child Welfare and Adoption Policies

An author and advocate contends that journalists are missing *the* story.

By Elizabeth Bartholet

As an academic interested in social reform, I appreciate both the media's power to influence change and the complexity of their role in reporting on tough policy issues. This appreciation is something I've gained during the past decade as I've talked with a lot of members of the print and broadcast press in my efforts to promote changes in child welfare policy. Reporters often call me for comment when stories relevant to my work emerge in the news, and I have chosen to respond to their inquiries and to engage in ongoing public debates about the issues I care about. Despite the occasional frustration I experience when I read, see or hear the product of our conversations, it's important to me to continue to work with members of the media. I know that significant changes in public policy occur only when there are fundamental shifts in the mindset of policymakers and the broader public. I also recognize the unique and critical capacity of the press to inform and educate each of these audiences.

In general, I have been impressed by the commitment of many of the reporters I have dealt with over the years to delve deeply into the issues and to wield responsibly their considerable power to shape public opinion. I am fully aware that reporters should not "take sides," but instead should gather the facts and report them fairly, giving those in their audience the opportunity to assess for themselves the interpretations of the facts and different advocacy positions. But I have been frustrated by the tendency of some reporters to reduce the multifaceted and complex reality of policy debate to a thin two-sided coin. Too often, reporters assume that once advocates of

"both sides" of a particular issue have been identified and quoted, the full story will have been told. The risk in this all-too-familiar reporting technique is not only of undue simplification but also of distortion: The two-sided story may not simply omit some of the richness of the full picture, but may project a false image.

I have two books coming out this fall dealing with issues that illustrate these problems. "Nobody's Children: Abuse and Neglect, Foster Drift, and the Adoption Alternative," and "Family Bonds: Adoption, Infertility, and the New World of Child Production" (originally published in 1993 and now being re-issued with a new preface), will be released by Beacon Press in October. My interactions with members of the press regarding the issues I write about show how difficult it can be to communicate information about new policy perspectives, particularly when the facts are complex and the ideas run against the tide of conventional thought.

"Nobody's Children" constitutes a challenge to the orthodox views that undergird today's child welfare policy. In this book I question whether it is appropriate to think of and treat children as belonging essentially and ex-



Elizabeth Bartholet with her sons Christopher and Michael.
Photo by Lilian Kemp Photography.

clusively to their kinship and racial groups and as a result to lock them into what are often inadequate biological and foster homes, where they suffer harmful abuse and neglect. I call for the elimination of racial and other barriers that prevent children from being placed in appropriate adoptive homes. I contend that our policies should be changed to encourage child welfare workers to look not only to the local "village" but also to the broader community to share responsibility for child rearing. I envision a society in which

abused and neglected children who are born to biological and racial “others”—those now seen as “nobody’s children”—are embraced as belonging to each of us.

The politics of these issues are complex. During the past decade, those identifying with the left (including many liberal advocacy groups) have tended to promote family preservation policies—policies that place an extremely high priority on keeping a child with his or her original family. They have tended to regard the parents accused of child maltreatment as the primary “victims,” at risk of further victimization by having their children removed and their parental rights terminated. My view—emerging out of my own leftward leanings—is very different. I argue that those on the left should focus on the children as the primary victims and should apply lessons learned from the battered women’s movement as they consider battered children. I question why family preservation ideology still reigns supreme when it is children rather than adult women who are being victimized.

The left has also tended to oppose adoption generally and transracial adoption in particular. The National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) has for more than two decades taken the position that black children who need to be placed outside their homes should stay within their racial group rather than being placed across racial lines. Liberals have generally deferred to NABSW and assumed that it speaks for the black community and for black children. But there is no reason to think that NABSW’s position in fact represents any “community” position, and no evidence that adoption across racial lines injures children. Indeed, the studies that have been done demonstrate overwhelmingly that it is the racial matching policies advocated by NABSW that injure black children by limiting placement opportunities and thereby increasing the likelihood that they will be denied permanent adoptive homes.

I have found it difficult to get my views and this debate reported in an

accurate and comprehensive manner. Advocates for family preservation and racial matching have often succeeded in positioning their critics as “anti-family,” “anti-poor” and “anti-black”—as part of the conservative camp, engaged in a general backlash against those at the bottom of the socio-economic heap and against anything smacking of affirmative action. By mischaracterizing the debate in this way, they have succeeded in silencing potential critics and stifling the emergence of new ideas from within the liberal camp. Those who see themselves as committed to social justice don’t relish being attacked as right-wingers and racists. And they may question their own judgment when liberal leaders seem to speak with one voice. (That some conservatives also condemn family preservation excesses and take policy positions favoring adoption exacerbates the risk felt by some liberals of guilt by association should they dare to express similar views.)

My other book, “Family Bonds,” takes on comparably complex territory. Again I present a liberal challenge to the orthodox liberal view. Feminists and others on the left routinely characterize adoption as being an essentially exploitative institution because it usually involves the transfer of children from poor women from racial minority groups and Third World nations to privileged white couples in rich nations. I argue that adoption is better understood as an arrangement that benefits not only children but also their birth parents. Ideally all women who become pregnant ought to be in a position to raise their children if they want. However, given that far too many women’s lives are characterized by circumstances that are anything but ideal, adoption, like abortion, gives pregnant women a choice that may be better for them than being forced to parent, and better for their children.

Adoption also gives infertile women an option that may be preferable to spending years trying to force their bodies to produce a pregnancy by using the intrusive and financially burdensome high-tech infertility treatment methods that our culture now condi-

tions women to pursue. I contend that feminists should expand their concept of reproductive rights to embrace adoption as a way of promoting “choice” for both pregnant and infertile women while at the same time providing children with the nurturing homes they need. However, adoption critics have again been able to silence many potential opponents and contain the liberal challenge by positioning those who support adoption as part of the conservative camp.

Members of the press can easily fall into traps laid in this area by clever advocates. It’s easy to find people to voice either the boilerplate “left” or “right” position, to quote them and to move on. It’s also tempting for those who think in terms of getting “both sides” of the story. But reporters who take this route may contribute to the effective silencing of debate that, in my view, limits understanding and affects the quality of public policy decisions, when they could instead illuminate the issues for the general public and for policymakers. They will also miss out on the important story that needs to be told—a more subtle but also more substantive story. This story has to do with the debate that lies within the liberal camp about ideas that have the potential to create new political understandings and alignments. ■

Elizabeth Bartholet is a professor at Harvard Law School. She is also author of “Nobody’s Children: Abuse and Neglect, Foster Drift, and the Adoption Alternative,” and “Family Bonds: Adoption, Infertility, and the New World of Child Production,” to be published by Beacon Press in October.

Reporting on Reproductive and Genetic Technologies

An author describes her experiences—good and bad—with the media.

By Lori B. Andrews

Three years ago, just after Dolly the sheep was cloned, a Chicago television talk show asked attorney Nanette Elster, a specialist in reproductive technologies, to debate the issue of cloning humans. Also on the show that day was a doctor in favor of advancing this research so that one day humans might use it. The host invited the doctor to speak first and introduced him with words of respect, referring to him as “a genius who leads infertile couples to the fertile delta.” He then allowed the doctor to take as long as he wanted to explain his position. When it was Elster’s turn to speak, the host’s introduction was not nearly as laudatory, nor was the time or attention she was given at all similar. Barely had she begun her rebuttal when the host motioned to a surprise group of additional guests, the royal blue-faced performance group, the Blue Man Group, to appear on the set. Members of Blue Man Group started lobbing cream cheese balls over Elster’s head into each other’s mouths, diverting attention from anything she might be saying.

It was an appalling display of how some media outposts treat coverage of these kinds of critical and curious topics. During my 21 years as a practicing attorney, law professor and author of books about reproductive and genetic technologies, I have had many opportunities to observe media coverage of these issues. And, on average, five reporters try to reach me every day for comment and background information to inform their stories. The day the Baby M surrogate mother case was decided more than 100 reporters called me. When Dolly was born, I had so many calls it was not possible to return even one-tenth of them. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that my telephone

rings more often during “sweeps” week; producers realize that these stories have the potential to appeal to a wide audience.

Through all of this, I have been continually struck by the one-sided coverage I’ve seen in the broadcast media. There is a herd mentality that focuses on one approach to the subject and then, after milking it, switches to the opposite approach. Usually the one-sided coverage is not evident in a single show, as it was in the situation that Elster found herself in when her perspective was all but obliterated by a circus act. Generally, an entire show is devoted to a particular take on an issue. In fact, news and talk show producers who call me often have a particular viewpoint they want to ply and they are seeking a “talking head” to mouth that perspective. As a result, the broadcast coverage rarely, if ever, does justice to the complexities of these issues.

If we look at the issue of surrogate motherhood in terms of broadcast media coverage, we can locate some of these media trends that unfortunately continue today. During the early 1980’s, when surrogate motherhood became a topic of national debate, producers would call and ask me to appear on morning news shows. They’d tell me they wanted me to talk about what they called “the gift of life:” a woman unself-



Lori B. Andrews stands next to some tools of reproductive technology. *Photo by Paul Thurin.*

ishly serving as a surrogate mother. I would try to explain that the issue was more complex. I’d describe how some women might be psychologically harmed by serving as the home for a fetus but losing a maternal connection with the child after birth. But the producers didn’t want to hear about this. Then, when surrogate Mary Beth Whitehead decided to keep the baby she had contracted to bear, all of a sudden those same producers were calling to ask me to discuss “reproductive prostitution.” Actually, they were asking me to talk about the same thing, surrogate motherhood, but in their quest for a

simple story line they didn't realize that they'd made a 180 degree turn in their portrayal of this issue. Again, though, they were not interested in conveying the broader, more complicated contexts, nor in sharing the fact with viewers that most surrogate arrangements seem to work out for all of the parties involved.

Reproductive and genetic technologies will continue to be of enormous interest to reporters—both print and broadcast—because they provide possibilities for telling compelling stories. There is the key ingredient of human interest—the couple desperate to have a child or the woman fearful that she will die from breast cancer as her mother did. There is a gee-whiz scientific angle, too, as new technologies seem to leap right out of science fiction and into doctors' offices.

But this desire to focus on those who are desperate to find ways to have a biological child or on the science behind these advances can lead reporters to miss what, in my view, are some of the most important stories about what's happening in this field. Because it isn't possible to visually portray or to interview a potential child, scant attention is given to numerous studies that indicate that some of these technologies might pose real risks for the children. High order multiple births are heralded as medical "miracles" without attention paid to the statistic that 16 percent of the babies die in the first month of life. New options such as egg freezing are hyped by the press without acknowledgement of studies suggesting genetic damage to the eggs. And because reporters are accustomed to dealing with scientists as neutral experts, they tend to overlook one of the more troubling aspects of this research: the dramatic commercialization of academic and government science due to changes in the law during the 1980's.

This latter circumstance has all the elements of what makes great storytelling—greed, conflict of interest, big business, politics and potential risks to patients. But these story lines are more difficult to dig out than ones that emerge from interviewing an in-

fertile patient, and so are rarely told.

That said, some newspaper reporters are doing this kind of investigative work and finding compelling ways to tell these important stories. Rick Weiss, a reporter at The Washington Post, and Robert Lee Hotz, a reporter at the Los Angeles Times, have each provided in-depth coverage of some of the risks in the ever expanding fertility business. Mitchell Zuckoff, Alice Dembner and Matt Carroll, at The Boston Globe, researched and wrote a revealing series on "a billion-dollar taxpayers' subsidy for pharmaceutical companies already awash in profits." Their reporting pointed to the unfairness of private companies getting exclusive benefit of publicly funded research.

Tough reportorial scrutiny should be applied also to decisions of taxpayer-funded researchers at the National Institutes of Health as they patent genes for private gain and enter into commercial ventures with biotech companies. Of course, these types of articles are more difficult and time consuming to undertake; they require more research and run the risk of alienating important researchers and institutions that have been long-standing sources. But reporting such as this is crucial to providing the public with a more textured picture of what is happening with these technologies.

There remain many more aspects of these breakthroughs and practices that could use the kind of public attention that good reporting can elicit. Such potential areas of inquiry include the following:

- Deficiencies in informed consent at in-vitro fertilization clinics.
- Ways in which clinics routinely exaggerate success rates in their promotional advertisements.
- Consequences that arise from the misuse of fertility drugs.
- The practice some clinics engage in when they sell patients' "excess" embryos to biotech companies for use in developing pharmaceutical products.

- The reason for errors in genetic testing and the consequences.
- The deficiencies of regulatory oversight for emerging technologies.

Along the way I've also had my share of strange encounters with the media. And these encounters have led me to have experiences that I would not otherwise have had, some of which sent my thinking in new and valuable directions. Others just served as momentary distractions or, even worse, as irritants. I was once asked by a reporter on a religious television station whether clones would have souls. I suggested that if the minister/host thought identical twins each had souls, then later-born twins, clones, would as well. I've sparred on Oprah with a woman who wanted to use her dead son's sperm to create her own grandchild.

But more often than not, my contacts with reporters have benefited my own work by serving as a sort of early warning system. They find out what is happening in my field before anyone else. They learn about the local couple who are suing over custody of a frozen embryo or of a judge's decision to stop an employer from doing genetic testing. I've found that the quickest way to get information about developments in reproductive and genetic technologies is to have a reporter fax it to you. I learned about the cloning of Dolly before the rest of the world did because Gina Kolata, a reporter at The New York Times, called me for an advance comment on it. Of course, such information flows enhance coverage as well, by allowing the expert to comment more knowledgeably on the scientific research or legal case at issue.

Also, by keeping an eye on what news shows are covering in this field, I am able to get a pretty good sense of what people care about. This habit also gets me out of the ivory tower of academia where faculty members assume everyone cares about the same things they do. It propels me into the popular culture arena where I find out what issues these concerns of mine will have to compete with in order to be made part of the political conversa-

tion. And it also reminds me what opposing arguments sound like.

It was, after all, an experience on television that taught me how truly specialized scientists are. I was on "CBS Morning News" with a scientist who specialized in gene therapy. The host asked him a question about how many diseases could be screened for while the fetus was growing. I was aware of at least 350 disorders that could be assessed through amniocentesis. However, this gene therapy researcher (who did not do prenatal diagnosis) answered "three." The lesson I learned that morning is one I hope reporters will have learned by the time they start asking questions for coverage of these stories.

I've also witnessed ways in which researchers can misstate the facts or the law to achieve their goals. On one news show I was on, an in-vitro fertilization doctor said that she told her

patients that embryo donation is illegal in her state (which was not true) and encourages her patients to donate their excess embryos to her for use in her own research. On a PBS broadcast soon after the public disclosures that the Department of Energy had undertaken radiation experiments on people without their knowledge or consent, the Marcus Welby-looking doctor who appeared on the show with me assured the audience that no improper experimentation was going on at his hospital. I knew of such research there, but had been bound by confidentiality not to disclose it.

In short, working with members of the media provides the perfect training ground for addressing these issues in the policy sphere. Like many in the media, lawmakers' attention spans are short. They have many other matters on their plates and they might be receiving erroneous or misleading ad-

vice from groups who are likely to be subject to the potential regulations.

Increasingly, it seems, these two domains—media and politics—are intersecting. Legislators are drawn to issues that can garner them publicity. For example, a swarm of Illinois state lawmakers introduced bills to ban human cloning immediately after Richard Seed, an independent scientist, set the media world afire with his vow to do just that in his state. That these laws duplicated ones already languishing without action in the Illinois legislature was overlooked in the rush for new publicity. Rather than vote on those, Johnny-come-lately lawmakers introduced their own bills in order to be able to hold press conferences that the press dutifully covered. The reporters did not do a good job of informing the public that similar bills already existed. And the quickest that I have ever been able to get a bill introduced was when, on the Phil Donahue show, I mentioned a problem with anonymous donor insemination. All of a sudden, a Washington, D.C. councilman who had seen the show had introduced a bill to deal with my concern. (That particular bill didn't pass.)

Relying on the media is surely not the best way to craft policy in this country. Too often the ideas that take hold are ones that can be explained in a catchy phrase or pithy sound bite. These are not always the ideas or issues that really need to be understood if sound policy decisions are to be made. "We don't believe in sound bites," one PBS producer said, trying to lure me on his show by promising the unusual chance to discuss issues in depth. He went on to explain what it was he wanted: "We believe in more light, less heat." I thought to myself, "Now that's the perfect sound bite." ■

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Surrogate mother Judy Stiver and her husband, Ray, left, of Lansing, Michigan, and Alexander Malahoff, who contracted with the Stivers for the birth of the infant, "Baby Doe," appear on Phil Donahue's show. The baby was born with microcephaly. Blood tests show Malahoff, of Middle Village, New York, was not the father. *Photo by Charles Knoblock courtesy of AP.*

Nieman Notes

Compiled by Lois Fiore

At Unity '99 the Topic Was Journalism

The conference offered a glimpse of what newsrooms could be.

By Sam Fulwood III

To many, the only real news that came out of the Unity '99 conference was GOP presidential candidate George W. Bush's attempt to bypass the largest gathering of minority journalists ever even though he was campaigning at the same time in Seattle. I know. I wrote the story that convinced him at the last minute to alter his schedule for a brief, impromptu walkabout at the convention.

But Unity '99 wasn't about presidential politics.

No, for most of the estimated 6,000 people attending Unity '99 last July, the gathering was the largest and most multiracial group of journalists to assemble in one place. Over the course of five days, there were workshops, speeches and cocktail parties involving media industry chatter. Those attending were primarily, but not exclusively, representing the Asian American Journalists Association, the National Association of Black Journalists, the National Association of Hispanic Journalists and the Native American Journalists Association.

The oft-stated goal of Unity '99 promoters was to unite a divided collective of "journalists of color" into a single force. Implicit is their ultimate ambition of pressing the establishment media for greater racial, ethnic and gender diversity at all levels in the nation's newsrooms.

I feel that's too much to ask; it is a burden on racial minorities that's unfair and impossible to achieve. Why should black, Latino, Native American and Asian journalists be the exemplars

of unity, allowing the larger journalistic community—or society at large—off the hook?

Five years ago, at the first Unity convention in Atlanta, the organizations struggled among themselves to pull off the first combined convention of minority journalists. This year's meeting was even more difficult to make happen than the first. During the run-up to the 1999 convention, the constituent organizations wrestled with whether to hold the meeting in Washington state, where voters had repealed affirmative action programs.

If NABJ, the largest of the minority groups, had convinced its members to stay away, the turnout might have been reduced and organizers might have been forced to cancel the long-planned meeting. Millions of dollars would have been lost to the organizations. In the end, black journalists retreated from a potentially crippling boycott threat, and the convention was spared.

"It's a very, very powerful thing," Catalina Camia, President of Unity: Journalist of Color, Inc., the umbrella organization that organized the convention, said to me as delegates arrived. "Our voices raised together are immanently louder and more powerful than a single voice."

Well, voices certainly were raised in protest of the overwhelming whiteness of America's news industry, as well they should be. According to a survey commissioned by the Freedom Forum's Media Studies Center in New York, 55 percent of journalists of color at U.S. dailies expect to leave the busi-

ness. Another study by the Latino journalist group drew attention to the "network brownout" on national news broadcasts, pointing out that less than a single percent of their reports were about Hispanics.

And so it went, from an early-bird's Town Hall meeting on Tuesday night (before more delegates arrived on Wednesday) that allowed Seattle residents to vent their frustrations over the lack of coverage in minority communities to a closing ceremony on Saturday night aimed at "Celebrating Our Future," the themes of race and ethnicity were front and center. One particularly insightful workshop session dealt with "How TV News Portrayals of Race and Class Impact Children."

But I'm not sure very many people got the intended message. It's an old story, better told in the 1969 Kerner Commission Report, which lambasted the media for covering the world "from the standpoint of a white man's world." Not much has changed on that front in 30 years, except far too many Americans tune out when the subject arises.

For me, deeply mired in the daily muck of news, Unity '99 offered a brief glimpse of what could be in the nation's newsrooms. If given the opportunity, journalists of color will talk about the broad and complex issues that confront all journalists. We might even write a story that prompts a presidential candidate to adjust his schedule. To be sure, if journalism improves, the nation's minority populations—including journalists—will gain. But America will benefit even more.

This forest-not-trees view of the convention can even make believers of the people who can change newsrooms. The New York Times's Washington Bureau Chief Michael Oreskes was one of the many white men—mostly job recruiters and newsroom executives—making the rounds, as one put it to me years ago, “to wave the company’s flag.” Just as minority journalists find themselves surrounded by an ocean of white faces in their newsrooms, white recruiters at minority meetings are outnumbered and appear less than at ease.

Yet, Oreskes told me a week after returning from Unity '99, the experience was refreshing. “It was more than a convention of minorities,” he said. “It was more like the national journalism convention that we don’t otherwise have.”

Oreskes spoke at one New York Times-sponsored workshop on writing and beat reporting. He was struck by the eagerness of the college age and entry-level journalists in his audience. They pulled out notebooks and scribbled furiously. They asked probing questions. They wanted to know how to hone their skills, how to develop sources, how to write clear leads and how to tell stories. Simply put, they wanted to know journalism.

Later, Oreskes said he talked with a diverse group of people at the convention. Executives and human resource people, photographers and Web page designers, young eager beavers and grizzled veterans. Race talk was minimal. Mostly the conversations were about the craft of journalism, hiring choices, management decisions, ethics and so forth. “I was amazed at the range of people who were there,” he said. “We don’t have, in a formal way, across the spectrum, any other place where so many people come together to talk about our craft. There are other journalism conferences such as ASNE (the American Society of Newspaper Editors) and IRE (Investigative Reporters and Editors), but those groups are more limited and restricted to a narrower group of people.”

He’s so right. And, that makes the point for racial diversity more elo-

quently than all the preaching to the converted that otherwise transpires at minority gatherings. When more newsroom executives engage in conversations about their shared craft with minorities among them, they’ll hear what Oreskes heard: Diversity can be fractious and noisy and troublesome, but it makes the best brand of journalism. ■

Sam Fulwood III, a 1994 Nieman Fellow, covers race and politics as a Washington correspondent for the Los Angeles Times.

—1943—

Frank Kelly’s most recent book, “Harry Truman and the Human Family,” was published in September 1998 by Capra Press. A new book—“Pioneers of Wonder: Conversations with the Founders of Science Fiction,” by Eric Leif Davin—contains a long section about Kelly’s work as a science fiction writer during the 1930’s. Kelly, who serves as an editor of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation’s Waging Peace Journal and as a director of the California Center for Civic Renewal, can be reached at his E-mail address, wagingpeace@napf.org. He’s hoping to attend the Nieman reunion in April 2000 and would like to hear from any members of the Nieman class of 1942.

—1955—

Ian Cross and his wife, **Tui**, of Rumati, New Zealand, toured the United States in April and May by air and rail and were reunited with several classmates—**Bob Drew**, film documentary producer, in New York City; **Jo Woestendiek**, Nieman spouse (of then-husband **Bill**) and now Editor of a Winston-Salem monthly publication, and **Sam Zagoria**, former Washington Post reporter and later Ombudsman, now retired in Winston-Salem and Florida. Cross is a former Wellington newsman, author of several books, and former head of New Zealand Television. His novel, “God Boy,” written before his Nieman year, has been con-

verted into a play and opened in Wellington and Christchurch to good reviews. Both Jo and Sam (plus wife **Sylvia**) visited the Crosses in New Zealand in separate trips.

—1956—

Julius Duscha writes that he has been doing some work for the News Inc. newsletter. News Inc. is edited by David Cole, a friend of Duscha’s, in San Francisco. A recent piece of Duscha’s—“Death Takes a (Paid) Holiday at Papers”—discussed the trend of newspapers charging to write obituaries and stories on engagements, marriages and divorces. Duscha concluded that, more and more, these events are seen as sources of advertising revenue rather than as legitimate subjects for news stories.

Desmond Stone passed away in December 1998. Stone, a native of New Zealand, was Editorial Page Editor at the Rochester (NY) Democrat and Chronicle from 1968 to 1985. During his years as a reporter and editor, Stone was known for his commitment to the rights of racial minorities, victims of violence, and the mentally ill. In 1960 he and Jack Germond co-wrote “Winds of Change,” a series that explored the realities of Rochester’s African-American community and anticipated the race riots that erupted in the city in 1964. Stone was also the author of “Alec Wilder in Spite of Himself: A Life of the Composer,” published in 1996 by Oxford University Press.

—1963—

Nieman Reports recently learned that **Chiu-Yin Pun** was killed in a traffic accident in mainland China a few years ago. At the time his Nieman year began, Pun was City Editor of the Sing Tao Evening News in Hong Kong. He studied economics at Canton University and began working as a reporter at the Evening News in 1946. Pun studied history and philosophy during his Nieman year.

—1966—

Dev P. Kumar, former Editor of The Statesman in New Delhi, is now a freelance writer. His book, “Kashmir: Return to Democracy,” was published by Siddhi Books of India.

—1984—

Derrick Z. Jackson was a winner in the Unity Awards in Media competition, sponsored by Missouri’s Lincoln University, for the second straight year. The Unity Awards recognize outstanding coverage of racial issues. Jackson won first prize in two categories—best overall collection of commentaries and best single entry. Jackson also took two first prizes in the Salute to Excellence journalism awards, given by the National Association of Black Journalists. Jackson won in the general commentary category for columns on childhood, local politics and the White House, and in the sports writing category for columns on racism in sports and the failure of black athletes to use their clout to effect change.

Jan Jarboe Russell writes to say that after four years of work, her biography of Lady Bird Johnson is finally out from Scribner’s. “The official publication date was July 30, 1999. It’s unauthorized—an independent work of history that describes Johnson’s life before LBJ, during LBJ, and after LBJ. Its title is ‘Lady Bird: A Biography of Mrs. Johnson.’ Early reviews have been good. We’ll see.

“Some of the surprises I discovered were how Lady Bird dealt with LBJ’s infidelities (she befriended her competitors and even modeled herself after them in certain cases) and how aggressive she was in dealing with reporters. During the 1960 campaign, she went to see Jackie Kennedy in Hyannis Port and Jackie confided that she was at a loss about how to help her husband during the campaign. Mrs. Johnson told her, ‘If I were you, I’d find one or two reporters and have them in and talk about your home. You could do that much.’ Jackie did, and it was one of the few concrete actions she

took during that campaign. I’d always had the idea that Lady Bird followed Jackie around like a little brown wren or something—in fact, in politics, it was Lady Bird who took the lead.

“I was really happy that George magazine excerpted one of the chapters from my book about Lady Bird’s 1964 train trip through the South in its August issue. It was the final issue that John F. Kennedy, Jr. worked on as publisher. Somehow the link between these two mythic families—the Kennedys and the Johnsons—goes on and on, in good times and bad.”

—1988—

Emily O’Reilly writes: “Greetings from Dublin, Ireland from Emily O’Reilly and **Stephen Ryan**. Stephen and I are doing very well. We now have four children ranging in age from nine to two with another on the way in September. (It’s an Irish Catholic kind of thing.) Stephen is working as design consultant with The Irish Times and other publications, and I was recently appointed Editor of Magill, a current affairs magazine. Last year, Random House (U.K.) published my book on the murdered Irish crime reporter, Veronica Guerin.

“We hope to be in Cambridge for the reunion and very much look forward to seeing everybody again.”

— 1991 —

Kevin Noblet, Deputy International Editor at The Associated Press, reports: “To my amazement and joy I have been given a second opportunity to spend a year away from the news grind and in academia. I’ve been appointed Scripps Visiting Professional at Ohio University’s E.W. Scripps School of Journalism, where I teach undergraduate classes, advise faculty and work with students at the school’s newspaper.”

—1994—

Paulo Anunciacao and **Christina Lamb** just had a baby. They write, “showing an early ability (not inherited from his parents!) to deliver well be-

fore deadlines, little Lourenço was born 10 weeks premature on July 7 and weighed just 3 lb. 11 oz., but is doing very well. He arrived just a week after the publication of Christina’s latest book, ‘The Africa House,’ by Viking/Penguin.”

It’s been a busy year for Paulo and Christina, who met during their Nieman year. They moved to London where Paulo is correspondent for Publico, Portugal’s daily paper, and Christina is diplomatic correspondent for The Sunday Telegraph. They were married in Zanzibar in the church where Livingstone preached against slavery. Anunciacao and Lamb continue, “The only moments of doubt came when the priest asked Paulo to say whether he was ‘monogamous,’ ‘polygamous’ or ‘potentially polygamous’! Our new address is: 10A Highbury Grange, London N5 2PX, U.K. The telephone and fax number is (171) 359 40 48.”

—1995—

Marilyn Geewax moved in July to the Washington bureau of Cox Newspapers, which owns the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. She said that “after 10 years of writing opinions, I want to get back to reporting, so I’m headed up to the Cox bureau in Washington, D.C.” Geewax joined the national staff as a technology reporter. She was at the Atlanta Journal-Constitution since 1985 as a business reporter and, more recently, as a member of the Constitution’s editorial board, where she focused on technology and the economy.

—1996—

Daniel Ulanovsky left his job as Deputy Editor of Clarin to start up a monthly magazine named “Latido. Una revista para sentir. Y pensar.” (“Heartbeat. A magazine for feeling. And thinking.”). In a note dated May 29, Ulanovsky wrote:

“A cold and rainy Saturday in Buenos Aires means a right moment to sit, write and share some news. Let me go some years back and say that I was suspecting that a newspaper didn’t pro-

vide me the environment to treat the topics I wanted and to develop them in the way I needed. Living the Nieman year far from a newsroom allowed me to understand this feeling better, and since then I have been thinking about how to put out a magazine that deepens the themes I am interested in. I think in human-related approaches and topics like happiness, God, pain, the body, parents/kids relationships, migrations and roots, loneliness.

“After years of preparation, the first

issue of “Latido” came out successfully at the end of June and was about human passions. The second issue reveals the masks we use every day to cover our thoughts.

“For the moment I am the only owner not because I don’t want a partner but because no one thinks the project will be economically profitable or even viable. They are probably right, but I think that at least once in life we have to make some madness. Otherwise, the world would be too predictable.”

—1998—

Marcelo Leite has given up writing editorials twice a week and covering science/environment the remaining three days for *Folha de S. Paulo* in Brazil.

“Now I’m a full-time Special Reporter for the same newspaper, covering most of the time genetics, biotechnology, ecology and climate change. Wearing two hats at a time was not a good idea, but it took me nine months to convince myself.

“I’m happier now. I work at home most of the week, no boss understands what I’m working on (I hope the readers do), no working over the weekend.... It’s second only to my Nieman year, which was the closest I was allowed to Paradise.

“The downside of it: virtually no editorial on science or environment has been published since I left in the beginning of May.”

Seda Poupnianskaia is now Chief of Public Affairs for the United Nations Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Poupnianskaia moved to Bosnia in mid-April for a three month appointment but now plans to be at her post for another six months. Seda says this is a very new experience for her because she had never been to the countries of the former Yugoslavia, never dealt with peacekeeping operations, and never worked for an organization like the U.N. before. “It is a unique, new and challenging world. And maybe one of the places to be at the end of the 20th Century.”

Poupnianskaia deals with journalists but in a different position from her usual role as a journalist. As the head of an office of 25 people, including radio, print, TV units and spokespeople, she feels that this experience “is very different but definitively an interesting and enriching one from both a personal and professional point of view.” The mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the largest U.N. mission in the world. ■

Nieman Reunion 2000

The Nieman Fellows reunion next year will begin with a welcoming reception under a tent at Lippmann House on Friday, April 28, and will end with a farewell luncheon on Sunday, April 30.

On Saturday morning, astronomy professor Robert Kirshner will speak on “How to Think About the Universe,” followed by a panel discussion, moderated by Hodding Carter, on “How to Think About the Nation and the World.” Panelists include professors Samuel Huntington and Jeffrey Sachs.

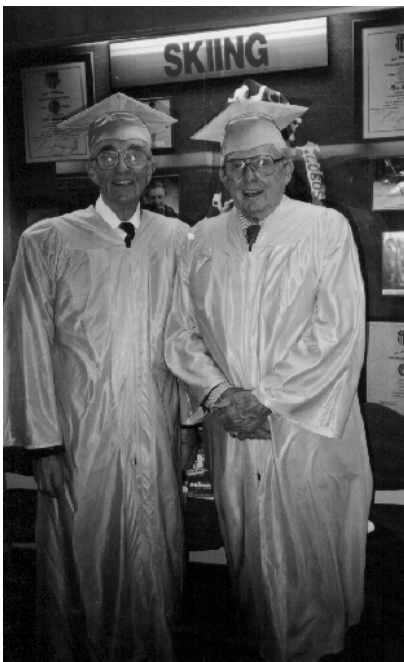
In the afternoon, a panel will tell us how to think about ourselves. Among those who have agreed to appear are professors Walter Willett, on health; Howard Gardner, on creativity, and Thomas Kelly, on music.

The evening dinner will be at the John F. Kennedy Library, with a speaker we are not ready to announce.

As you can see, the program is organized to give Nieman a lot of time to visit with each other.

So join in on the nostalgia and freshen your view of the world, the nation and yourself.

Questions about hotels? You can get in touch with Kate Straus, Reunion 2000 Coordinator, at Nieman2000@eventsinc.net ■



Henry (Hank) Trewitt, left, Nieman class of 1954 and **John G. (Jack) Samson**, from the class of 1960, at their 50th college reunion at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, on May 15. The university insisted the 50th class wear gold robes and sit in the front of the audience during graduation ceremonies for the class of 1999.

Both men were in the first journalism class ever graduated from the University of New Mexico in 1949. Trewitt was with *Time*, *Newsweek* and *U.S. News & World Report* for years; and Samson was with *United Press* during the Korean War and later was a staff writer for AP and an editor for CBS in New York.

End Note

An Urban Eye Looks at Rural Life

Photographs that ‘beguile without fantasizing.’

By Frank Van Riper

I grew up in New York City—the Bronx—a few blocks from Yankee Stadium. I’ve lived and worked in cities all my life. The sense of place one gets from cities is naturally different from that of small towns like the ones I’ve depicted in my books. That, I’m sure, helped my writing and photography. Everything in Down East Maine was different and, therefore, fascinating to me as a documentarian. People just didn’t do stuff like dig clams or tag bears within sight of the Grand Concourse.

Then, too, there are the people themselves. What passes in the common folklore for the true Mainer is a taciturn, humorless Joe, who doesn’t care a whit for anyone “from away.”

For everyone like that, I’ve encoun-

tered dozens more who display a trenchant wit, true warmth and an admirable talent for surviving in a land that is as harsh as it is beautiful. The storied Maine aloofness is better described as a shy reserve, tempered by that rarest of commodities, good manners.

To the Bronx boy who spent his travel time on the subway and whose encounters with trees were infrequent and strange, Down East Maine was a place of raw and fragile beauty. It was a place where you could walk in the woods for hours without encountering a soul; where the music of the evening was in the birds and the crickets, and where the starlit night sky—undimmed by competition from civilization below—burned with a rare spectacular brilliance.

Is it any wonder I was smitten?

The danger, of course, is to romanticize, to gloss over the poverty or the difficulty of making it in a remote, unforgiving environment. So I am proud of what one Maine reviewer said of my effort in her tiny weekly:

“One of those very special books that pays tribute without gushing, is truthful but never grim, and manages to beguile without fantasizing....”

No journalist could seek higher praise. ■

Frank Van Riper is a 1979 Nieman Fellow. His book, “Down East Maine: A World Apart,” was published by Down East Books, Camden, Maine, \$29.95.





Working the Tide

Only blueberry raking matches it for backbreaking toil.

Clamming—digging for soft-shelled clams in unyielding wet clay with a short, heavy clam rake—is one of the toughest ways to harvest seafood because it is done by hand, a few clams at a time. And it can't be done in water.

Clammers watch the tide tables as assiduously as lobstermen. Only, unlike the fishermen, the clammers wait for dead low tide, when coves are turned into mudflats thanks to the amazing pull of the Bay of Fundy. (They also watch for, and respect, warnings of red tide; the plankton-produced toxin can temporarily make clams and quahogs that have fed on it poisonous, if not deadly.)

When the water drops, be it in a cool fog or under a hot sun, the high rubber boots go on as the clammers wade ponderously into the flats, searching for the telltale blowholes in the mud, indicating that clams are lurking beneath the surface. A good day of digging can yield several baskets of clams, which then are sold, mostly to local restaurants or stores.

Every summer, one can count on seeing a tourist who is taken with the idea of clamming for his or her evening meal. One also can count on that tourist quickly tiring of the game and heading for the local takeout stand for a mess of juicy, sweet fried clams that, likely as not, were harvested hours before—by somebody else.

Text and photographs by Frank Van Riper.

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

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

Vol 53 No. 3 NIEMAN REPORTS
Fall 1999 THE NIEMAN FOUNDATION FOR JOURNALISM AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Publisher Bill Kovach
Editor Melissa Ludtke
Assistant Editor Lois Fiore
Editorial Assistant Adam Reilly
Design Editor Deborah Smiley
Business Manager Gina Camara

Nieman Reports (USPS #430-650) is published in March, June, September and December by the Nieman Foundation at Harvard University, One Francis Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138-2098.

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<http://www.Nieman.Harvard.edu>

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Subscription \$20 a year, \$35 for two years;
add \$10 per year for foreign airmail. Single copies \$5.
Back copies are available from the Nieman office.

Please address all subscription correspondence to One Francis Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138-2098 and change of address information to P.O. Box 4951, Manchester, NH 03108.
ISSN Number 0028-9817

Second-class postage paid at Boston, Massachusetts, and additional entries.

POSTMASTER:
Send address changes to
Nieman Reports,
P.O. Box 4951,
Manchester, NH 03108.