

Nieman Reports

THE NIEMAN FOUNDATION FOR JOURNALISM AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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21st Century Muckrakers

Who Are They? How Do They Do Their Work?

Words & Reflections:

Secrets, Sources
and Silencing Watchdogs

Journalism 2.0

'to promote and elevate the standards of journalism'

Agnes Wahl Nieman
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Nieman Reports
The Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard University

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Cover Photo:
Cartoonist Udo J. Keppler used an octopus to represent the Standard Oil Company, 1904. *Courtesy of Library of Congress.*

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Recognizing Excellence

The Nieman Foundation becomes a home for two investigative journalism awards.

BY BOB GILES

Investigative reporting has always been central to the Nieman experience. Journalists specializing in investigative work continue to populate Nieman classes. Speakers address the topic at seminars and workshops. The Nieman Watchdog project (www.niemanwatchdog.org) offers a platform to reinforce an essential element of watchdog reporting: asking probing questions. For more than 60 years, Nieman Reports has published stories examining the craft of investigative journalism, and in this issue it carries forward that tradition under the theme of 21st Century Muckrakers.

This legacy influenced recent decisions by the Nieman Foundation to administer two awards that honor independent investigative journalism:

- The Worth Bingham Prize for Investigative Reporting
- The I.F. Stone Medal for Journalistic Independence.

The press remains an essential national institution in its job of independently probing for facts about wrongdoing or information the government wants to shield from its citizens. Its watchdog role is never more vital than during a national crisis. In a time of economic challenges for news companies, however, deep concern is emerging that a commitment to such public service journalism is waning. Shrinking news staffs and diminishing reportorial resources are worrisome indicators that many daily news organizations will no longer support a serious investment in investigative reporting.

Linking the Nieman name with these awards is an opportunity to reinforce independent investigative reporting by recognizing excellence. To be sure, the awards are distinctive in their purpose.

The Worth Bingham Prize honors newspaper or magazine investigative reporting of stories of national significance where the public interest is ill served. Worth was heir to his family's newspaper holdings in Louisville when he was killed in an automobile accident in 1966. The Worth Bingham Memorial Fund was established, and the initial prize was given the following year.

Joan Bingham, Worth's widow, and their daughter Clara, who have overseen the prize program, approached us a year ago with the idea that the Nieman Foundation might have an interest in creating an archive for the winning entries. As these discussions moved along, they led to a broader discussion about establishing the Nieman Foundation as home for the prize. Proposals were exchanged over several months; agreement was reached and approved recently

by the trustees of the Worth Bingham Fund. In recent years, the Worth Bingham Prize has been among several journalism honors given at the National Press Foundation's annual February dinner in Washington, D.C.. Beginning in 2009, the prize ceremony will be presented at a dinner at Walter Lippmann House that will feature a lecture on investigative reporting by the winner.

The I.F. Stone Medal is a new award to be presented annually to a journalist whose work captures the spirit of independence, integrity, courage and indefatigability that characterized I.F. Stone's Weekly, published 1953-1971. The I.F. Stone Medal will be awarded at an event in Washington that will include a talk by the winner and a workshop discussion on journalistic independence.

Izzy Stone was a model of the resolute, provocative journalist who worked against injustice and inequity and was not afraid to dissent from conventional wisdom. Creating a forum to honor and encourage journalistic independence recognizes that the qualities his work represented are now under stress—qualities that seem especially essential during a time of war in which a nation pays a heavy price for secrecy and deception when used to justify military actions.

We believe that the Nieman Foundation can use its bully pulpits—through Nieman Reports and the Watchdog Journalism Project in tandem with the influence of the Worth Bingham Prize and the I.F. Stone Medal—to draw attention to the need for continued excellent investigative reporting and courageous journalistic independence. ■

The Magazine's Redesign

During the past year, our designer, Diane Novetsky, has guided our journey toward what she describes as Nieman Reports with a "simpler, cleaner, more contemporary feel." In earlier issues, more subtle design changes were made, but with this issue—from its cover to its End Note—a central element in our redesign emerges with our new fonts. The fonts were chosen with ease of reading foremost in our minds and for the elegant, fresh look we feel they give our pages. Our goal has been to preserve the magazine's basic features while updating its style, and we hope you agree that we've succeeded. ■
—Melissa Ludtke

21st Century Muckrakers

Watchdog reporting resides at the core of what journalism does. Its roots dig deeply into the common ground uniting the muckrakers' unearthing of public and private scandals a century ago with what investigative reporters are illuminating today. Though reporting and distribution of this news is very different in the digital era, unfortunately the human conditions requiring press scrutiny are not. These include patterns of corruption and malfeasance among those holding powerful positions of public and private trust. These circumstances and the behavior of others who endanger people's health, safety and well-being continue to be brought to public attention through the effort of journalists.

It is this effort, most of all the resources of time and money needed to support it, that journalists are now scrutinizing, as they contemplate whether emerging business models for newsgathering and distribution will buttress—or possibly eviscerate—this core role. Digital technology can be an investigative reporter's closest ally—with its ever-strengthening capacity to locate and search records, create and use databases, and share information in documents—but in tugging eyes and advertising dollars away from print and broadcast media, the financial framework to pay for news reporting is in need of innovation.

In this issue of Nieman Reports, reporters and editors peer into the future of investigative reporting to let us know possibilities they see ahead. For some, their outlook is shaped by their ongoing work in a newspaper's newsroom or at a TV station. Others speak about what they see through the lens of nonprofit journalism, whether they've been there for a few months, as is the case for **Paul E. Steiger** at ProPublica, or a few decades, as it has been for **Charles Lewis**. Lewis, founder of the Center for Public Integrity, is now starting a new enterprise, the Investigative Reporting Workshop at American University.

Even as they consider the future, they remember the past. The reporting team of **Donald L. Barlett** and **James B. Steele** observes: "With a few notable exceptions, even in the best of times investigative reporting was little more than window-dressing in the American press Investigative stories often were published only when indefatigable reporters spent nights and weekends pursuing leads after covering their regular beats. A favorite line of editors was, 'Why don't you spend a little of your time and see what you come up with?'"

Despite this attitude—and other obstacles—examples of good investigative reporting emerge often enough to remind people of its essential role in our democracy. Journalists, too, are reminded of its merits through awards bestowed on stellar work. Recently, two Nieman Fellows—WCNC-TV investigative reporter **Stuart Watson** and Charlotte Observer Associate Editor Mary Newsom—read or watched nearly 140 entries as judges for the 2008 Goldsmith Prize for Investiga-

tive Reporting award given by the Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy. After being immersed in contemporary examples, Watson and Newsom reflected on what they saw and heard.

“Obviously, reports of the death of investigative journalism have been exaggerated,” Newsom wrote to me, calling her judging experience “inspiring.” It had “for a time at least counterbalanced the ubiquitous pessimism haunting America’s newsrooms,” she said, but acknowledged “the not-so-pretty truth hiding under that huge stack of inspiring contest entries.” Severe staff reductions in newsrooms mean that because “many of the best investigations emerge from routine coverage, close but skeptical, a reporter who isn’t covering county governments closely isn’t likely to flush out crooked county commissioners,” Newsom wrote.

For Watson, his intense focus brought to mind a newsroom boss who had a category he called “little i investigative reporting.” By this he meant reporting that let readers know, for example, the safety record of a chemical plant that just exploded. “Once upon a time, not too long ago,” Watson writes, “there was another phrase for that kind of deadline journalism—we used to call it ‘reporting.’ Calling plain old backgrounding ‘investigative reporting’ so inflates and cheapens the currency of the term as to render it meaningless.”

With similar blending of remembrance and forward thinking, voices and experiences of investigative journalists carry us through this issue of Nieman Reports. In the three other editions to be published this year, smaller collections of stories about various aspects of investigative reporting will appear. Each article will migrate from our print magazine to our Web site (www.nieman.harvard.edu) where they will be assembled as a valuable resource for journalists, for those who teach journalism, and for those who study it.

Our visual journey moves from the late 19th and early 20th century muckraking era to the Watergate coverage of the early 1970’s, which swept into newsrooms a wave of young journalists hoping to do watchdog reporting during a time when newspapers and network TV news were thriving. We thank author Ann Bausum for generously supplying us with several Library of Congress images that appeared in her book, “Muckrakers,” and for her willingness to let us borrow the timeline compiled for her book, and we thank National Geographic, the book’s publisher, for allowing us to reprint the timeline. Our gratitude extends to The Associated Press for giving us the ability to reprint several of the more recent watchdog images, and to the Newseum—Karen Wyatt, Director of Collections and Visual Resources, and Peggy Engel, Managing Editor, in particular—for locating and granting permission for the use of memorable images from its collection. ■

Publisher, Editor and Reporter: The Investigative Formula

Looking back to the early 1900's—to Ida Tarbell and S.S. McClure—offers valuable lessons for watchdog journalism in the 21st century.

BY STEVE WEINBERG

WATCHDOG GALLERY



Muckraker Ida Tarbell (1857-1944). *The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, Pelletier Library, Allegheny College.*

Twenty-five years ago, I read a book published 104 years ago. It contributed mightily to my education as an investigative journalist. Beyond that contribution to my personal education, the book invented

contemporary investigative journalism more than anything else ever published.

The 800-page book, with its title masking the fierce exposé tone and devastating evidence, is “The History of the Standard Oil Company.” The author is Ida M. (for Minerva) Tarbell. The genesis of the book was a series of articles by Tarbell in McClure’s Magazine. The eponymous owner, S.S. (for Samuel Sidney) McClure, also played a huge role in the development of what in the opening decade of the 20th century lacked a name, but today goes by “investigative reporting.”

If the past is prologue (which I believe is true without qualification), and if history is a good teacher (which I believe is sometimes true, depending on the mindset of the pupil), then Tarbell (1857-1944) and McClure (1857-1949) offer vital, timely lessons for investigative journalism circa 2008.

The Tarbell-McClure Connection

Tarbell grew up amidst the oil fields of rural northwestern Pennsylvania. (For readers lacking in their oil history, the first U.S. well began gushing oil in 1859, near Titusville, Pennsylvania.) But despite her deep and broad knowledge of the fledgling oil industry, she never expected to write about it.

During an era when women rarely attended college, Tarbell did, and graduated. She failed, at least by her standards, in a brief career as a schoolteacher. In her late 20’s, knowing she did not want to marry or mother children but otherwise unsure how to fulfill her intense desire to make the world a better place, Tarbell fell into a job proofreading an educational magazine called *The Chautauquan*, based in Meadville, Pennsylvania, the same town where she had attended Allegheny College. The editor gave her opportunities to report and write; Tarbell excelled in those roles. After a decade, she left the magazine to freelance in Paris, France.

As for McClure, he arrived from Ireland as a schoolboy, accompanying his widowed mother and his siblings. Impoverished, he managed to barely avoid starvation until graduation from high school. At the urging of an uncle, McClure moved to Galesburg, Illinois, where odd jobs allowed him to earn tuition for Knox College. Ending up on the East Coast after graduation, McClure located employment at a bicycling magazine that taught him the business side, then in the early 1890’s started his own general-interest magazine, a risky venture made all the more treacherous by a national economic downturn. Over and over, it appeared the magazine would descend into bankruptcy,

but McClure's clever managing of the budget plus outstanding editorial content staved off failure.

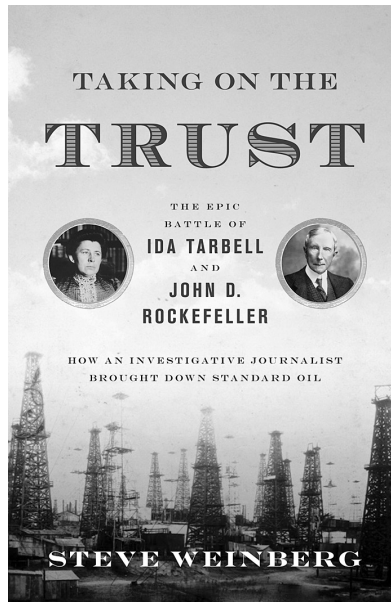
McClure happened to see some of Tarbell's freelancing from Paris, finding himself so impressed that he traveled there to meet her. She started freelancing for his magazine, a few years later leaving France to join the staff in New York City. During the last half of the 1890's, she achieved renown by carrying out two assignments dreamed up by McClure—serialized biographies of two deceased, controversial, famous men—Napoleon Bonaparte and Abraham Lincoln.

By 1900, McClure realized that his magazine must tackle one of the most difficult topics around—corporate giantism and rapacity in the form of “trusts” (think of the word “antitrust”). The Standard Oil Company, founded and controlled by John D. Rockefeller, represented the biggest, most infamous trust of all. McClure asked Tarbell to write a proposal for tackling the topic. She did, and the rest, pun and cliché both intended, is history.

Essential Historical Lessons

Superb editorial content gets attention and sells magazines. McClure intuited that well-researched, well-written accounts of Napoleon Bonaparte and Abraham Lincoln would increase circulation. He was right; the circulation of the magazine shot up measurably with each installment of the lives of Bonaparte and Lincoln. The serialization of Standard Oil's rise, thanks in large part to the brilliant and often predatory tactics of John D. Rockefeller, resulted in massive circulation gains, too. Those circulation gains meant McClure could appeal more convincingly to lenders, investors and potential advertisers.

Time spent reporting pays dividends and leads to uncovering the truth. McClure, while sometimes expressing impatience at Tarbell's pace, nonetheless understood that for his reporter to turn up new, compelling material, she would need time. Lots of time. Perhaps no journalist had spoken these



words as of 1900, but McClure perhaps heard them in his mind: “Time equals truth.” (I first heard that formulation from Robert Caro, author of remarkable journalistic biographies of Robert Moses and Lyndon Baines Johnson.) Tarbell spent time in archives seeking personal correspondence, visited out-of-the-way towns to interview women and men never before approached by a journalist, queried government agencies for documents, and entered courthouses to track down litigation. She accomplished her remarkable research during an era when long-distance travel was slow, without the aid of photocopy machines, audio tape recorders, the Internet, or digital cameras.

Support from editors and publishers is vital. No topic is too large or too risky if editors and publishers will support their reporters' quest for information with resources and time. Imagine how appreciative contemporary readers would be if more magazines, newspapers, broadcast networks and stations, and cable outlets and Web sites (posting original content), had reporters delving into Wal-Mart, McDonald's, Microsoft, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Defense, and other ridiculously powerful, nearly unchecked institutions. McClure wanted to earn enough money to keep his magazine

afloat and pay himself a large enough salary to support his family while also paying his staff well, which is exactly what he did. Never did he place the maximizing of profit ahead of sound journalism in the public interest.

The time equals truth formulation can still work. It is vital to develop lots more publishers who subscribe to the notion. ■

Steve Weinberg is the author of seven nonfiction books, including his most recent, “Taking on the Trust: The Epic Battle of Ida Tarbell and John D. Rockefeller,” published by W.W. Norton in early 2008. He is a former executive director of Investigative Reporters and Editors, Inc., and teaches magazine journalism at the University of Missouri School of Journalism.

A Personal Note

Plenty is wrong with book publishing in general. Still, lots of publishing houses are willing to advance money to journalists who say they will deliver a book manuscript on a vital topic for society. That is what happened with my book at W.W. Norton, where Robert Weil, among others, acquires books on searing topics every year, risking the company's cash. Norton, not so incidentally, is one of the few major book publishers that has remained independent of corporate giantism. Because my book advance would not sustain me for the number of years I needed—I am either plodding or thorough, depending on the perspective—I supplemented the advance with a generous grant from the Alicia Patterson Foundation, presided over by journalist/administrator Peggy Engel. ■—S.W.

WATCHDOGS IN WASHINGTON

The Press and the Presidency: Silencing the Watchdog

‘President Bush was obsessed from the beginning of his administration with what he regarded as unjustified intrusions by the press.’

BY MURREY MARDER

The Bush administration will leave the White House with relations between the presidency and the press in shambles. No other president has set out so determinedly to discredit the role of the press as a watchdog on the transparency and accountability of government. Sadly, during the Bush presidency the American press side-stepped the administration’s hypocrisy of fighting a war to bring a free press to Iraq, while seeking to reduce its oxygen in the United States.

One of the first decisions President George W. Bush made was to issue an executive order tightening controls on the release of presidential and vice presidential records. To begin his presidency with secrecy as his priority was no accident. Bush was a neophyte in federal government, thrust totally unprepared into the role as “leader of the free world.” His vice president, Dick Cheney, however, had three decades to observe presidents close-up and had concluded that they had unwisely yielded power to others, thereby diminishing the presidency. Cheney took office as Bush’s mentor in Washington’s odd ways, determined to roll back what he construed as crippling inroads on presidential power.

Years before most of the press had any idea of the scope of Cheney’s reach behind the scene, he was the most powerful vice president in American history. Bush and Cheney, in the name of restoring power to the White House, had undercut the prime objective of the U.S. Constitution’s creators: to prevent the abuse of power. In the shock of two wars, in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Congress and press both defaulted as counterweights against the power grab.

The Sleeping Watchdog

Even before President Bush took office, the print and broadcast press corps in Washington, D.C. were far more advocates of watchdog reporting than they were performers of it. Congress similarly was often delinquent in its fundamental oversight role of maintaining checks on executive power. There is still little public understanding that the press and Congress have a symbiotic relationship. In fact, few editors realize that if they do not send reporters to cover hearings at the Capitol, there might not be hearings, because Congress survives on the publicity such coverage brings.

This interaction was underscored in the report of the special 9/11 commission on the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, which pointed out that, congressional committees “are often spurred into action by the work of investigative journalists and watchdog organizations.” The report ruefully added, “In recent years, traditional review of the administration of programs ... has been replaced by ‘a focus on personal investigations, possible scandals, and issues designed to generate media attention.’”

As financial pressures have intensified on news organizations—with widespread cuts in staff and newsroom resources—both congressional and press scrutiny of the executive branch has been severely diminished. Even though there was already less press scrutiny due to the transformational times in which the press was operating, President Bush was obsessed from the beginning of his administration with what he regarded as unjustified intrusions by the press. Relief from

what scrutiny existed came suddenly with national preoccupation over the 9/11 attacks, and those were soon followed by anthrax powder attacks on Capitol Hill. In political terms—with Republicans in control of both houses of Congress—these threats on public safety virtually immunized the Bush administration from criticism for the wars in Afghanistan and in Iraq.

During this time, the press remained the one potential counterweight that could have publicly explored what was later revealed to be grievous misjudgments in launching the Iraq invasion without preparation for its aftermath. But no attempt at watchdog reporting was made by a major news operation, with the exception of the excellent reporting done by the then-Knight Ridder Washington bureau. In general, it can be said that the press was actually in a supportive relationship with the Bush administration regarding the invasion of Iraq; subsequent to the invasion, The New York Times and The Washington Post published mea culpa explanations about their lack of aggressiveness in reporting on the lead-up to the war in Iraq.

The White House View

The Bush administration’s objective appeared not simply to contain or counter criticism from these quarters, but to blot it out. In April 2004, at a White House barbecue for the press, Ken Auletta of The New Yorker wrote, a reporter asked the president how he could know “what the public is thinking” if he did not read newspapers or watch the TV news, as he had earlier claimed. Without missing a beat, Bush replied, “You’re assuming

that you represent the public. I don't accept that."

It soon became clear that Bush's response was no fleeting barb. It clearly reflected a determination to obliterate the long-held assumption that in the United States a free press is a recognized watchdog agent for holding public officials accountable for their policies and actions and for demanding transparency of public records. Senior officials in the White House, including Chief of Staff Andrew Card, were authorized to explain to those who headed news organizations the challenge the Bush administration was putting forth: In essence, it was denying that the press has any check and balance role to play in the American system of government.

As press observer and New York University journalism professor Jay Rosen summarized the stand-off on April 25, 2004 on "PressThink," his Weblog: "What the Bush people say is, 'We don't accept that you have a check and balance function. We think that you are in the game of 'Gotcha.' Oh, you're interested in headlines, and you're interested in conflict. You're not interested in having a serious discussion ... and exploring things.'"

Rosen went on to write that "generations of journalists have been taught to believe differently. Their sentences start like this, 'In our system the press describes the role of journalism as a check on power, which is quasi-Constitutional only because another part of the Constitution, the First Amendment, says you can't legislate the role of the press....' Bush, Rosen continues, 'rejects this idea. That theory has gone down,' he says. 'And you guys don't have that kind of muscle anymore.'"

The Fourth Estate

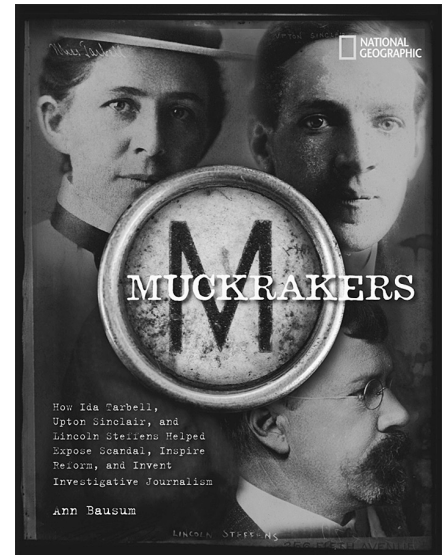
Other sources disagree totally with the Bush White House on the Founders' concept of the role of the press. In a 1974 speech, then-Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart said that the "primary purpose" of the First Amendment was "to create a fourth institution outside the government as an additional check on the three official branches." Stewart

cited several landmark cases in which the Supreme Court had upheld the right of the press to function as a check on official power, including the 1971 Pentagon Papers case involving top secret papers on the Vietnam War initially published by The New York Times and The Washington Post. The high court struck down restraining orders—requested by the Nixon administration and issued by federal judges—which had stopped both of those presses.

In 1964, in *New York Times Co. v. Sullivan*, a libel case, Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan delivered what still stands as the most sweeping interpretation of "the right to criticize government ... [as] the central meaning of the First Amendment." Brennan wrote that there is "a profound national commitment to the principle that debate on national public issues should be uninhibited, robust and wide open, and that it may well include vehement, caustic and sometimes unpleasantly sharp attacks on government and public officials."

The most unexpected disagreement with President Bush about the press came from within his cabinet in 2007, from newly appointed Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates, who replaced controversial Donald Rumsfeld, who was a major influence in the decision to launch the Iraq War. Gates, who had served four presidents in high intelligence posts, had to be talked into leaving the leadership of Texas A&M University to take this job. He retained enough independence in the process to tell a U.S. Naval Academy graduating class that in devotion to freedom, "The press is not the enemy, and to treat it as such is self-defeating." Gates urged the new graduates "to remember the importance of two pillars of our freedom under the Constitution: the Congress and the press. Both surely try our patience from time to time, but they are the surest guarantees of the liberty of the American people."

Gates's bold outspokenness coincided with evidence in parts of the nation of a growing turn against the Bush administration's polarizing po-



This timeline presents a sampling of muckraking journalism from 1858-2007. It is reprinted with permission of the National Geographic Society from the book "Muckrakers" by Ann Bausum. Text copyright © 2007 Ann Bausum.

1858

An article called "The Swill Milk Trade of New York and Brooklyn" runs in the May 8 issue of Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, exposing the production of poor-quality milk among city-raised cows that are fed swill (a byproduct of fermentation) instead of adequate grain.

1859

The first oil well is drilled near Titusville, Pennsylvania.

The publication of Charles Darwin's "Origin of Species" prompts many intellectuals to emphasize the philosophical teachings of the Bible and defer to Darwin for scientific explanations about the origins of life.

litical strategy over the Iraq War. In the House of Representatives, in the earlier stages of the war, some had stooped to the lowest level of equating dissent with disloyalty. But in more recent times, instead of reinforcing the Bush administration's demeaning of a watchdog press, an opposite effect has begun to emerge in some arenas with a surge of concern about the loss of watchdog reporting.

Now, arriving in the mix of new media outlets, comes the nonprofit journalistic venture called ProPublica, dedicated to investigative journalism ("reporting on abuses of power by anyone with power") and supported with

\$10 million-a-year financing pledged by philanthropists. With former Wall Street Journal Managing Editor Paul E. Steiger as its editor, the publication that will debut later this year will also be an experiment in transcending ideology, since the donors who make its existence possible are strongly anti-Bush. In addition to its Web site, ProPublica intends to offer "temporary exclusives" of its investigative reporting to "existing news platforms" that offer the best visibility for a particular story. Steiger has said that he felt impelled to act and innovate because "today, all around me is an industry in upheaval, with slumping revenues

and stocks, layoffs and takeovers of publishers that a decade ago seemed impregnable ..."

An observer might add, what an irony it would be if President Bush's attempt to shrink the influence of the press boomeranged into one reborn and more powerful than ever. ■

Murrey Marder, a 1950 Nieman Fellow, is a former chief diplomatic reporter with The Washington Post. He is also the sponsor of the Nieman Watchdog project (www.nieman-watchdog.org) through the creation of The Murrey and Frances Marder Fund at the Nieman Foundation.

Decision-Making: A Visual Journey Inside the Iraq War

'... it remains the job of journalists to do more than report the "stuff" that happens or bring to the public the "first rough draft of history."

BY MICHAEL KIRK AND MICHAEL WISER

Nearly seven years after September 11th, it is not hard to find reporting about our nation's response to that tragic day. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, WMD and Abu Ghraib, Fallujah and insurgents, warrantless wiretapping and inadequate medical care for veterans seem like familiar stories. An incalculable number of newspaper articles and dozens of books—we count more than 50 on our bookshelves—and thousands of hours of television and radio coverage have been done on them. On the PBS series "Frontline," where we work as producers, more than 40 documentary programs about such subjects have been aired since 9/11. Why then did we decide to add to this mix a four-and-a-half hour program detailing what some call "the war on terror" but what we entitled, "Bush's War"?

In the spring of 2003, while the looting in Iraq was growing out of control, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld famously remarked, "Stuff happens!" His words were said to indicate callous indifference to the

situation in Iraq, but Rumsfeld was also signaling that it would be a mistake to assign responsibility for it. Looting was simply something that happened. For quite some time, the press acquiesced.

This moment was indicative of how the news media have seemed unwilling to challenge the "stuff happens" assertions of those who hold positions of power. Events are reported, then new ones transpire, and they push the older ones out of the headlines, rarely to resurface. Journalists often lack the time and resources to provide much-needed context or to probe deeply into motivations and actions of the people involved so as to shed light on those who bear responsibility for events about which they are reporting. On television, in particular, such reporting is all too rare.

During the years since 9/11, we've produced 10 films for "Frontline" that chronicle the epic struggles over policy inside the Bush administration. These films have examined in depth how these battles resulted in the emergence

of policies that have come to define this war. Our films straddle the fence between journalism and history—as Emmy Awards in both journalism and history attest. No matter the label, their focus remains on revealing how key decisions were made by those who were in the position to do so.

Portraying the Powerful

Last October "Frontline" Executive Producer David Fanning asked us to take on the project of producing a single film about the war by meshing new interviews and reporting with the series' massive archive of hundreds of interviews and thousands of hours of footage. While we'd told parts of the story before, neither "Frontline" nor any other news organization had attempted to portray the Shakespearean dimensions of the full story of how decisions by the most powerful people in our government led us to the situation our country confronts today.

We knew from our prior reporting that decisions about interrogation

WATCHDOG GALLERY



In 1890 Jacob Riis (1849-1914) published “How the Other Half Lives,” including his photograph of children sleeping on the streets of New York. *Photo courtesy of Library of Congress.*

techniques, war plans, the power of the presidency, domestic spying, and military strategy were not discrete stories but part of a single, fascinating narrative waiting to be told about the interplay among the most senior administration officials. We knew that our greatest challenge would be finding a way to translate the massive amount of material we’d accumulated into an accessible and comprehensible story.

So we drew boxes, stacking them to indicate how one event followed another chronologically. We whittled down our starting list of hundreds of key events to fewer than 100 of what we saw as more important moments. Into the boxes that remained, we plugged in the behind-the-scene stories we’d discovered about the key players involved. Our focus remained on President George W. Bush, Vice President Richard Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of State Colin Powell, Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet, and National Security Advisor and later Secretary of State Condoleezza

Rice. We wanted to examine how bureaucratic battles among them led to some of the critical events and/or decisions in the Iraq War.

To tell the story of the failure of diplomacy in the run-up to the war, for example, we focused on the long-standing, multifaceted and always fascinating relationship between Secretary of State Powell and Vice President Cheney. Their strained relationship reached back to the Gulf War when Powell served as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under then Secretary of Defense Cheney. From the moment Bush announced Powell’s appointment, Cheney had worked to marginalize Powell’s influence, primarily by bringing on Rumsfeld, a personal friend of Cheney’s, as Secretary of Defense. Rumsfeld and Cheney worked together to counter Powell’s attempts to moderate administration policy. As many Americans know already from reporting done primarily after Powell left the administration, he was effectively cut out of key decisions, ambushed in speeches, and attacked

1872

In “The King of Frauds,” the New York Sun details the unscrupulous dealings of financiers through *Crédit Mobilier* during the construction of the transcontinental railroad. Published on September 4, the article implicates more than a dozen U.S. congressmen and prompts a federal investigation of the scandal during 1873.

1887

Nellie Bly spends “Ten Days in a Mad-House” disguised as a patient in order to observe mistreatment of the mentally ill as background for her series in the New York World, which starts on October 16.

1888

On September 2, the San Francisco Examiner publishes “Overboard: An ‘Examiner’ Man Tests the Life-Saving Gear of the Ferry.”

1890

Scribner’s publishes “How the Other Half Lives,” a study on ghetto life in New York City by Jacob Riis.

1892

Ida B. Wells (later Ida B. Wells-Barnett) reports on May 21 in the Memphis newspaper *Free Speech* about the horror and injustice of racially motivated lynching. After her newspaper offices are destroyed in retaliation, she leaves the South and takes her story to the New York Age.

by anonymous administration officials in the press.

A focus on key people—on their temperaments, personalities and interactions of powerful people such as Powell, Cheney and Rumsfeld—is simply good storytelling. Often viewers get drawn into caring about policies and events they might otherwise not engage with through gripping, insightful portrayals of characters such as these. But such a focus is about more than producing a good television show; it is about fulfilling the presumed role of a free press in a democracy by explaining how and why our elected leaders and their appointees acted as they did.

This has been a daunting story to tell. Rarely could we find footage of times when these many decisions were being made behind closed doors. Often the principals were reluctant to talk. With interviews with key deputies—Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, Army Secretary Thomas White,

Powell's Chief of Staff Larry Wilkerson, Deputy Attorney General Jack Goldsmith, NSC staffers Philip Zelikow and Franklin Miller and others—and with journalists who originally reported much of this story—Dana Priest, Steve Coll, Bob Woodward, Thomas Ricks, Karen DeYoung, Ron Suskind, Barton Gellman, Elisabeth Bumiller, Michael Gordon and others—it has been possible to piece together the dramatic events that happened out of sight (and sound) of the public.

Once our narrative course became clear, we dug inside our archive of 4,000 hours of videotape, hundreds of photographs, and numerous documents so we could make visual the stories we'd decided to tell. This time-consuming final stage is what rewards us—and our viewers—with the fascinating intersection and sometimes jolting juxtaposition of voice, document, film and photography.

In reporting and producing “Bush's War,” we feel privileged—and at the

same time obligated—to be able to shine our light in the dark corners of what is probably the most important story of our time. In future years, historians will have their turn; undoubtedly they will rewrite the story based on new information that will surely be uncovered. For now, however, it remains the job of journalists to do more than report the “stuff” that happens or bring to the public the “first rough draft of history.” At its best, journalism provides citizens with enough information to make an informed judgment about who is responsible for decisions made about policies conducted in their name. ■

Michael Kirk, a 1980 Nieman Fellow, is a founding producer of “Frontline,” now in its 25th season. He is the producer/director/writer and Michael Wiser is field producer of “Bush's War,” which was first broadcast on PBS on March 24-25, 2008. Wiser is a 2003 graduate of Harvard Law School.

Determining the Reliability of a Key CIA Source

After his newspaper story exposed the CIA's reliance on a con man to determine if Iraq had WMD, a journalist dug deeper to unravel the mystery.

BY BOB DROGIN

A year ago in Nieman Reports, Steve Weinberg, the former executive director of Investigative Reporters and Editors, wrote an article entitled “The Book as an Investigative Vehicle for News,” about books being written by journalists that are providing in-depth accounts of Iraq War policy and decision-making. Now Los Angeles Times reporter Bob Drogin describes some of the challenges he found as he transformed his investigative reporting into a book about a CIA source code named Curveball.

Turning a lengthy newspaper investigation into a book couldn't be that difficult. Or so I thought. I soon discovered that I needed to

overcome three decades of newspaper writing before I could even begin.

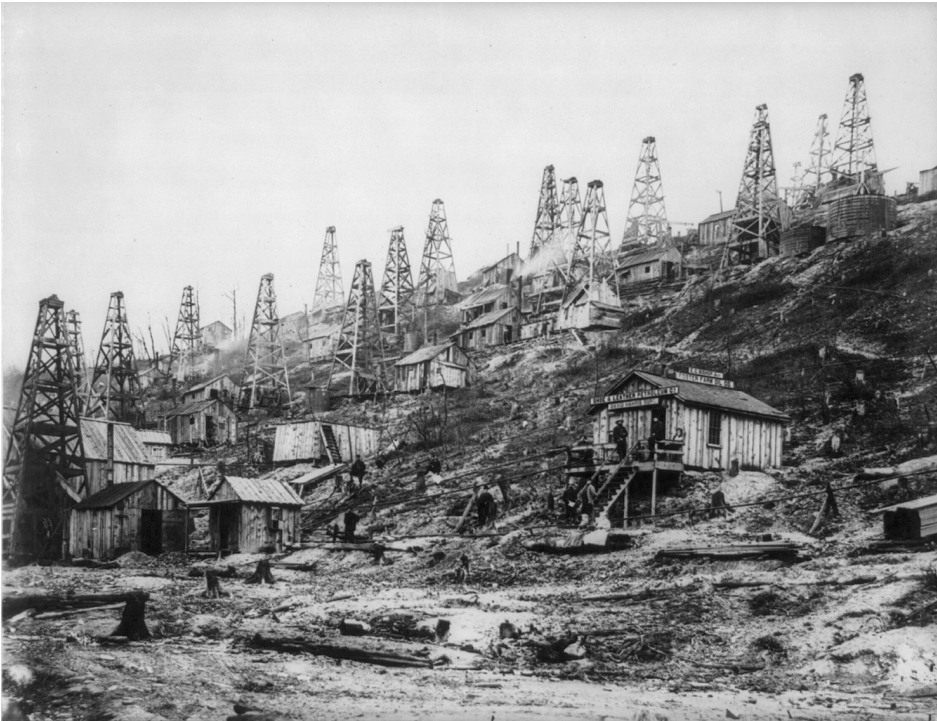
My story focused on a young Iraqi chemical engineer who sought political asylum in Germany in 1999. He brought no documents or other proof, but the smooth-talking defector convinced Germany's spy service that he had helped design and build secret biological weapons factories on trucks and trains for Saddam Hussein's regime. A local U.S. intelligence team issued his wonderfully apt code name: Curveball.

Few outsiders then believed that Hussein directly imperiled Western security. But after the 9/11 attacks, CIA officers in Washington re-evaluated the German reports and Curveball's

terrifying account soon reverberated through U.S. intelligence channels. By the fall of 2002, the Bush administration had latched onto Hussein's supposed weapons of mass destruction as a pretext for war. President Bush directly warned of Iraq's deadly bio-trucks, among other dangers, in his 2003 State of the Union speech. More memorably, Secretary of State Colin Powell vividly cited Curveball's “eyewitness” account and displayed drawings of the sinister trucks when he argued the case for war to the U.N. Security Council.

As a reporter on the intelligence beat in the Washington bureau of the Los Angeles Times, I had helped “truth squad” White House claims on

WATCHDOG GALLERY



Ida M. Tarbell grew up near oil derricks in Western Pennsylvania and later investigated the practices of the Standard Oil Company for McClure's Magazine in November 1902. *Photo courtesy of Library of Congress.*

Iraq, raising doubts when the evidence appeared weak. But Powell's U.N. presentation convinced me that the CIA possessed indisputable proof. I went to Baghdad after the invasion and spent a month covering the hunt for WMD. Day after day, U.S., British and Australian teams raced across the baking desert to search suspect factories, arsenals, pesticide plants, and other facilities. They came up with zilch. I returned home determined to discover how the CIA had gotten such crucial intelligence so catastrophically wrong.

In March 2004, a year after the invasion, my colleague Greg Miller and I helped find the answer. We broke the news that the prewar intelligence had relied on the unconfirmed account of a dubious defector in Germany. Worse, we wrote, U.S. authorities never interviewed Curveball, never verified his information, and didn't even know

his name before the war. The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and other investigations soon confirmed and expanded our information. Finally, in April 2005, John Carroll, then our editor, urged me to focus full-time on the Curveball case. He could sense a bigger story.

During the next six months, I made two trips to Germany, one to England, and numerous visits to the United Nations in New York. I reached out to intelligence sources and former weapons inspectors and other experts around the world. I hooked up with John Goetz, a freelance reporter based in Berlin, to help track down the German side of the saga. Our 8,000-word story led the paper and filled three inside pages on November 20, 2005.¹ We couldn't find Curveball (who is under the protection of German intelligence), but we traced the astonishing screw-ups, bureaucratic rivalries, cult-

 1893

S.S. McClure founds McClure's Magazine in New York, N.Y., with J.S. Phillips and associates.

 1894

Henry Demarest Lloyd writes a documentary about J.D. Rockefeller and the development of Standard Oil.

 1895

Theodore Roosevelt is appointed a commissioner of the New York City Police Board. Lincoln Steffens covers Roosevelt's reform efforts for the Commercial Advertiser. Roosevelt resigns in April 1897 to become President William McKinley's Assistant Secretary of the Navy.

 1898

The Spanish-American War is fought to determine the independence of Cuba. Theodore Roosevelt participates as a colonel, leading his regiment of Rough Riders. War coverage becomes increasingly sensational and provocative, prompting Joseph Pulitzer to retreat from his commitment to print shocking and exaggerated news.

 1899

"Packingtown," an early exposé about the meatpacking industry in Chicago by Algie Simmons, is published by Charles H. Kerr & Co.

The Chicago Daily Tribune gathers statistics on injuries caused by fireworks in an article warning of their use during Independence Day celebrations.

¹ <http://fairuse.1accesshost.com/news2/latimes935.html>

like attitudes, and spineless leadership that plagued the case. It was hard to overstate the scope of the disaster. If U.S. intelligence authorities famously failed to connect the dots before 9/11, in *Curveball*, they made up the dots.

Several publishers and Hollywood studios contacted me after the story ran. Random House quickly offered a contract to write a 100,000-word book, and Focus Features bought the option for a film. The paper granted me a book leave. I was thrilled. I already had reported on Iraq's WMD for three years. I was obsessed by the topic and had files bulging with notes and reports. A book would let me provide context and perspective, a way to crosscheck competing accounts, something newspapers never could do. With the benefit of hindsight, and more reporting, I could connect the proper dots. I'd never written a book before, but how hard could it be?

Reporting Begins Anew

I soon found out. My story involved a confirmed liar, at least four rival spy services, and officials desperate to hide their culpability for an intelligence fiasco. Even the classified documents were filled with errors. A newspaper story didn't have to answer every question; a book should at least try. Frantic, I went back to my earlier sources and pleaded for help unraveling the case. I switched on a tape recorder, which I rarely use for news interviews. Transcribing the material later, I was shocked to discover how much I had missed when I only listened for cogent quotes.

Now, the underbrush of detail helped explain the why and how, not just what had happened. I identified new sources in Washington and returned to Europe and the United Nations. I filed a half dozen Freedom of Information Act requests (all were denied) and found new clues in old documents. Three months passed. I kept finding more people to interview, more documents to chase. I recalled that Neil Sheehan spent 16 years writing "A Bright Shining Lie," arguably the best nonfiction book about the lies in

Vietnam. I could see why. Unlike him, my meter was running.

Most Washington reporting is conducted by telephone, press conference, or computer research. Each day, reporters offer insight into meetings they can't attend or scramble for reports written by others about events far away. Now I reverted to my early days as a police reporter. I knocked on doors, begged invitations to dinner, and otherwise sought face-to-face meetings. Sources needed to know I wanted the truth, not a sound bite. Our newspaper story, I realized, had only sketched a skeleton of a story.

I set up a basement office with a computer but no telephone. I arranged 12 large boxes of notes and documents on the floor behind me. And I froze. What was my lede? Did a book have a lede? I tried writing a detailed outline, with 20 chapters, but tossed it away. It was too formulaic, too flat. I wanted something more organic, more lifelike. I not only had the defining story of one of America's worst intelligence failures. I had a great yarn to tell. I wanted to provide the voice and the authority it deserved. That meant I needed to relearn my craft.

I built chapters around dialogue and scenes. I described not just what people said and did, but what they thought and why. I let the details emerge as clues to a puzzle, not an assembly of facts. I sketched in the history to explain how attitudes and biases had developed. I ignored outside experts and pundits. My characters were real people, with real motives, emotions, hopes and dreams. I let their story unfold in real time, largely in their own words, building suspense toward a dramatic conclusion.

It was brutal. Over the next nine months, I wrote and rewrote every word, paragraph and page several times. Despite the endless space a book potentially offers, I learned that less often is more. I vastly overwrote some sections, then slashed them back to keep the story moving. I used endnotes to cite every source and moved text there that bogged down the main narrative but still deserved attention. I rewrote sections as new information

challenged my earlier reporting. I worked seven days a week, usually 15 or more hours a day. I vowed never to write another book if I survived the ordeal, and my worried family eagerly agreed.

To my surprise, I met my deadline for the manuscript. My leave had expired, and I wearily returned to work the same day at the Los Angeles Times. At nights and on weekends over the next six months, I desperately cut chapters and rewrote others. Like most new authors, I was stunned to discover that the publisher offered less editing on a 300-page book than my newspaper normally provided for a 30-inch story. So I nervously passed drafts to friends and colleagues and incorporated their suggestions into my manuscript. I was frustrated at my failure to find several key documents or officials. But I took solace in Bob Woodward's description of his work as the "best available version of the truth." No book about an intelligence operation is ever 100 percent complete, but I felt sure I more than met Woodward's investigative standard.

"Curveball" arrived in bookstores in October 2007, and more than a dozen newspapers and magazines responded with very favorable reviews. The New York Times Sunday Book Review called it "worthy of Somerset Maugham or Graham Greene." I was blown away. Translations are underway in Holland, Germany, Japan and other countries. Even better, I was invited to launch the book on "The Colbert Report." Little impresses my teenage kids, but seeing their dad mocked on late night TV did the trick. I might even write another book. ■

Bob Drogin, a reporter in the Washington bureau of the Los Angeles Times, is the author of "Curveball: Spies, Lies, and the Con Man Who Caused a War," published by Random House. His Web site is www.curveball-book.com.

Digital Records Reveal Corruption on Capitol Hill

The 2006 Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting was awarded to the staffs of The San Diego Union-Tribune and Copley News Service, “with notable work by Marcus Stern and Jerry Kammer,” given in recognition of “their disclosure of bribe-taking that sent former Representative Randy Cunningham to prison in disgrace.” In separate articles that follow, Stern and Kammer describe how, in working on aspects of this story of Congressional corruption, they went about their investigative reporting and built on the work being done by one another.

Combining investigative techniques and technology, a reporter unearths a scandal.

BY MARCUS STERN

In May 2005, Randy Cunningham was seen by his supporters as a larger-than-life fighter pilot, war hero, and ardent pro-military keeper of the conservative flame. As a Republican member of the U.S. House, he had steered hundreds of millions of federal dollars to his San Diego congressional district and political contributors. The lawmaker who called himself Duke, serving his 16th year in the House, was politically invincible. He could keep his seat for life.

That was then, before Cunningham was disclosed as the most corrupt member of Congress ever caught, both in dollar amount and audacity. As it turned out, he and his cronies had been secretly acquiring boats, mansions, Oriental carpets and other antiques as they traveled by limo and private jet to resorts where they wined, dined and soaked in hot tubs with prostitutes. They paid for their lavish excesses by systematically plundering the military-intelligence budget each year. The former war hero’s corruption earned him the longest prison term ever meted out to a member of Congress—eight years and four months. And it helped put the spotlight on earmarks, the currency of congressional corruption.

The darker side of Cunningham

came out thanks to relentless digging by journalists, bloggers and federal investigators. But no suspicions swirled around Cunningham until a newspaper article published on June 12, 2005 showed that a defense contractor named Mitch Wade had purchased Cunningham’s Southern California home at a highly inflated price. The sham home sale paved the way for Cunningham to upgrade from a house to a mansion and Wade’s defense firm to go from having no federal prime contracts to a portfolio exceeding \$100 million within two years, according to the article.

As the writer of that story, I’m asked frequently how I got onto it. Most are surprised to learn that no tip was involved. The break came from a time-honored reporting practice: kicking over stones. Or in a digital parlance, what I did might be called “clicking over stones,” since a lot of hunting around in cyberspace is what revealed early on the threads I used to weave this story together.

Early in May 2005, as I sat in my office of the Copley News Service on the 11th floor of the National Press Building, no suspicions swirled around Cunningham. He had taken two trips to Saudi Arabia in the previous year, and I hadn’t believed his explanation

1901

William McKinley is assassinated on September 14; Theodore Roosevelt becomes the nation’s 26th President.

1902

“Tweed Days in St. Louis” runs in the October issue of McClure’s Magazine as the first installment of what becomes known as “The Shame of the Cities,” by Lincoln Steffens. Book is published in 1904.

The first installment of Ida Tarbell’s “The History of the Standard Oil Company” appears in the November issue of McClure’s Magazine. The collected articles are published as a two-volume book set in 1904.

1903

The January issue of McClure’s Magazine includes an editorial calling attention to its three articles about “American Contempt of the Law.” They are authored by Ray Stannard Baker, Lincoln Steffens, and Ida Tarbell.

1904

Wall Street insider Thomas Lawson writes a tell-all exposé called “Frenzied Finance” for the August issue of Everybody’s Magazine.

Edward Bok publishes a series of editorials warning about “The ‘Patent-Medicine’ Curse” in the Ladies’ Home Journal.

Republican Party candidate Theodore Roosevelt becomes the first President by succession to gain outright election to the presidency with his defeat of Alton Brooks Parker, a Democrat.

then: He said he wanted to improve relations between the Kingdom and the United States. But after a wide-ranging swing through public records, I had nothing to debunk the reason he gave. I decided to do one last thing: to see if the congressman had updated his living accommodations.

An online search of property records found that Cunningham and his wife had purchased a \$2.55 million mansion in the pricey neighborhood of Rancho Santa Fe 18 months earlier. That price seemed way beyond the reach of a couple living on the salaries of a lawmaker and a public school administrator. Another search showed that Cunningham had sold his house in Del Mar Heights for \$1.67 million—\$1.3 million more than he had paid for it about 15 years earlier. Perhaps that put him in position to buy the mansion.

But something else caught my eye: He didn't sell the house to an individual. He sold it to something called 1523 New Hampshire Ave. LLC. That sounded to me like a Washington, D.C. address. An electronic search found that the buyer was a company registered in the state of Nevada to a man named Mitch Wade. The search also showed that Wade had a second company registered in Nevada: MZM Inc.

I found MZM's corporate Web site, where I learned it was a fast-growing defense company that had gone from no prime contracts to more than \$100 million within the rough time frame of the house sale. Cunningham, as a senior member of the defense appropriations subcommittee, had substantial influence over defense spending. And the defense contractor who bought his Del Mar house for \$1.67 million was suddenly swimming in defense contracts.

Next, I looked to see what Wade did with Representative Cunningham's Del Mar Heights house. Another quick search of property records found that he had put the house right back on the market for roughly the same price he'd paid for it. It languished on the market for eight months before selling at a \$700,000 loss. During that same period, San Diego home values had appreciated in double-digits.

Over the next couple of weeks, I was able to review "comps" for houses sold in Del Mar Heights during the period that Cunningham sold the house to Wade. It confirmed that Wade had substantially overpaid.

When I called MZM, a spokesman told me that the company had purchased the house to boost its presence in San Diego. But after the sale went through, the company decided it did

not fit their "corporate or security interests." So Wade put it back on the market without ever actually seeing it. He could not account for the loss in value at a time when home values were exploding upward.

When I called Cunningham, he acknowledged that he had supported Wade's efforts to get defense contracts, but he insisted that help had nothing to do with the house transaction. When asked what cynics might think, Cunningham said this: "My whole life I've lived above board. I've never even smoked a marijuana cigarette. I don't cheat. If a contractor buys me lunch and we meet a second time, I buy the lunch. My whole life has been above board, and so this doesn't worry me." Later, he added, "The last thing I would do is get involved in something that, you know, is wrong. And I feel very confident that I haven't done anything wrong."

On June 12, 2005, the Union-Tribune in San Diego published the story laying out the details of the home sale along with the explanations offered by the lawmaker and the defense contractor. Five days later, a federal grand jury began issuing subpoenas. Five months later, Cunningham tearfully pleaded guilty to taking more than \$2.4 million in bribes. Today, he sits in jail.

Congressional Earmarks: Revealing Who Really Benefits

BY JERRY KAMMER

Marcus Stern's explosive story about a defense contractor's purchase of Duke Cunningham's home at a grossly inflated price propelled us, in the Copley News Bureau, into a series of investigative stories showing that Cunningham's corruption, while outrageous, was not truly extraordinary. During the next several months, our reporting unearthed a permissive Capitol Hill culture that unites congressmen, contractors and

lobbyists in a sleazy loop of influence buying and selling.

One of that culture's most prominent features is the earmark, a line item inserted into a spending bill, often with little or no oversight. Earmarks have been around for a long time, and many serve legitimate public purposes. But they didn't proliferate nor become an open invitation to fraud until the 1990's, when members of Congress fully recognized their power to raise

money and fuel an incumbency protection machine.

Earmarks in defense bills became the currency of Cunningham's corruption. They were his side of a quid pro quo arrangement that brought him a mansion, Rolls Royce, luxury vacations, a series of boats, and the prostitutes, who last year wrapped up prosecutors' bribery case against one of Cunningham's vividly decadent bribing benefactors.

WATCHDOG GALLERY

1905

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CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

McClure's Magazine

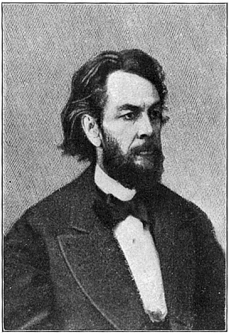
VOL. XX NOVEMBER, 1902 NO. 1

THE HISTORY OF THE STANDARD OIL COMPANY

BY IDA M. TARBELL
Author of "The Life of Lincoln"

CHAPTER I—THE BIRTH OF AN INDUSTRY

ONE of the busiest corners of the globe at the opening of the year from wilderness to market-place. This prodigious strip of Northwestern Pennsylvania, not over fifty miles long, a waste place of the earth, it had revolutionized the world's methods of illumination and added millions upon millions of dollars to the wealth of the United States.



GEORGE H. BISSELL

The man to whom more than any other is due the credit of what is called the "discovery" of oil; for it was he who first took steps to find its value and to organize a company to produce it.

Petroleum as a curiosity was no new thing. For more than two hundred years it had been described in the journals of Western explorers. For decades it had been dipped up from the surface of springs, soaked up by blankets from running streams, found in quantities when salt wells were bored, bottled and sold as a cure-all—"Seneca Oil" or "Rock Oil." It was called. One man had even distilled it in a crude way, and sold it as an illuminant. Scientists had described it, and travelers from the West often car-

known the world over as the Oil Regions. Twelve years before, this strip of land had been but little better than a wilderness its only inhabitants the lumbermen, who every season cut great swaths of primeval pine and hemlock from its hills, and in the spring floated them down the Allegheny River to Pittsburgh. The great tides of Western emigration had shunned the spot for years as too rugged and unfriendly for settlement, and yet in twelve years this region avoided by men had been transformed into a bustling trade center, where towns elbowed each other for place, into which the three great trunk railroads had built branches, and every foot

In this issue of McClure's Magazine, the first installment of Ida M. Tarbell's "The History of the Standard Oil Company" appeared.

During the past decade, earmarks became central to the legalized bribery of the campaign finance system. In many ways, it is an astonishingly permissive system; it serves sponsors of congressional earmarks by ensuring that their campaign coffers are filled by grateful lobbyists as it responds to the requests of the recipients with largesse. By giving members a personal stake in spending bills, it also helps assure passage. No matter how much wasteful spending the bill contains, a "yes" vote is assured. Earmarks also consume enormous amounts of staff time that could be directed to more legitimate needs.

To peer into this world of influence and affluence, I focused a lot of my reporting on Bill Lowery, a former

San Diego congressman and member of the appropriations committee. Lowery, a cynical man who, according to friends, despises the press and wryly notes that his job is guaranteed by the citizen's right to petition on the Congress, refused to talk.

Lowery had retired from Congress in 1990 after news accounts about his close ties to one of the more corrupt figures in the national savings and loan scandal. As a member of the House Banking Committee, Lowery had enthusiastically supported the S&L deregulation that facilitated that multibillion-dollar plundering of federally insured institutions. After leaving Congress, he immediately became a lobbyist, following the path from Capitol Hill to K Street that has become routine among retiring public servants lured by the financial charms of service to special interests.

Lowery specialized in getting earmarks inserted into spending bills supervised by his close friend from the desert east of Los Angeles, Rep. Jerry Lewis. By 1999, when Lewis became chairman of the defense appropriations subcommittee, Lowery's satisfied clients were paying him millions of dollars every year. One of his first clients was Brent Wilkes, a former accountant and someone who saw how easily the system could be prostituted. Wilkes bought Cunningham, hired Lowery, contributed liberally to a host of key appropriators, and began getting multimillion dollar earmarks stuffed into spending bills to pay for his services converting government documents into digital format.

My reporting drew on three principal sources of records:

The British medical journal *The Lancet* publishes "The Dark and Insanitary Premises Used for the Slaughtering of Cattle and Hogs," by Adolphe Smith on January 14.

The Appeal to Reason begins serial publication of Upton Sinclair's novel, "The Jungle." The final installment appears on November 4.

Ray Stannard Baker examines corrupt "Railroad Rebates" in the December issue of McClure's Magazine. Four additional articles follow, including one called "Railroads on Trial" in the March 1906 issue.

Thomas Lawson examines fraud in the life insurance industry through a series for *Everybody's Magazine*.

Publication begins in Collier's magazine of a serial by Samuel Hopkins Adams about "The Great American Fraud" of patent medicines.

Charles Edward Russell examines the meatpacking industry in his book, "The Greatest Trust in the World," published by the Ridgeway-Thayer Co.

1906

Upton Sinclair's "The Jungle" is published as a book by Doubleday, Page and Co., during February.

Cosmopolitan Magazine begins publication of the "Treason of the Senate" series by David Graham Phillips in March.

President Theodore Roosevelt coins the term "muckraker" during a speech in Washington, D.C., on April 14, having first tested his remarks on March 17 at a private dinner for journalists who were members of the Gridiron Club.

1. Lowery's lobbying disclosure forms revealed his clients and the fees he charged them.
2. The conference reports of spending bills helped us compile a partial list of the earmarks these clients received.
3. Campaign finance records assembled by the Center for Public Integrity allowed us to tally the contribution checks to political campaigns that were written by Lowery, his associates, and clients.

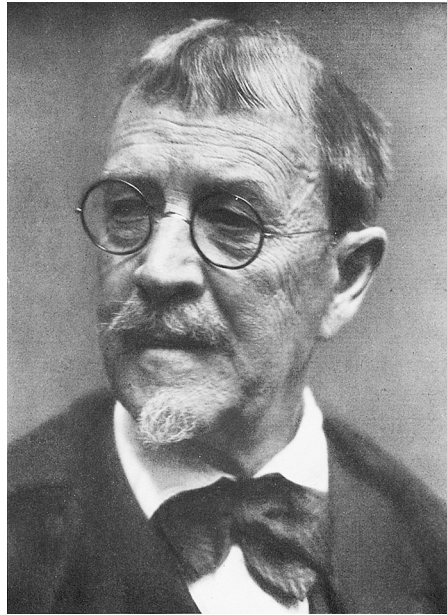
The most interesting pattern that emerged involved Lewis's 1999 to 2005 chairmanship of the defense appropriations subcommittee. While Lewis green-lighted hundreds of millions of dollars in earmarks for Wilkes and other Lowery clients, Lowery directed a fundraising machine pumping hundreds of thousands of dollars into Lewis's campaign coffers.

Lewis didn't need the money to defend his reliably Republican seat. But in 2004, these funds allowed him to write checks for \$650,000 in "excess campaign funds" to the Republican war chest to fund vulnerable incumbents. In this case, money spent on other party members' races purchased Lewis the best seat at the table. A few months later, Republican leadership awarded him the coveted chairmanship of the full appropriations committee. He called the honor "the highlight of my career."

Records Reveal, Sources Confirm

Our reporting also revealed a lot about Lewis and Lowery's exchange of key staff members. We observed that their offices had become "so intermingled that they seem to be extensions of each other." Two Lewis staffers who had shepherded earmarks into bills for Lowery later joined his lobbying firm, where they earned millions of dollars and became frequent contributors to their former boss.

WATCHDOG GALLERY



Muckraker Lincoln Steffens (1866-1936).
Photo by Edward Weston.

While I relied heavily on public records, I received valuable help from several human sources. A few Capitol Hill insiders helped us to flesh out the Lowery-Lewis relationship with details about their patronage of Capitol Hill restaurants and Lewis's role as the best man in Lowery's second wedding. Having this personal testimony about him added to what I'd gleaned from court records of his two divorces.

Few members of congressional staffs were willing to talk with me for this story, either on or off the record. I received important help, however, from a few former staffers, especially Nathan Facey, who helped me understand the mechanics and the appropriations culture. Facey was disillusioned by his service on Capitol Hill, especially the punch-your-ticket-and-cash-in mentality of congressional staffers who view public service as vocational school for K Street. The opportunistic virus of Lowery's cynicism has spread its infection across Capitol Hill.

One of our more valuable sources

was Keith Ashdown, the burly and brilliant earmarks' watchdog at Taxpayers for Common Sense. Ashdown has no equal in the forensic science of tracking earmarks that lobbyists and congressional staffers try to bury like dog bones. It was news coverage of the Cunningham scandal, he says, that made the corruption of earmarks comprehensible to the general public. "Before Cunningham, it was more of a budget wonk thing, it wasn't anything that grabbed you by the throat and made you pay attention," he told us during additional reporting we did for the book we wrote about the scandal.¹ "A lot of people thought that earmarking was just something that congressmen are supposed to do."

The Lewis-Lowery relationship is being probed by federal criminal investigators, who confront the challenge of determining just how far the influence trading can go before it crosses the legal line. Whether or not it is criminal, there is vivid evidence—revealed in the Cunningham saga, the Lewis-Lowery relationship, and the extensive coverage of Jack Abramoff's schemes—that Congress now often practices governance not envisioned by President Abraham Lincoln at Gettysburg. What we have is government of the lobbyist, by the earmark, for the campaign cash—and the occasional, more explicit bribe of the sort preferred by Randy "Duke" Cunningham. ■

Jerry Kammer, a 1994 Nieman Fellow, and Marcus Stern each agreed to a buy-out arrangement with Copley News Service in 2007. Kammer hopes to write about immigration, which he first reported on as a correspondent in Mexico in 1986. Stern is working as a media consultant. Information about the book they wrote with two Copley colleagues, based on their reporting about Randy Cunningham, is found at www.thewrongstuff.net.

¹ "The Wrong Stuff: The Extraordinary Saga of Randy 'Duke' Cunningham, the Most Corrupt Congressman Ever Caught," by Marcus Stern, Jerry Kammer, Dean Calbreath, and George E. Condon, Jr., was published by PublicAffairs in 2007.

Classified Documents: Secrecy vs. Citizenship

In the digital age, there is an appetite ‘for direct access to source documents.’

BY STEVEN AFTERGOOD

When the Justice Department announced the indictment in August 2005 of two pro-Israel lobbyists and a Department of Defense analyst for mishandling classified information, the prosecutor, then-U.S. Attorney Paul McNulty, solemnly explained that “Those not authorized to receive classified information must resist the temptation to acquire it, no matter what their motivation may be.”

I remember being startled by the severity of that statement, particularly since I frequently pursue the temptation that McNulty warned against. In fact, it occurred to me that I had personally committed most of the “overt acts” that were alleged against the defendants: I had asked government officials questions on topics that I knew to be classified; I had occasionally received classified information for which I was not authorized, and I had communicated it to others who were likewise unauthorized.

Of course, inquiring into classified government information and disclosing it is something that many national security reporters and policy analysts do, or try to do, every day. And with a few narrow exceptions—for particularly sensitive types of information—courts have determined that this is not a crime. (To convict the pro-Israeli lobbyists when their case comes to trial this spring, the judge ruled that the prosecution must show that the defendants did more than simply traffic in classified information. They must also have sought to harm the United States or advanced the interests of a foreign power and must knowingly have engaged in criminal activity, among other limiting conditions.)

Use of Classified Information

McNulty’s words are worth pondering because they encapsulate some disturbingly prevalent attitudes towards classified information, the press, and the public. In his view, classified information is assumed to be uniformly sacrosanct and categorically off limits. He does not admit the possibility that information might be classified unnecessarily, or in error, or out of malign self-interest.

But experience—and declassification—teaches otherwise. The universe of classified information includes not only genuine national security secrets, such as confidential intelligence sources or advanced military technologies, but an endless supply of mundane bureaucratic trivia, such as 50-year-old intelligence budget figures, as well as the occasional crime or cover-up.

Nor does McNulty consider that sometimes there might be a public interest in disclosure that outweighs a legitimate security interest in secrecy. Should the press have resisted the temptation to discover that “numerous incidents of sadistic, blatant and wanton criminal abuses were inflicted on several detainees” at Abu Ghraib prison, as the Taguba report revealed in 2004, just because that report and that sentence from it were clearly classified “Secret”?

Remarkably, there is a popular school of thought in support of this point of view, and those who believe this scorn disclosure of any classified information. Former education secretary and conservative commentator William Bennett decried the 2006 award of the Pulitzer Prize to New York Times reporters James Risen and

McClure’s Magazine publishes an examination of “The Story of Life Insurance” in a series by Burton J. Hendrick beginning in May, 1906.

Former staff members from McClure’s Magazine reorganize under the banner of the American Magazine during July. Their first issue is published in October.

Edwin Markham writes a series about child labor entitled “The Hoe-Man in the Making” beginning with the September issue of *Cosmopolitan Magazine*.

George Kibbe Turner writes about the commissioner form of government in “Galveston: A Business Corporation” for the October issue of McClure’s Magazine.

1907

George Kibbe Turner’s article on vice in the city of Chicago, published in the April issue of McClure’s Magazine, helps prompt Illinois to establish the first state minimum wage laws.

The American Magazine publishes Ray Stannard Baker’s article in May, entitled “Clash of Races in a Southern City,” as part of a series on race relations that is later published by Doubleday, Page and Co., as “Following the Color Line” (1908).

Brand Whitlock writes a novel condemning capital punishment called “The Turn of the Balance.”

1908

The June issue of *Everybody’s Magazine* carries Charles Edward Russell’s exposé about how the state of Georgia leases its prisoners to contractors as free labor in exchange for providing their room and board.

Eric Lichtblau for their coverage of intelligence surveillance activity and to Dana Priest of The Washington Post for her reporting on CIA detention sites abroad.

These reporters, Bennett said, “took classified information, secret information, published it in their newspapers, against the wishes of the President. As a result, are they punished, are they in shame, are they embarrassed, are they arrested? No, they win Pulitzer Prizes, they win Pulitzer Prizes. I don’t think what they did was worthy of an award. I think what they did was worthy of jail,” he said in April 2006 in a radio broadcast reported by Editor & Publisher.

His words echo the implicit view that classified information is sacrosanct by definition and is not to be disclosed under any circumstances. Bennett adds to this view the flourish that “the wishes of the President” ought to be decisive in the matter.

Yet to reject this view does not mean one is indifferent to national security or blind to the fact that disclosure of some types of classified information can put lives at risk. Just as not all classified information is genuinely sensitive, it might be noted that not all unclassified information is harmless or risk-free. As someone who spends his days gathering government records from obscure places—and publishing them on a Web site operated by the Federation of American Scientists¹—I frequently find unclassified documents that arguably do not belong in the public domain. I’d include among them instructional manuals prepared by the U.S. government on the following sorts of topics:

- The preparation and use of improvised explosives
- The training of snipers
- The operation of shoulder-fired missiles.

Though I am not in the business of withholding information from the public (it goes against my grain to

WATCHDOG GALLERY



McClure's Magazine, November 1903, featuring an article by Lincoln Steffens.

do so), I have chosen not to republish documents such as these on our Web site.

The Nature of Citizenship

Interwoven into this broader issue seem to be divergent perspectives on the nature of citizenship and, by implication, of journalism. Is a citizen basically a spectator and an object of policies that are authored by professionals? Or can a citizen aspire to be an active participant in the policy process? The passive spectator might easily be satisfied with whatever information authorities decide to disclose and is likely to defer to “the wishes of the President.” But the active participant will favor maximum disclosure and view sweeping claims of secrecy with skepticism.

In our time, the activist concept appears to be a minority view, swamped by an insatiable appetite for entertainment and diversion. But some countervailing trends are noteworthy.

From my vantage point—as a close observer of the online dynamic—I notice an increasing public appreciation for direct access to source documents.

Many readers don’t merely want to be told what some new official document says, they want to see the document for themselves.

Tens of thousands of readers visit my organization’s Web site daily for this kind of access, and many newspapers have started to offer online access to newsworthy documents to supplement their reporting. Publication of source documents does not obviate the need for reporting, since mere disclosure leaves key questions unasked: Who prepared the document? Why, and to what end? Who dissents from its conclusions? And so on.

But in a virtuous circle, the direct access to such documents creates an expectation and a demand for greater availability. Meanwhile, the still-maturing blogosphere permits new forums for public engagement with national policy—some of them quite sophisticated—and enables active citizens to establish contact with like-minded individuals.

Even with this technology available, I find that most newspapers do not offer such “tools for citizenship” to the same extent that their business pages offer tools for investing, for example, with their detailed daily statistics on the performance of thousands of stocks. In most papers—and even on their Web sites—it is easier to find the daily batting averages of one’s baseball team than the daily voting records of one’s congressional delegation. Why should that be so?

To demand robust access to government information, together with the rights and responsibilities of active citizenship, still involves swimming against the tide. Even so, something pushes many of us to believe the fight is still worth waging. ■

Steven Aftergood directs the Project on Government Secrecy at the Federation of American Scientists and writes the Secrecy News e-mail newsletter and blog.

¹ www.fas.org/blog/secrecy

Investigative Reporting About Secrecy

‘With some noteworthy exceptions, secrecy is rarely tackled head-on in the press.’

BY TED GUP

The real intent of the First Amendment was to prevent national suicide by making it difficult for the government to operate in secret, free from the scrutiny of the press.

—I.F. Stone, October 3, 1966

Investigative reporters are all too familiar with secrecy. They know it as the obstacle that stands between them and the object of their interest. Everything about investigative reporting reinforces the notion that secrecy is but an impediment to be overcome. We celebrate our triumphs over secrecy with prizes, promotions and public accolades. But secrecy is more than a mere roadblock to successful reporting, and the conventional treatment of secrecy may inadvertently play into the hands of those who seek to keep the public in the dark.

With some noteworthy exceptions, secrecy is rarely tackled head-on in the press. Rather, it crops up in stories as an incidental—a fleeting denial of access, a closed door, a call not returned, a stalled Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request. Secrecy itself gets short shrift. It is endemic to the culture of investigative reporting to see it in terms that are defined by our own ability or inability to surmount the obstacles before us.

In so doing we have tended to overlook one of the more significant stories of our lifetime—an emerging “secretocracy” that threatens to transform American society and democratic institutions. Systemic or indiscriminate secrecy involves the calculated use of

secrecy as a principle instrument of governance, a way to impede scrutiny, obscure process, avoid accountability, suppress dissent, and concentrate power. The tendency to abuse secrecy is as old as power itself, but prior to 9/11 it was usually checked, and even its abuses were cyclical.

Too often today this broader use of secrecy escapes our attention, or at least our reporting—especially when as reporters we fail to prevail and obtain the information sought. On the rare occasion that secrecy itself is granted center stage, it is often so closely tied to the particulars of a given story that the context is lost. Readers encounter the subject of secrecy almost always in isolated settings—this official refused to disclose, that official declined to comment.

Our own reportorial frustrations have sometimes been allowed to color our judgment and blind us to the news; we personalize secrecy. Because we are stymied in our quest for information, we view the story as a dry hole. There is a professional reluctance to write about secrecy per se, in part because it is seen as self-serving or whining, an admission of our own shortcomings as reporters. Writing about intact secrets somehow smacks of defeatism. Great reporters, we might imagine, would not stoop to carping about such conditions, equating secrecy with professional adversity; they would rise above them, or so the argument goes. Watergate and the Pentagon Papers remain the template, stories steeped in secrecy, but in which the reporters emerged triumphant. The closest we come to recognizing secrecy as an integral element of the story is when it is cast as a cover-up.

Charles Edward Russell explores the hypocritical connection between Trinity Church and the huge revenues it nets as owner of extensive slum tenements in New York City. The piece runs in the July 1908 issue of Everybody’s Magazine; similar pieces appear in other muck-raking magazines around the same time.

Edward Bok examines the taboo subject of venereal disease in a photo-illustrated series for the Ladies’ Home Journal. Subscriptions fall by 70,000 readers in protest, but the series leads ultimately to greater openness about discussing sex.

1909

Documentary photographs by Lewis Hine of children working in factories contribute to the demand for child labor protection laws.

In November McClure’s Magazine exposes the white slave trade of immigrants caught up in prostitution in “The Daughters of the Poor” by George Kibbe Turner.

1911

John A. Fitch writes about the 12-hour workday of the steel industry in “Old Age at Forty” for the March issue of the American Magazine.

S.S. McClure retires as editor of McClure’s Magazine. The magazine survives until 1929.

1912

Former chief executive Theodore Roosevelt stages a political comeback as the Progressive Party candidate for President. He garners more

Obstacles to Reporting on Secrecy

There are other reasons why secrecy is rarely taken on directly. To expose broad patterns of secrecy requires reporters to cooperate across beats and to subordinate sensitivities over turf to news values. There is also the fear that an examination of secrecy is for policy wonks and political scientists, not journalists, and that it is too abstract to be of much interest to readers. But it is no more so than a host of other topics we routinely cover, including economics, science, health or politics (and secrecy involves them all—and more).

The key, here as elsewhere, is to show who benefits and who suffers and how secrecy is the lubricant for all manner of chicanery. Nothing so discredits legitimate secrets as the profusion of counterfeit secrets. Most importantly, we should be detailing how indiscriminate secrecy threatens to profoundly alter our entire system of governance, neutering oversight efforts and marginalizing citizens. Secrecy writ large can hijack democracy itself.

Finally, while journalistic enterprises have targeted secrecy at the publishers' and trade association level, individual papers are often squeamish about working in concert with one another, eschewing campaigns out of fear that they compromise objectivity. One week a year, a coalition takes up the subject and spotlights individual states' compliance or lack of compliance with sunshine provisions, but otherwise it is a topic left to ad hoc efforts linked to specific reporting challenges.

Historically, reporters have indulged themselves in reporting almost exclusively on those secrets that they have penetrated. Everyone reports on a leak, but too few notice the dam looming behind them. The sense of accomplish-

ment that comes with cutting through resistance and secrecy is undeniable. But cumulatively, such breakthrough stories may have left readers/citizens with the dangerous misimpression that few secrets can withstand our reportorial onslaught, that the republic still enjoys a robust albeit begrudging transparency, and that the government's or industry's feeble attempts to ward us off and conceal their actions are ultimately to no avail. In short, we have telegraphed to the electorate, the consumer, the patient and the litigant, that they are in possession of all the vital information they need to make informed choices.

That does not comport with my experience as a reporter. Nor does it, I believe, reflect the reality of America in 2008. Silly as it might sound, we also do the nation a service when we admit what important information we do not possess and cannot acquire because it has been denied us.

Secrets Not Shared

In truth, secrecy has migrated well beyond the historic reservoirs of national security as the nation's entire infrastructure has been considered a potential terrorist target. All the state, county and metropolitan authorities that intersect with those sites—as well as the private industries that operate them—have increasingly come under the mantle of secrecy. Communications intercepts have brought the telecommunications companies into the security fold.

Formal secrecy, as all investigative reporters know first hand, is only a fragment of the problem. Hundreds of thousands of officials, senior and junior, as well as contractors, possess the ability—without any formal training or authorization—to scribble “Sensitive But Unclassified,” or “Official Use Only,” or any one of many other

designations on documents, thereby removing them from public scrutiny even as they admit them to be unclassified. Those labels have brought about a sea change in the availability of materials and in our ability to track the policies and practices of government and industry. It is a subject familiar to the coalition of interest groups and journalists who care so deeply about such affairs, but it remains widely unknown to most Americans.

Secrecy is increasingly a problem in the courts as well, as fewer cases are adjudicated in open court and more and more cases go the way of alternative dispute resolution and are sealed. In the federal courts, fewer than two percent of cases go to a full and open trial. This might sound like an arcane subject, but it has very real public implications as tort litigation over potentially dangerous products—autos, tires, medications, machinery—medical malpractice, gender, age and race discrimination, and a slew of other topics that directly affect the public's safety and well-being, are increasingly settled out of sight.¹

In my book on secrecy, “Nation of Secrets: The Threat to Democracy and the American Way of Life,” I reported that the software system used in all federal courts is designed to spit out “No Such Case Exists” when anyone queries cases that have been sealed. [See page 83 for a reflection by Walter Pincus of Gup's book.] But outside of lawyerly publications, such matters rarely receive notice in any systemic context.

I recognize that the economy has thinned the reportorial ranks, but given the wild proliferation of secrets in both the public and private spheres, it would be a terrific investment of reportorial resources, not to mention a valuable public service, to dedicate an entire beat to secrecy. If nothing else, it would produce some remark-

¹ In an award-winning series of investigative articles, The Seattle Times examined how King County judges had improperly sealed hundreds of court files holding secrets of potential dangers for the public. This series, entitled “Your Courts, Their Secrets,” was written about by one of its reporters, Ken Armstrong, in the Winter 2007 issue of Nieman Reports and can be read at www.nieman.harvard.edu. The original series of articles can be found at <http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/yourcourts-their-secrets/>.

able stories, and it might just help the public grasp the wider implications of unchecked secrecy.

When I began working on my secrecy book, I asked a ridiculously simple question that produced some extraordinary responses. The question: “May I have a list of everything I am not allowed to see?” At least it

was a start. ■

Ted Gup is the author of “Nation of Secrets: The Threat to Democracy and the American Way of Life” (Doubleday, 2007) and is the Shirley Wormser Professor of Journalism at Case Western Reserve University. His e-mail is tedgup@att.net.

NONPROFIT APPROACH

Seeking New Ways to Nurture the Capacity to Report

‘Without an independent news media, there is no credibly informed citizenry.’

BY CHARLES LEWIS

You journalists live in the reality based community. [But] that’s not the way the world really works anymore.... When we act, we create our own reality ... we’re history’s actors ... and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do.

—Unidentified senior advisor to President George W. Bush, as quoted by Ron Suskind in *The New York Times Magazine*, October 17, 2004

Controlling information and public perceptions is hardly a new phenomenon; a powerful few have been doing this literally for centuries. But the global reverberations and almost immediate human impact of decisions made by those now in power is new. And when the truth is deliberately, effectively obscured by secrecy, lies and public posturing, it distorts the government decision-making process, mutes popular dissent, and sometimes fatally delays the inevitable, cold dawn of logic, reason

and reckoning so fundamental to an open democracy.

We expect in an open, pluralistic society, in a democracy, that journalists will safeguard the broad public interest and ultimately provide truth and accountability to citizens. But unfortunately, in this 24/7 “warp speed” information age, the myriad and imaginative ways in which to propagate a palatable but false reality have substantially increased in recent decades, far outpacing the ability of reporters and other independent truth-tellers to hold those lies up to the harsh light of day.

Each successive White House occupant has been more adept at controlling the message of his administration, technologically but also in terms of additional public relations money and personnel and “outreach.” And the intricacies of the Bush White House communications efforts, specifically the extent, substance and sophistication of its “on message” coordination and internal discipline, remain substantially murky thanks in no small part to the apparent and possibly illegal destruction of millions of White House e-mails. We do know

votes than Republican President William Howard Taft but is defeated by Democrat Woodrow Wilson.

1913

The ratification of the 17th Amendment places the election of U.S. Senators into the hands of voters, not state legislators, as had previously been stipulated in the U.S. Constitution.

1914

Edwin Markham writes an exposé about child labor, “Children in Bondage.”

Margaret Sanger campaigns for greater access to information about birth control by founding the *Woman Rebel*. Her periodical is labeled obscene, and Sanger is forced to flee the country or face imprisonment.

1916

Outside investors assume control of the *American Magazine*; it folds soon after.

1919

Sports fan and journalist Hugh Fullerton questions: “Is Big League Baseball Being Run for Gamblers, With Ballplayers in the Deal?” His story appears December 15 in the *New York World* and prompts an investigation; revelations follow that White Sox players had deliberately lost the 1919 World Series as part of a betting scheme.

that, as *Newsday* reported, the Bush administration in its first term hired an additional 376 public affairs officials to package information at an annual cost of \$50 million.

And, separately, \$254 million was spent on “faux news” contracts, nearly double what the Clinton administration spent during the preceding four years. Positive video news releases were sent out to hundreds of commercial TV stations, viewed by millions of Americans, often with no on-air identification or disclosure. Government Accountability Office Comptroller General David Walker criticized the practice as “illegal propaganda,” and the Federal Communications Commission recently has begun issuing fines to broadcasters who have aired it without disclosure.

Unfortunately, the problem of finding verities instead of verisimilitudes beneath the varnish has been exacerbated in recent years throughout America because there are, quite simply, fewer varnish removers—investigative reporters—actually devoted daily to monitoring those in power. Of course we all know too well that meticulous information-gathering and editorial quality-control essential for serious, high quality news require time and money—finite resources that many news organizations are increasingly unable or unwilling to expend.

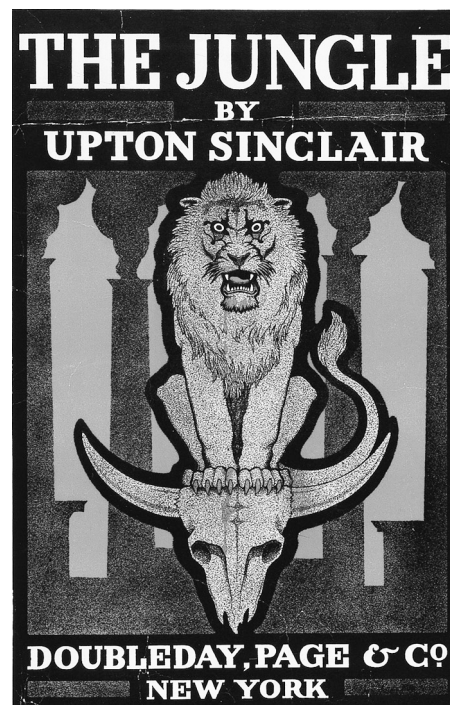
Doing Less—With Less

Indeed, in recent years nearly all of our media corporations have been reducing their commitment to journalism, reducing their editorial budgets, early “retiring” thousands of reporters and editors from their newsrooms in order to keep their annual profit margins high and their investors happy, harvesting their investments from a “mature” industry. The net result of this hollowing out process: There are fewer people today to report, write and edit original news stories about our infinitely more complex, dynamic world.

While more and more newspapers transform themselves into “print-Web hybrids,” as columnist Robert Kuttner and others have written, online ad-

vertising revenue must increase considerably if newsrooms are going to be able to remain near their current editorial payroll levels. That prospect is uncertain at best, and layoffs in the immediate years ahead seem likely. And international reporting and investigative reporting, always time-consuming and expensive, increasingly have come to be regarded by management as high-risk, high-maintenance, high-priced impracticalities.

WATCHDOG GALLERY



On assignment for the journal *Appeal to Reason*, Upton Sinclair visited meatpacking firms in Chicago and wrote about his findings in novelistic form in his 1906 book, “*The Jungle*.”

The global reach of the new technologies, the versatility, range and depth of what is possible journalistically because of multimedia convergences, computer-assisted reporting and other technical advances, the ease and relative affordability of high-speed communications in this information age, are all terrifically exciting and historically unprecedented. And the quality of some of the best reporting and writing breaks new ground

with each passing year. What gnaws is the realization that there ought to be more, much more, of this unprecedented quality of journalism. Thus far, however, most of the emerging online commercial media ventures are noticeably light when it comes to their commitment or their capacity to publish original reporting.

The highly successful Web search engines, such as Google or Yahoo!, merely aggregate, automate and repackage other people’s work. While the world’s blogs continue to proliferate and will develop further as a content form before our eyes, hardly any of them at present are solely devoted to responsible reporting and “fact-based journalism.” Perhaps new stand-alone, advertising-supported, profitable, original newsgathering and storytelling venues—beyond password-protected, subscription-based, specialized niche publishing—will robustly evolve in the digital age, but that hasn’t really happened yet.

Wither the Resources?

If, like an endangered species, there will be fewer sightings of serious, independent, high-impact “truth-to-power” national reporting, will this kind of vital, no-holds-barred truth-telling become a thing of the past, like the dodo bird? No, but what is needed are new, sustainable economic models for in-depth news and a new, much greater ownership and management commitment to publishing it “without fear or favor.”

In a 2004 State of the News Media survey (by the Project for Excellence in Journalism) of 547 journalists and news media executives, 66 percent felt that profit pressures were hurting national coverage—up 25 percent since the question was first asked in 1995. As the world is becoming infinitely more complex, 86 percent of national journalists whose newsrooms have undergone staff reductions believe the news media is “paying too little attention to complex stories.” It is deeper than just numbers, though.

My particular interest has been very simple since 1977, when I began work-

ing as an off-air investigative reporter, hired by ABC News in Washington in the wake of the Watergate scandal, later as a producer at “60 Minutes,” and for 15 years as the founder and executive director of the Center for Public Integrity. All I have wanted to do is find an unfettered place to investigate and expose abuses of power.

I became frustrated in the 1980’s and quit commercial journalism to start a nonprofit investigative reporting organization. Too often, investigative reporting did not seem to be particularly valued at the national level, regardless of media form. Occasionally I had seen investigative reporter friends’ and colleagues’ stories unjustifiably resisted, reduced or rebuffed by their respective news organizations. National news organizations often seemed to only reactively report the various systemic abuses of power, trust and the law in Washington—from the Iran-Contra scandal to the Housing and Urban Development scandal to the Defense Department’s procurement prosecutions, from the savings and loan disaster to the “Keating Five” influence scandal to the first resignation of a House Speaker since 1800.

In Washington, there was very little aggressive investigative journalism about these or other subjects and, equally galling to me, smug denial by the incurious national press corps despite its underwhelming, lackluster pursuit of these major instances of political influence and corruption.

Regarding the decision by George W. Bush and his administration to initiate a preventive war in Iraq in March 2003, it was unfortunately not particularly surprising that most national reporters and their news organizations were figuratively embedded in official propaganda and misleading statements. There were a few notable exceptions in Washington to this pattern, certainly, such as the fine independent reporting by the Knight Ridder bureau. Some major news organizations have publicly eaten crow, acknowledging without necessarily apologizing that their coverage was perhaps not sufficiently critical of government pronouncements and

information.

Such uncharacteristic humility does not ameliorate the tragic consequences of an unnecessary war and the tens of thousands of slain or wounded soldiers and innocent civilians, including women and children. Could such a controversial war of choice have been prevented if the public had been better informed about the specious official statements, faulty logic, and breathtaking manipulations of public opinion and governmental decision-making processes? On the five-year anniversary of the invasion of Iraq, that might be too searing a question to ask, but it nonetheless will likely haunt our profession for years to come.

When Profit Isn’t the Motive

All of this underscores the fundamental necessity of serious journalism to any functioning democracy predicated upon self-government of, by and for the people; without an independent news media, there is no credibly informed citizenry. But what does it say about the current state of the commercial news media today that it took a nonprofit investigative reporting organization to research and post online all of the Iraq and Afghanistan contracts and the windfalls of war to the penny, company by company, first revealing Halliburton’s bonanza? Why did it take that same nonprofit organization to analyze all of the 935 false statements made by the President and seven of his top officials over two years about the supposedly imminent threat posed by Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, in a 380,000-word, searchable, online public and private Iraq War chronology? [See box on page 26 for more information on this project.]

It was the Center for Public Integrity that posted those massive reports in 2003 and 2008.

Why in the Philippines was the corruption of the President, spending tens of millions of dollars to build lavish mansions for his mistresses, uncovered and documented by a nonprofit investigative reporting organization, the Philippine Center for Investigative

1931

Drew Pearson publishes “Washington Merry-Go-Round” and goes on to prepare a regular column with that name for *The Washington Post*; in it he exposes political corruption during a reporting career that spans four decades.

1938

George Seldes founds *In Fact*, a weekly newspaper, to avoid censorship in the mainstream media. He uses this forum to help expose the hazards of cigarette smoking.

1939

“The Grapes of Wrath” calls attention to the hardships of migrant labor when John Steinbeck’s novel is published by Viking Press.

1942

Publication in November of a report about Nazi death camps by the *Jewish Frontier* fails to gain the attention of the mainstream press. Not until the ending of World War II in 1945 would the full story of Nazi concentration camps be reported.

1952

Reader’s Digest publishes “Cancer by the Carton” in its December issue, an article by Roy Norr about the health hazards of smoking cigarettes.

Selling the Iraq War: Unearthing False Advertising

For three years, I have been conducting research for a new book about truth, power and the role of journalism today. In the summer of 2005, for a chapter about the Iraq War, I asked researchers, led by Mark Reading-Smith, at the Fund for Independence in Journalism, to begin tracking every single utterance by eight of the top U.S. officials (President George W. Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Colin Powell, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, and White House press secretaries Ari Fleischer and Scott McClellan) made from September 11, 2001 through September 11, 2003, regarding Iraq's weapons of mass

destruction (WMD) and the al-Qaeda-Saddam Hussein-Iraq link. Since 2004, numerous government reports have conclusively found there were no WMD in Iraq and no significant al-Qaeda ties to Iraq.

Their analysis found that 935 false statements were made by these top officials over the two years. The number of statements spiked dramatically upward in the weeks prior to the Iraq War resolution vote in October 2002 and before the November 2002 mid-term elections, and were twice as high in the January-March 2003 days before the invasion of Iraq. Separately, for context, they gleaned revelatory material from more than 25 government, whistleblower and credible journalist-reported books about this

subject, published between 9/11 and the end of 2007. The summary report, written by Lewis and Reading-Smith, and the unprecedented 380,000-word, online searchable, public and private Iraq War chronology, including the public statements interlaced with the internal knowledge, discussions, doubts and dissent known at the time, was offered to the Center for Public Integrity (www.publicintegrity.org) for public release.

For the first time, five years after the start of the Iraq War, journalists and citizens can view what the most prominent Bush administration officials said publicly, juxtaposed against what they knew internally, day to day, prior to the March 19, 2003 invasion of Iraq. ■—C.L.

Journalism, resulting in his removal from office? [See an article by Sheila S. Coronel about this reporting on page 73.]

There are many nonprofit organizations committed to investigative reporting in the United States and in the world, none older than the Center for Investigative Reporting, begun in California in 1977, and none newer than ProPublica, which just emerged in January 2008, with former Wall Street Journal managing editor, Paul Steiger, as its president and editor in chief. [See articles on pages 30 and 41.] All are limited in various ways, from the caliber or number of experienced personnel to the quality and frequency of their publications or documentaries, to their ability to fully utilize the exciting new technologies and means of distribution.

The net result is that important subjects desperately requiring responsible investigation and public education simply go unaddressed. When that happens, the public is not as well informed as it could be, important truths do not emerge in a timely, relevant fashion or at all, and accountability of those in

power essential to any democracy does not occur. These trends are universal, irrespective of geography, climate or the country's economic or democratic condition.

Yet amidst the current, deteriorating state of original, investigative and otherwise independent journalism in America, new, very energizing forces are at play. There are talented and highly motivated journalists, mindful of the stakes involved; entrepreneurial nonprofit and for-profit leaders with vision, a commitment to community, and financial wherewithal; new media platforms and technologies revolutionizing the means and cost of production and, every day, more and more signs of what is possible journalistically, particularly with the new social networking connectivity of the Web and related, constantly improving technologies.

All of this has set the stage for the recent emergence of some new hybrid entities to emerge, such as cluster relationships between university-based centers and major commercial news organizations committed to high quality journalism that have occurred at the

University of California (Berkeley), at Brandeis University, and at Columbia University. [See accompanying box on page 27.]

The possibilities represented by these new approaches explain why—working closely with veteran reporter, editor and American University journalism division director Wendell Cochran and the dean of the School of Communication, Larry Kirkman—I have decided to start and lead, as executive editor, an exciting new enterprise, the Investigative Reporting Workshop at American University in Washington, D.C.. Not only do we intend to do significant, original, national and international investigative reporting for multimedia publication or broadcast, the workshop also will serve as a laboratory “incubator” to develop new models for conducting and delivering investigative journalism. We will also partner with other nonprofit institutions or with investigative journalists.

What both journalism and democracy need right now are new economic models—fit to meet the full range of our contemporary challenge—to sup-

port the work involved with bringing forth in-depth, multimedia news. These models will succeed if they can nurture a more hospitable milieu for investigation and exposure of abuses of power and provide real-time truth and accountability to citizens. Because no one in power should ever be able to create their own false reality, or to even think it is possible. ■

Charles Lewis is Distinguished Journalist in Residence and professor at American University and president of the Fund for Independence in Journalism in Washington, D.C.. A former producer at "60 Minutes," Lewis founded and for 15 years directed the Center for Public Integrity, where he coauthored five books.

1953

On October 20, Edward R. Murrow initiates his hard-hitting look at Senator Joseph McCarthy for "See It Now" on CBS-TV. A noted episode runs on March 9, 1954. His series leads to the senator's censure and helps to end his sensational hunt for Communist sympathizers.

1959

"The Safe Car You Can't Buy" appears in *The Nation* on April 11 as an early exposé by Ralph Nader about automobile design flaws.

1960

In April, *Sepia* magazine begins publishing a series of articles by John Howard Griffin, a white reporter who spends five weeks disguised as a black man to examine race relations in the South.

1962

Michael Harrington's study of poverty in "The Other America: Poverty in the United States," is published by Macmillan.

"Silent Spring" by Rachel Carson prompts government action on environmental protection following its publication by Houghton Mifflin.

1963

Simon and Schuster publishes "The American Way of Death" by Jessica Mitford, an exposé of fraudulent practices in the funeral industry.

Universities and Investigative Journalism

The University of California at Berkeley Investigative Reporting Program is directed by investigative producer/correspondent Lowell Bergman and houses the West Coast editorial and production facilities for the PBS programs "Frontline" and "Frontline/World," as well as the three Investigative Reporting Post Graduate Fellows who receive stipends during their year of study and training at the journalism school. In September 2004, The

Elaine and Gerald Schuster Institute for Investigative Journalism became the nation's first such center to be housed at a university (Brandeis) and is directed by its founder, investigative journalist Florence Graves. [See her story on page 32.] And the newest of these, the Stable Center for Investigative Journalism at Columbia University, is headed by Sheila S. Coronel. [See her story on page 73.] ■—C.L.

New Sources of Funding, New Sources of Reporting

As nonprofit investigative models take shape, a journalist surveys emerging possibilities.

BY GILBERT CRANBERG

When I left *The Des Moines Register* in 1982, I did not leave journalism. I simply moved from the daily newspaper's anonymous editorial essay to other forms, including newspaper op-ed pages, magazine articles, and books. Without the daily deadline and the imperative to fill space, I could spend the time it took to explore issues of interest that the local news media ignored or underreported. I became

what could be regarded as an investigative reporter.

The downsizing of editorial staffs around the country has turned loose a lot of people capable of doing similar work. Margaret Engel, who directs the Alicia Patterson Foundation, which makes grants to support in-depth reporting, says, "Get those journalists the money." And it's not only money that makes the difference. Jon Sawyer, director of the Pulitzer Center

WATCHDOG GALLERY



Making sausage in a Chicago meat factory was a topic of Upton Sinclair's writing. *Photo courtesy of Library of Congress.*

on Crisis Reporting,¹ says finding the space—offering the promise of drawing attention to the finished product—to publish what reporters find is as much of a challenge as the money.

Enter ProPublica, the new non-profit news organization dedicated to investigative, public service journalism generously financed by a California couple, Herbert M. and Marion Sandler. ProPublica has both money, up to \$30 million over the next three years, and the prestige to make a persuasive pitch for space.

ProPublica begins life with a question mark because of the liberal causes supported by its benefactors, the Sandlers, but also with the presumption of credibility by being run by Paul E. Steiger, former managing editor of *The Wall Street Journal*. [See his article on page 30.] The news side of the *Journal* was widely respected

during his time there for the quality of its work and for not having an ideological ax to grind. (Steiger, of course, had nothing to do with the *Journal's* editorial page.)

Unlike some nonprofits that work through providing grants to journalists—perhaps most famously, investigative reporter Seymour Hersh was assisted in uncovering the atrocity at My Lai by a \$2,000 travel grant from the Fund for Investigative Journalism—ProPublica will have much of its work done by 24 full-time staffers working out of its office in Manhattan. That sounds like an expensive way to do investigative reporting, but ProPublica spokesman Richard Tofel says annual “news costs will be about 60-67 percent of the total [of \$10 million] when we’re up and running, with ‘news’ including salaries for reporters, editors and researchers” and items directly attributable to news accounting for the bulk of the budget. Tofel says the split—60-67 percent news vs. 40-33 percent for all the rest—“compares to about 15 percent for news (defined this way) at a leading newspaper or magazine.”

The expense of launching and operating a newsroom in New York is considered worthwhile to foster a “newsroom culture.” Whether that culture will matter or be evident to ProPublica’s outlets remains to be seen. Most of the work produced by ProPublica’s in-house staff will be offered without charge, exclusively initially, to news organizations where publication is likely to have the greatest impact.

Other nonprofits, notably the Center for Public Integrity, also maintain in-house staffs of investigative reporters. Regardless of the model—in-house

staff or grants—the work produced will stand or fall on its quality. At a time when the buzz words in journalism are local-local and news holes are shrinking, it could be a difficult environment for ProPublica’s work to thrive, especially the long-form pieces ProPublica is likely to do, even if they are given away.

Foreign subjects would seem an especially hard sell. But the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, which specializes in global reporting, has been successful in obtaining space even for lengthy take-outs. The center, which is financed mostly by members of the Pulitzer family, gets a lot of mileage out of its modest annual budget—\$315,000 in 2006, \$560,000 for 2007. “Our experience shows it is possible to find good platforms for important stories,” says Sawyer. Examples of reporting it has supported include these:

- A four-part series in the Salt Lake Tribune spotlighting working conditions in Chinese factories.² The articles took up more than a page of newsprint each day. For this story, the center funded five trips to China by Loretta Tofani, who won a Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting she did at *The Washington Post*. [See more about Tofani’s reporting on page 42.]
- A story about HIV in the Caribbean was displayed on more than three full pages in *The Palm Beach Post* in November 2007.³ *Post* reporter Antigone Barton’s travel costs were paid for by the center, which also commissioned the video documentaries and interactive Web materials that go along with the online display of her article.

Unlikely Sources

When I look at my own experiences after leaving daily journalism, I find in

¹ The Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting was established in 2006 as a division of the World Security Institute to sponsor independent reporting of global issues that “have gone unreported, underreported or misreported in the mainstream American media.”

² <http://extras.sltrib.com/china/>

³ <http://alt.coxnewsweb.com/palmbeachpost/hiv/index.html>

some of them the potential for other ways of promoting and supporting such reporting—even when it does not necessarily get done by people who refer to themselves as a “reporter.” When I taught journalism part-time at the University of Iowa, I cowrote two books with Randall Bezanson of the law school and John Soloski, my colleague at the journalism school.⁴ It was a revealing experience. What I called “legwork” my coauthors called “research.” They do footnotes. Together we did extensive digging and, with the help of a couple of foundations, our books were published, as well as a large number of articles.

Bezanson is a powerhouse. During the past 10 years he has published four books (another is on the way), three book chapters, 20 academic articles, and 20 shorter pieces. I discovered that he is one of the best investigative reporters I know. Others on the faculty also do outstanding investigative work, and certainly this is the case at other universities, as well. Let me put forth a few examples.

- Erik Lie, a professor in the Iowa business school, played a pivotal role in putting the spotlight on the backdating of executive stock options.
- Gary Wells, a psychology professor at Iowa State, has investigated police line-ups and other police identification practices and shown how they too often produce mistaken eyewitness testimony.
- David Baldus, a colleague of Bezanson’s at the law school, has revealed striking evidence of how the death penalty has been applied in racially discriminatory ways.

All of their research, and much more, would be Pulitzer Prize material if produced in newspaper newsroom settings. ProPublica intends to publicize investigative journalism by others in an online Romenesko-type format. It would be a major service if it tapped into the rich vein of such “reporting”

being produced on the nation’s college and university campuses.

Steiger has written that ProPublica will report on “abuses of power by anyone with power: government, business, unions, universities, school systems, doctors, hospitals, lawyers, courts, nonprofits, media.” His words recall the ethics statement of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, which states that the press was made free “to bring an independent scrutiny to bear on the forces of power in the society, including the conduct of official power at all levels of government.”

In practice, the for-profit, institutional press focuses overwhelmingly on “official power,” giving short shrift to power wielded within the private sector. This seems an anomaly considering that we have a free market economy in which the actions of the private sector arguably touch the lives of people as much, if not far more, than actions taken by our government do. Such neglect of the private sector consequently caught much of the press flatfooted before the savings and loan crisis emerged, Enron collapsed, and the predatory lending scandals started to unravel.

Private-sector muckraking is hard and time-consuming work, made much more difficult by the absence of a legal right of access to corporate meetings and documents. The Wall Street Journal has shown, brilliantly, that such reporting can be done. The combination of Steiger’s experience and the Sandler’s millions hold the promise of being a potent pair. Perhaps together they will lead the way to showing how, in this new era of journalism, more of this kind of reporting can be done and brought into public view. ■

Gilbert Cranberg, former editor of The Des Moines Register’s editorial pages, is George H. Gallup Professor Emeritus at the University of Iowa.

1965

Ralph Nader’s “Unsafe At Any Speed: The Designed-In Dangers of the American Automobile” is published in November by Grossman Publishers. His revelations prompt the federal government to establish its first automobile safety standards by the next year.

1969

Seymour Hersh breaks the story of the My Lai massacre from the Vietnam War through a November story distributed by the Dispatch News Service.

1971

Reporting for The New York Times, Neil Sheehan discloses on June 13 the existence of a Vietnam War study by the Pentagon. A court battle ensues before the Supreme Court asserts the newspaper’s First Amendment right to publish the Pentagon Papers.

1972

Writing for The Washington Post on February 29, Jack Anderson reveals the connection between a corporate campaign contribution to the Republican Party and the subsequent dismissal of an antitrust suit against that company by the Republican administration of President Richard M. Nixon.

On June 19, Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward publish their first cowritten article in The Washington Post of a two-year series of stories about a June burglary of offices at the Watergate Building. Their reports contribute to the resignation

⁴ “Taking Stock: Journalism and the Publicly Traded Newspaper Company” (2001, Wiley-Blackwell). “Libel Law and the Press: Myth and Reality” (1987, Free Press).

Going Online With Watchdog Journalism

‘... investigative reporting itself is also on the cusp of major transformation ...’

BY PAUL E. STEIGER

As I write these words late in January 2008, at ProPublica, we are working our way through more than 850 resumé from journalists seeking to join our new nonprofit, nonpartisan, investigative reporting team. I am learning two things. One is that there is no shortage of very talented reporters and editors eager for an opportunity to expose abuses of power. The second is that many see little hope of carrying forward this work at a whole range of newspapers and other news organizations where just a few years ago they would have been delighted to spend the rest of their careers.

By now, everyone who cares about journalism and its role in society understands that the business model that for four decades handsomely supported large metropolitan newspapers has crumbled as readers and advertisers flock to the Internet. The result is a curious mixture of glut and shortage: an explosion of certain kinds of information available instantly and free of charge on the Web—spot news, stock prices, weather, sports, the latest doings of celebrities and, most of all, opinion—offset by an accelerating shrinkage of foreign reporting and in-depth investigation.

This doesn't mean that investigative reporting is going to disappear. It remains an important part of what many national publications and news programs have to offer. Their audiences expect it, and many of them will give up other things before they cut it back.

Similar approaches to ProPublica's have attracted much interest—and funding—from philanthropists and foundations. ProPublica is the brainchild of California philanthropists Herbert and Marion Sandler and becomes the most recent and the largest experiment in using nonprofit

models. Others—such as the Center for Investigative Reporting in Berkeley, California, and the Center for Public Integrity and the Pulitzer Center for Crisis Reporting, both in Washington, D.C.—have been at it longer and do significant work. They could do more if, as I hope will be the case, they are able to attract more funding.

... opportunities are increasing for enterprising diggers to reach pay dirt.

And while most of the big metro papers are shrinking their newsroom staff, many still channel major resources into sustained investigation of issues vital to their local audiences. For example, the Los Angeles Times, which has lost its top editor three times in the past three years amid management's insistence on successive waves of newsroom cuts, nevertheless mobilized a large brigade of reporters on the Norman Hsu story last summer and fall, breaking significant news about the fugitive funder of Senator Hillary Clinton's campaign. The continuing story was of special importance to the Times's readers; many of Hsu's activities and legal problems were in California.

Transforming Investigative Reporting

Even as news organizations are experiencing business upheaval, investigative reporting itself is also on the cusp of major transformation—in the way it

reaches its audiences, how news and information is gathered and distributed, and the topics on which it is focused.

Reaching Audiences: Only at our peril do we ignore Dave Barry's message—"Caution! Journalism Prize Entry! Do Not Read!" The five-part series or the huge takeout (10 inches on the front page jumping into a double-truck or more inside) still works for some readers but for an ever-smaller share of them. More creative communication techniques—humor, irony, photography, video, animation—are necessary to reach readers and viewers with shorter attention spans. This doesn't mean merely adding a couple of pictures and a graph or two to a newspaper narrative and running the package on the Web in much the same form as it would appear in a newspaper. It means rethinking the entire way a story is told—screen by screen—and adding in video clips and interactive graphics at the precisely right moment. These typically must be backed up with such elements as sustained narratives, interview transcripts, and supporting statistics and data sources that the infinite capacity of the Internet makes feasible. Some audiences will read them first; some will skip them entirely—but it's important that they be there.

Reporting Tools: Today's investigative reporters have a dizzying array of computer-aided devices at their disposal—if they have the initiative to master them. True, we are working in challenging times, when some of the traditional techniques of investigative reporting are being undercut. Court documents, for example, are increasingly being sealed. Hedge funds and private capital, which have ever-greater influence on the economy, face far

fewer public disclosure requirements than publicly traded corporations and traditional banks and brokers. Even so, opportunities are increasing for enterprising diggers to reach pay dirt.

This came home to me powerfully last fall, when I dropped in on a brown-bag lunch seminar for about 20 Wall Street Journal reporters and editors. It was led by the youngest person in the room, Vauhini Vara, a San Francisco-based reporter just a few years out of Stanford. The topic was how to use Facebook in combination with other databases to find sources inside major companies. I watched jaws drop all around the table as she demonstrated in two or three minutes that she could identify a dozen present or former employees of a given company who were all within two degrees of separation of a reporter in the room. She convinced many veteran reporters that these people could be reached through friend-of-a-friend contact instead of being cold-called. Presumably the approach would work just as well with a government agency. What I particularly liked about Vara's approach was that it is an aid to old-fashioned shoe-leather reporting, except that it permits vast reductions in the amount of leather expended per interview. Couple this with the more familiar techniques of database mining as ever more information becomes digitized, and you have an environment in which the ability of reporters to find important information grows exponentially.

Topic Choices: Most investigative reporting focuses on government or business or their intersection, because that is where the bulk of the power resides. ProPublica certainly hopes to do its share of exposing abuses by bureaucrats and plutocrats, cabinet secretaries and army generals. Many other areas seem ripe for probing, however. Other institutions and cadres with great power of their own often get a pass these days—unions, school systems and universities, doctors and hospitals, lawyers and courts, nonprofits and the media. Other large groups of people are frequent targets

for abuse or fraud, like the elderly and immigrants.

We now look out at a landscape of many crucial topics ripe for investigation and at a likely smaller number of well-trained reporters to do this work. Does that mean we have a recipe for disaster or, at least, disappointment? Not necessarily. The opinion-rich domain of the blogosphere doesn't offer much in the way of experience-laden reporting. But as bloggers have demonstrated, some have the ability to spot—and mercilessly publicize—errors they detect in what traditional news organizations publish. Bloggers also have the ability to add information and insight to build on what reporters have unearthed. Each contribution—when its accuracy has been tested—can enrich public knowledge in a way that is many times more powerful than a letters column in a newspaper or a magazine.

In hope of participating in this process, ProPublica will launch a blog of its own this spring, which will be aimed at aggregating any noteworthy investigative reporting that we can find that day. In some cases we will add brief or extended comments; with other items we find and display we will suggest avenues of follow-up or get to work on doing more investigative reporting on the story ourselves. In addition to publishing and archiving this content on our Web site, ProPublica's team of 24 journalists will offer temporary exclusives on our investigative reporting to existing news platforms that we think can give it the greatest visibility. We will also follow-up our own work assiduously. Our goal is to reach not necessarily the largest possible audience but the audience that can best effect solutions to the problems we identify. The challenge is exciting. ■

Paul E. Steiger, the former managing editor of The Wall Street Journal, is the editor in chief of ProPublica, which is based in New York City.

of President Richard M. Nixon on August 9, 1974.

“Syphilis Patients Died Untreated,” reports Jean Heller in an Associated Press story from July 25. The story reveals that African-American men unwittingly participated in a 40-year experiment to study the characteristics of syphilis when it is treated and when left untreated.

1974

Seymour Hersh uncovers the practice of illegal domestic spying by the CIA in a New York Times story on December 22.

1975

Ms. magazine publishes a report in its April issue by B.J. Phillips about the mysterious death of Karen Silkwood following her investigation into radiation exposure as a nuclear power plant employee.

1983

Larry Kramer widens public awareness of the spread of AIDS through a story called “1,112 and Counting” for the March 14-27 issue of the New York Native.

1985

The National Catholic Reporter begins reporting about child abuse by priests and a church cover-up of the matter in its July 7 issue.

1986

Syndicated columnist Jack Anderson discloses that the administration of

Watchdog Reporting: Exploring Its Myth

‘The myth of journalists doggedly uncovering all the facts is both important—and dangerous.’

BY FLORENCE GRAVES

Once upon a time, the nation was crawling with brave and well-funded investigative reporters who found and exposed wrongdoing wherever it occurred. From Ida Tarbell to Bob Woodward, journalists crusading for truth bravely defended democracy from the incursions of corruption and undue influence. Alas, how we have fallen from those mighty days! As newsrooms slash budgets and publishers demand higher profits, investigative journalism is under attack.

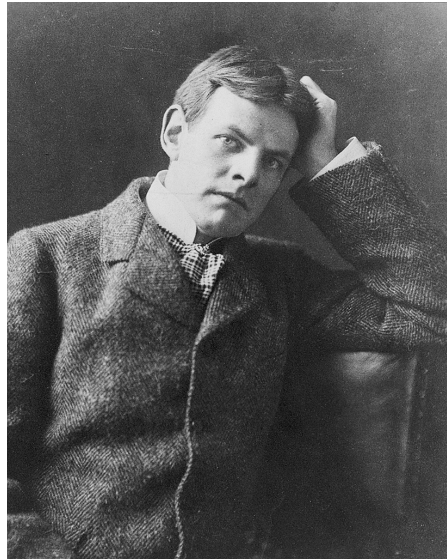
It’s a great narrative. But it’s a myth.

The profit pressures on journalism are very real. In fact, that is one reason I founded the Schuster Institute for Investigative Journalism in 2004, as one of the emerging nonprofit models for investigative journalism. And the urgent need to expose undue influence, tainted decision-making, and hidden malfeasance is real. Those are among the main goals of the Schuster Institute at Brandeis University, and it’s also why I founded and ran Common Cause Magazine with a focus on investigative reporting during the 1980’s. We can admire—and aim at—this goal without believing the myth. The truth: Even when news organizations were flush, in-depth investigative reporting has been more an ideal than a reality.

Consider the research done by Michael Schudson, professor at the University of California at San Diego and at the Graduate School of Journalism of Columbia University, and published in his books “The Power of News” and “Watergate in American Memory: How We Remember, Forget and Reconstruct the Past.”

- In “The Power of News,” Schudson wrote, “The muckraking theme has been powerful in American jour-

WATCHDOG GALLERY



David Graham Phillips (1867-1911). In 1906 *Cosmopolitan Magazine* published “Treason of the Senate,” a nine-part series exposing patterns of corruption among senators. *Photo courtesy of Library of Congress.*

nalism for a century, even though its practice is the exception, not the rule.” He points out that “in the time between Lincoln Steffens, Ida Tarbell, and Ray Stannard in 1904 and Woodward and Bernstein in 1972 and 1973,” muckraking had “no culturally resonant, heroic exemplars.”

- In analyzing myths generated by Watergate, Schudson concluded that “the press as a whole during Watergate was—as before and since—primarily an establishment institution with few ambitions to rock establishment bonds.” While he concluded that many news organizations’ commitments to investigative reporting began to increase in the

1960’s—before Watergate—that commitment was already dissipating early in the Reagan years.

Government Watchdog

The myth of journalists doggedly uncovering all the facts is both important—and dangerous. “What is most important to journalism is not the spate of investigative reporting or the recoil from it after Watergate,” wrote Schudson, “but the renewal, reinvigoration, and remythologization of muckraking.” This helps all of us aim higher and dig even more deeply.

Here’s the danger: Many Americans naively believe that Watergate spawned hordes of investigative reporters who are urgently ferreting out all waste, fraud and abuse of power in the public interest. This fosters a false and complacent public impression that if there is any wrongdoing by government or corporate officials, heroic journalists are doing everything they can to track it down and report it.

While the Washington press corps has grown mightily, is it adequate? Most medium-sized newspapers have a Washington presence, but these reporters often focus on the same few issues and the same few people at the top—leaving significant issues and agencies uncovered. Those U.S. news organizations that do assign a full-time reporter to an agency “beat,” usually assign them only to a handful of big beats such as the Pentagon, Department of Justice, Department of State, and Treasury. Those “beats” usually involve tracking major policy decisions and rarely leave enough time for reporters to make connections between these policies and relevant influence-peddlers or to dig deeply into other agency business. It is extremely

difficult, if not impossible, for these reporters—as well as those who are assigned to cover several agencies at one time—to cover the “official” daily news and the insider machinations about decisions and also track the influence of hundreds of well-paid lobbyists and well-staffed PR firms dedicated to protecting huge corporations’ interests and who have vast access to policymakers. This doesn’t even take into account the increased difficulties reporters confront when facing the recent and unprecedented government clampdown on the release of information and deliberate slowdowns in response to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, the increasing trend of the government issuing subpoenas to journalists to disclose their confidential sources, and the threat posed by libel suits.

Contrary to the myth, only a skeleton crew of reporters is trying to find out how Americans’ daily lives—what they eat, the medicines they take, the products they use, and the environmental conditions in which they live—are being affected by hundreds of lobbyists, dozens of partisan and “Astroturf” think-tanks, scores of federal agencies, and hundreds of officials all defended by the ironically named “public information officers” who prevent the flow of many important facts out of their offices.

To get a sense of just how bad the problem was becoming, in 2001 The Project on the State of the American Newspaper surveyed newspapers and wire-services to determine which ones “regularly cover” 19 federal departments and agencies.¹ The survey found that apart from the major departments such as defense, state, justice and treasury—which are comparatively well covered by reporters—a surprising number of agencies with huge budgets had either no reporters or just a few, including the following:

- No full-time reporter: Veterans Affairs (\$46 billion budget) and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (\$482 million budget)
- Two full-time reporters: Department of Interior (\$10 billion budget)
- Three full-time reporters: Agriculture (\$73 billion budget), Environmental Protection Agency (\$8 billion budget), and Social Security Administration (\$7 billion budget)
- Four full-time reporters: Labor Department (\$39 billion budget) and Internal Revenue Service (\$9 billion budget).

Congress is where laws are passed, but it is within these agencies that the laws are shaped into realities that affect our lives. Are only three full-time reporters enough to oversee all of the government’s decision-making about environmental protection and monitor all of what lobbyists do to shape those regulations behind closed doors? Consider, too, the spectacular growth in sophistication and influence of a vast number of power centers—multinational corporations, global financial institutions, international governments, and nongovernmental organizations. Then there is coverage of local and state news, when editors and publishers are subjected to even greater pressure from special interests—commercial and otherwise—in their community.

Increasingly bereft of key resources—time, people and money—to do in-depth reporting, journalists have become much more dependent on leaks and tips from people who usually have an agenda that might not always be so obvious. One resulting paradox is that while more reporters than ever are covering Washington, we really know less about many very important things. Consider the press’s spectacular failure to find out the truth about the administration’s claims about Iraq. Or

President Ronald Reagan has sold weapons to Iran in order to influence the release of political hostages in the Middle East.

1987

Bob Woodward exposes questionable policies and practices at the CIA in “Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA 1981-1987,” published by Simon & Schuster.

1989

Jerry Mitchell reports on October 1 in the Jackson, Mississippi, Clarion-Ledger that the 1964 trial of the man accused of assassinating civil rights leader Medgar Evers was rigged with jury tampering. His story leads to the reopening of the case and a murder conviction. Other civil rights cases from the era are reexamined and retried.

1993

Eileen Welsome exposes “The Plutonium Experiment,” a federal study involving plutonium injections conducted without patient knowledge. It runs on November 15 in the Albuquerque Tribune.

2001

Eric Schlosser examines the health hazards of convenience foods in “Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal,” published by Houghton Mifflin.

2004

Seymour Hersh collects a series of articles written for The New Yorker

¹ An article about the project’s original 1999 survey is available at www.ajr.org/Article.asp?id=3269. The survey was updated two years later by Lucinda Fleeson, and the new results appear with the original AJR article written by John Herbers and James McCartney in “Breach of Faith: A Crisis of Coverage in the Age of Corporate Newspapering,” edited by Gene Roberts and Thomas Kunkel.

how long it took to unmask Congressmen Tom Delay and Randy (Duke) Cunningham. Or the overlooked warnings about today's subprime crisis—and in earlier years the Savings & Loan crisis, the Department of Housing and Urban Development scandal, and the Iran-contra arms deals.

This is not to say that investigative reporters have been failing. Press investigations have recently revealed unacceptable conditions for Iraq War veterans at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, the CIA's abuses in prisoner interrogations, the use of warrantless wiretaps of citizens' phones by the U.S. government, and other memorable watchdog stories. We can find plenty of other examples of superb investigative journalism—likely more and better than a decade ago—but that doesn't mean there's enough of it.

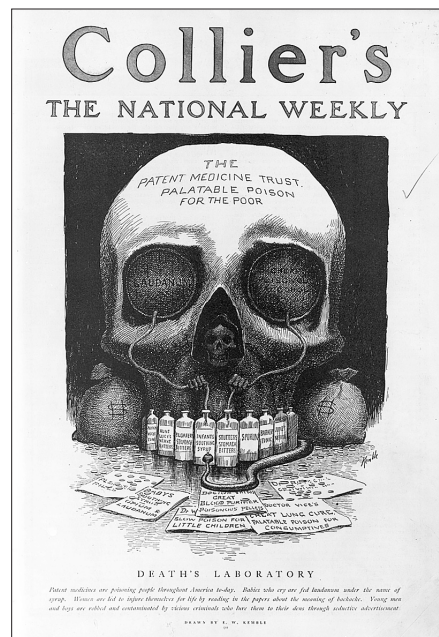
In our news media's daily practice and performance, watchdog reporting is not keeping pace with the growing need. While powerful institutions—government, corporate and nonprofit, both U.S. and global—that need to be watched are multiplying and getting richer and more sophisticated, precisely the opposite is happening in journalism: The number and availability of reporters who have the time, institutional backing, and resources to be effective watchdogs are getting pinched. Nor does it seem that this trend is about to change given the faltering financial resources available at most news organizations—and the ways in which these resources are being used in this era of celebrity and entertainment journalism.

Uncovering Corporate Malfeasance

Meanwhile, news organizations have never been very committed to exposing corporate wrongdoing. A convincing argument could be made that today corporations effectively run the country—including what happens in Washington, D.C.—through their campaign contributions, opposition research, careful spin-doctoring, sophisticated public influence campaigns, heavy-hitting lobbyists, and still more tools.

Arguably, corporate titans might be in a better position to abuse the public trust than many government officials. While numerous outlets cover business and report on corporate news, most of what reaches the public is aimed at investors, usually indicating whose business is up and who's is down. The New York Times then-media reporter

WATCHDOG GALLERY



In 1906, Collier's published E.W. Kemble's "Death's Laboratory," an investigative article about the sale of alcohol and chemical-laced medicines. *Courtesy of Library of Congress.*

Felicity Barringer pointed out a few years ago that "more than 250 Pulitzers in journalism have been awarded since 1978. Business figures prominently in about 10." She then asked, "But what about corporations and industries? Are there some comfortable folk there who could do with some afflicting?"

Our own survey of the Pulitzers revealed that out of the 90 Pulitzers given for public service journalism, only about a handful involved primarily an investigation of corporate power. And of the 25 Pulitzer Prizes awarded for investigative journalism, in just two of them did the reporters

focus specifically on situations involving corporations.

Even in flush times, the job of systematically and thoroughly covering the government, the corporate sector, and the nonprofit sector would have been a mammoth David-takes-on-Goliath effort. But these are not flush times for the news business. And that's why there's such an urgent need for what Chuck Lewis, founder of the Center for Public Integrity, has been calling the new nonprofit journalism. [See Lewis's article on page 23.] Each of us who launched one of these new nonprofit models did so independently, albeit with similar reckonings about the need. None of us pretend to be the solution to the ongoing financial crisis that has led many newspapers to eliminate or cut back their investments in investigative reporting. But all of us want to contribute to the solution—albeit in slightly different ways and with somewhat different areas of focus.

Schuster Institute for Investigative Journalism

The Schuster Institute for Investigative Journalism is the nation's first—and only—investigative reporting center based at a university (in our case, Brandeis University) that is intended to help fill the increasing void in high-quality public interest and investigative journalism. As journalists, we research, report, place and publish or broadcast our work. Our ongoing interaction with students comes in working closely with those we hire to assist us with our investigations; we get superb research assistance, while we mentor them and offer an intimate sense of what is required to do in-depth reporting. We also reveal to them the value this kind of reporting holds for our nation. No matter what these students end up doing, whether it's journalism, law, business or politics, they take with them an understanding of—and appreciation for—the importance of a free and unfettered press in a democracy.

Our goal is to explore in-depth significant social and political problems

and uncover corporate and government abuses of power and reveal what we find through “impact journalism,” in which our in-depth projects break important news and jump-start public policy discussions about underreported social and political injustices important to a democracy. The three prime areas of our interest are:

1. Political and Social Justice
2. Gender and Justice
3. The Justice Brandeis Innocence Project.

Our investigations reach the public via broadcast, the Web, and in newspapers and magazines that have a proven ability to inform the public.² In collaboration with The Washington Post, I explored a whistleblower lawsuit against Boeing. In reporting that story, we found that Boeing—with what seemed like almost a wink from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)—was installing unapproved (and potentially dangerous) parts on its planes. With the freedom I have through my association with this institute,³ I was able to delve deeply for months. Few reporters would have had the time to study the FAA’s regulations and requirements deeply enough to be able to challenge its spin. “Boeing Parts and Rules Bent, Whistle-Blowers Say,” appeared as an above-the-fold Page One story in April 2006 and was picked up around the world.⁴ While reporting the story, I discovered many indications that Boeing and the FAA have a tighter

relationship than any citizen would want to exist, and I uncovered half a dozen other stories I’d like to pursue when I have more time.

There are certainly other ways to do this work—and plenty of room for many more news organizations and journalists to commit to doing it. The breadth of global “beats” is only going to expand, while it appears likely that crucial stories simply are not going to be done. Last fall, the Columbia Journalism Review editorialized that, “As newsroom resources continue to contract—foreign bureaus close, staffs shrink, travel budgets evaporate—producing a broad, deep and authoritative news report day in and day out may in some cases require that news operations join forces.” The Schuster Institute alone—or even in concert with every other nonprofit investigative journalism entity in existence today—will never be able to fill the growing gap. Doing so is going to require innovative ideas matched with unprecedented cooperation and collaboration among journalists and a commitment to this job by all of us. ■

Florence Graves is the founding director of The Schuster Institute for Investigative Journalism at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts. She was founder of Common Cause Magazine and has been an investigative reporter for nearly three decades.

² The institute pays for the in-depth research that goes into our preliminary proposals and investigations; for our placed articles, we accept freelance fees, which pay for a fraction of our research costs. In the past year, our work has appeared in such media outlets as The Washington Post, The Boston Globe, Columbia Journalism Review, and Good Housekeeping (U.S. and international editions), and has been featured in various NPR radio and TV talk shows. Our investigative work has been picked up by news organizations such as The China Post, The San Jose Mercury News, ABC News online, Chicago Tribune, Seattle Post-Intelligencer, and The Standard (Hong Kong), and linked to or commented on in more than 150 blogs. —F.G.

³ Brandeis University provides our institute with a home firmly placed within an academic tradition that honors freedom of inquiry and independence from government influence and corporate control, with an explicit dedication to social justice and to the pursuit of truth wherever it might lead. —F.G.

⁴ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/04/16/AR2006041600803.html>

magazine about the government’s Iraq War policy into a book called “Chain of Command: The Road from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib.”

2005

Dana Priest, reporting in November for The Washington Post, uncovers the existence of secret overseas detention centers maintained by the CIA for its fight against terrorism.

2006

William Glaberson writes a three-part series for The New York Times about the “Broken Bench” of New York State’s system of 1,250 town and village courts.

Bob Woodward publishes “State of Denial,” the third book in his investigative look at the planning and execution of the Iraq War under the leadership of President George W. Bush. He documents systematic negligence and misjudgment.

2007

In a follow-up report for The New York Times, William Glaberson reveals widespread fraud and mismanagement of the millions of dollars exchanging hands each year in New York State’s small-town courts.

Washington Post reporters Dana Priest and Anne Hull expose widespread problems with outpatient care at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center for soldiers wounded in the Iraq War. ■

Understanding the Value of Investigative Reporting

A nonprofit director feels frustrated by how difficult it is to find ‘adequate resources for independent investigative reporting.’

BY BILL BUZENBERG

“Watchdog” and “muckraker” are wonderful words, reflecting both the greatest challenge of a free press and the most compelling need in a free and open society. When done well, investigative journalism improves lives and strengthens our republic, as demonstrated by the groundbreaking work of Ida Tarbell (Standard Oil), Upton Sinclair (meatpacking), Lincoln Steffens (urban corruption), Edwin Markham (child labor), and other standard-bearers of the craft. Certainly, modern-day muckrakers continue in this grand turn-of-the-20th century tradition. While hard-fought, individual battles to ferret out information to tell an important story are being won again and again, the broader war for transparency and accountability is, I fear, being lost. As Joseph Pulitzer once said, “Our republic and its press will rise or fall together.”

At a time when the American press had largely abandoned muckraking and our republic was in dire need of greater transparency, I took the reins at the nonprofit, nonpartisan Center for Public Integrity (CPI) in Washington, D.C.. That happened in January 2007, nearly two decades after Charles Lewis, its visionary builder, founded CPI, which has set the benchmark for solid investigative journalism. [See article by Lewis on page 23.] As an online pioneer, CPI has put millions of words, thousands of documents, and scores of databases on the Web, most of it made easily searchable by journalists, policymakers and citizens. CPI’s investigations have broken news about the Lincoln

Bedroom’s high-roller guest list in the Clinton administration and have posted—against the explicit wishes of the Justice Department—the previously undisclosed Patriot II legislation crafted by the Bush administration. Altogether, CPI has issued 400 investigative reports and 17 books, including the 2004 best seller, “The Buying of the President.”¹

Digital Documentation

After more than a quarter-century in public radio, including 16 years as head of the news operations at National Public Radio (NPR) and Minnesota Public Radio (MPR), known nationally as American Public Media, I was eager—to borrow author Kevin Phillips’s description of CPI’s work—to shine a brighter light of truth “into so many Washington dirty laundry baskets.” I knew, too, that digital journalism’s tools and technology have enabled us to open up new avenues of in-depth reporting and global distribution of what we find, which has increased the scope of our reporting and the breadth of its influence.

In 2005, I had collaborated with CPI while running American RadioWorks, public radio’s documentary unit based at MPR. After a year of working together with Northwestern University’s Medill News Service to collect travel data from the basement of the Capitol, our three organizations published an online report called “Power Trips.”² Every lobbyist-funded trip during the previous five years for members of Congress and their staffers is made

public through a first-of-its-kind, detailed, searchable database of some \$55 million in travel expenses—payments for which sponsoring lobbyists presumably had more in mind than the scenery. As a result of making these records transparent—and the 1,200-plus articles written as a result of our findings—congressional travel behavior changed sharply; most notably, lobbyist-paid travel plummeted. Then, one year ago, Congress toughened the law in an attempt to close this influence loophole.

During this first year I’ve been at CPI, by relying on the Chuck Lewis-method of unassailable, no-stone-unturned, investigative journalism, I had a front-row seat to observe the impact this kind of reporting can have on government’s performance. What follows are two examples of projects released last year:

Superfund Project: CPI exposed the state of toxic-waste cleanup by the Environmental Protection Agency’s stalled Superfund program. As part of our massive report, “Wasting Away: Superfund’s Toxic Legacy,” we revealed the names and political contributions of polluters, complete with maps, a listing of contaminants, and other data for all 1,624 Superfund sites. A large amount of our Web traffic for this project comes from inside the EPA, which claims no comparable, searchable database.

Financial Disclosure Information: On the state level, CPI has for years made available a variety of financial

¹ For CPI’s work on the 2008 presidential campaigns, see www.buyingofthepresident.org.

² This project and others mentioned later in this article can be found on the CPI Web site at www.publicintegrity.org.

disclosure information. Our most recent release is an updated “States of Disclosure” project, which provides information on every governor, supreme court justice, and legislator in all 50 state capitals. We also grade the states to show which have the weaker and stronger disclosure laws. Time after time, CPI has seen state legislatures use our data to address their failing grades.

International Reporting

Ten years ago, Lewis also launched the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), a global membership network whose ranks now include nearly 100 journalists in 50 countries. [See the article by Fernando Rodrigues on page 71 about his investigative reporting as part of ICIJ.] “Collateral Damage,” the most recent ICIJ project, was released last spring after more than a year of reporting and research, which required combing through thousands of foreign lobbying records. This project relied on the collaborative effort of 10 investigative journalists on four continents. What CPI ultimately published is one of the most comprehensive accounts of U.S. military aid and assistance in the post-9/11 era—a project that now features a unique database that combines U.S. military assistance, foreign lobbying expenditures, and human-rights abuses into a single, accessible tool kit. By being able to see all of these dollar figures in the same database, CPI was able to reveal for the first time how Pakistan’s \$9 million in military assistance for three years before 9/11 had jumped to \$4.6 billion, with only minimal Pentagon oversight.

Other efforts have dug deep into the war efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq,

including the following projects:

Contractors and Contributions: In 2003, for example, after hundreds of Freedom of Information Act requests, the “Windfalls of War” project tallied the dollar amounts paid to contractors, totaled their political contributions, and identified the former U.S. military officials on their boards or in senior management positions. Late last year, CPI updated that project by naming the current top 100 Iraq and Afghanistan contractors and posted online their even more lucrative contracts. It was this project that first revealed that

able database of nearly 400,000 words provides documentation that tracks the 935 false statements spoken publicly by George W. Bush and seven of his administration’s key officials from 9/11 through the start of the Iraq War and beyond. Statements are deemed false when the speaker unequivocally stated that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction or that Iraq was linked to al-Qaeda.

Funding Investigative Journalism

With the Bush administration outsourcing government to an extent never seen before—private contracts have more than doubled in the past five years, with billions of dollars being contributed to political campaigns and with 35,000 lobbyists in Washington spending more than \$3 billion annually—there is no lack of topics to explore. While our work at CPI is going well, I’ve been frustrated in my new job by how much we aren’t able to do because of the difficulty in finding adequate resources for independent investigative reporting.

During the 16 years I spent as vice president of news in public radio, I helped to raise tens of millions of dollars from foundations—a task I can now appreciate as being relatively easy. Trying to raise funds to support CPI’s work, I can make

a crystal-clear case about the need for tough investigative journalism, but I find that resources to sustain the work we do are much harder to come by. Although my former public radio colleagues will protest that they are only an on-air pitch break away from going off the air, NPR, MPR, and many major public radio operations are fairly dependably well resourced. With its endowment of more than

WATCHDOG GALLERY



In 1929, St. Louis Post-Dispatch reporter Paul Y. Anderson won the Pulitzer Prize for Reporting for “his highly effective work in bringing to light” hidden details of the Teapot Dome oil-lease scandal. A gas station owner in Zillah, Washington, was so outraged by the corrupt dealmaking that he built his station to look like a teapot in protest.

Courtesy of the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Washington State Department of Community Development.

Halliburton, and its former subsidiary KBR Inc. (Kellogg, Brown & Root), have by far won the most lucrative contracts in Iraq.

False Statements: In late January, CPI released another data-rich, innovative project on Iraq called “The War Card: Orchestrated Deception on the Path to War.” [See related box about reporting on this project on page 26.] A search-

\$200 million, and annual budgets of roughly \$150 million, NPR is not a struggling news organization. Nor is MPR, with an endowment and annual budget more than half that of NPR's, though certainly each could do even more with a greater amount of financial resources.

Unlike public radio, CPI takes no government money. While it earns some of its revenue, CPI relies heavily on foundations and major individual donors, but without the advantage of on-air pledge drives. It is my wish that more foundations and individual donors could appreciate how critical their support is for sustaining the high-quality investigative reporting done by CPI and other independent, nonprofit journalism organizations. In the challenging economic environment of today's for-profit news industry,

we recognize how unlikely it is that newspapers and broadcast entities will be able to support efforts such as these. CPI is embarking on a major campaign to dramatically increase its endowment. A day of great jubilation would be when we raise the necessary funds to allow us to devote more of our energy and attention to our investigative work rather than to our operating budget each year.

In his 2004 book, "The Vanishing Newspaper: Saving Journalism in the Information Age," University of North Carolina professor Philip Meyer writes, "The only way to save journalism is to develop a new model that finds profit in truth, vigilance and social responsibility." Meyer cited two examples of what he meant—NPR and CPI. The public radio model has proved its sustainability, and the smaller, but equally vital,

CPI is seeking its sustainability model by raising a larger endowment. As we do so, words that the late historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., a founding CPI advisory board member, used to describe our organization are ones I will carry with me and use as I try to convince others of the value of what we do. As Schlesinger said of CPI, it is "an indispensable truth-teller in a treacherous time." ■

Bill Buzenberg became the executive director of the Center for Public Integrity in January 2007. He had been vice president of news at Minnesota Public Radio/American Public Media for the previous nine years. For 18 years he was at NPR, including seven as vice president of news and 11 years as a foreign affairs correspondent and London bureau chief.

When a Few Dollars Make a Big Difference

The Fund for Investigative Journalism enabled Seymour Hersh to report on the My Lai massacre; since then it has funded many other investigative stories.

BY JOHN HYDE

In 1969, as the Vietnam War raged on, a dogged young reporter named Seymour Hersh thought he was onto something. He had learned that there might have been a massacre of Vietnamese civilians by U.S. soldiers in the village of My Lai. Knocking on one door after another, Hersh asked editors at mainstream news organizations to buy him a plane ticket so he could pursue this lead—and, if proven correct, this publication would be able to offer the story to its readers. One after another, they rejected his request.

Hersh then stumbled across a fledgling organization called the Fund for Investigative Journalism (<http://fij.org/>). This fund had been established by Philip Stern, a progressive-minded philanthropist who had spent a lifetime trying to, in his words, "balance the scales of justice." He'd done what he

could to fund projects designed to alleviate poverty and others to battle against racism, corporate greed, and government corruption. Over time, he became convinced that by putting a small amount of money into the hands of aggressive reporters, he could do an immense amount of good toward achieving these goals.

For Hersh, that small amount of money—the first grant given out by the fund—was \$250, which he used to pay for his reporting trip to Indiana. Hersh returned feeling certain that he had a story, so the fund gave him an additional grant of \$2,000 to pursue it further. When he finished his reporting, the magazines to whom he offered the story turned him down. After a friend who operated Dispatch News Service, a small newspaper syndicate, agreed to run his piece, the scandal he'd unearthed became

a huge and influential story when 36 newspapers in the United States and abroad bought the rights to reprint it. Hersh won the Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting in 1970, and public opinion about the Vietnam War was profoundly affected.

"Think of it," Stern later wrote, "a mere \$2,250 in fund grants enabled Seymour Hersh to leverage a whiff into a colossal stink and contribute mightily to the change in how Americans viewed the war in Vietnam."

Courageous Pursuit of Stories

Since then, the work of investigative reporters who have received the fund's grants has been recognized by the award of nearly every major prize in journalism: There has been another Pulitzer, two National Magazine Awards, the George Polk Award,

the Raymond Clapper Award, and the Frank Luther Mott Award. There have also been plenty of other courageous reporters whose work we've funded who have not won prizes but who have endured harassment and imprisonment and risked their lives in pursuit of what they knew was an important story to tell.

Journalists who've headed out to do reporting we've funded have been beaten up, shot at, and run out of town. In 2001, Argwings Odera was forced to flee his native Kenya after the nation's president went on national television and accused him of treason because of his stories about government corruption. Robert I. Friedman, a freelance author, was sent into hiding after his book, "Red Mafiya," earned him a death sentence from the Russian mob. After he received a subsequent fund grant to investigate human trafficking in India, he contracted a rare disease during his time there and died. In honor of his work, the fund created the Robert I. Friedman Award for International Investigative Reporting to honor him. Eliza Griswold, who was the first winner of the Friedman Award, was detained and subsequently ushered out of Pakistan while she was reporting on Waziristan, a remote tribal area thought to be the hiding place of Osama bin Laden.

There was Lesley McCulloch, a Scottish journalist, who was arrested and jailed for five months while reporting on the conflict in Banda Aceh. The Indonesian government originally threatened to charge her with treason, a capital offense, but later backed away when international opinion coalesced in her favor. Unknown to her jailers, McCulloch had smuggled a cell phone into her cell and gave a series of interviews to the BBC.

Our annual book award is named in honor of legendary editor Gene Roberts, a longtime member of the

board of directors whose idea led to this \$25,000 award. It gives authors who are writing investigative books financial assistance during times when it can be a struggle for them to complete their projects. Our most recent recipient was Jessica Snyder Sachs, a science journalist whose book, "Good Germs, Bad Germs: Health and Survival in a Bacterial World," details how the "war on germs" threatens a massive public health crisis as microbes become resistant to antibiotic drugs.¹

Many years after the My Lai massacre story made him famous, Seymour Hersh looked back on the important

role the fund plays. The support it provides, he said, "is absolutely essential for nonestablishment journalists working on stories that—believe me, I know—99 percent of managing editors would have passed up." ■

John Hyde is the part-time executive director of the Fund for Investigative Journalism. He has been a reporter and editor for several newspapers, including the Des Moines Register, where he served in the Washington bureau for 12 years.

Fund for Investigative Journalism: Practices and Policies

As a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, the fund operates frugally so it can give out as many grants as possible. Its 12-member board of directors, composed of distinguished working journalists who serve without compensation, meets several times a year to weigh grant proposals. Frugality is a necessity, since the fund accepts no money from corporations, labor unions, special interest groups, or governmental agencies. Most of its funding comes from foundations and individual contributors.

Grants, ranging from \$500 to \$10,000, are awarded to U.S. and foreign journalists, and projects in all media are considered, including newspapers, magazines, broadcast, books and the Internet. Applicants state in a letter what they propose to investigate and how they intend to go about it. They also submit their

résumé, a budget for the project, a sample of published work, and a "letter of interest" from an editor or producer stating that if the finished product meets their editorial standards, they will consider using it.

Half of the grant is given at the start and half when the project is completed. Other than this financial assistance, the fund exerts no editorial control over the project, nor does it monitor how the grant money is used. Its interest is in good journalism, not reviewing expense reports. The fund does not offer scholarships or training programs. Its sole purpose is to promote tough, honest investigative journalism by putting money into the hands of reporters eager to shine light into dark places. And, in that respect, it is often the only game in town. ■—J.H.

¹ Previous winners include Stephanie Mencimer for "Blocking the Courthouse Door: How the Republican Party and Its Corporate Allies Are Taking Away Your Right to Sue," about tort reform, and "Vows of Silence: The Abuse of Power in the Papacy of John Paul II," by Jason Berry and Gerald Renner, which details sexual misconduct by a secretive sect within the Catholic Church and an effort to cover it up at the Vatican's higher levels.

WATCHDOG GALLERY



In 1931, Drew Pearson (1897-1969) published "Washington Merry-Go-Round," which became the name for his Washington Post column in which he exposed political corruption. *LBJ Library and Museum/Courtesy Newseum.*

Seeking Support for Investigative Projects

These foundations and centers offer financial support for journalists.

Alicia Patterson Foundation

www.aliciapatterson.org

This Washington, D.C.-based fund provides six-month and one-year grants to working investigative reporters who want to pursue independent investigative projects. Grants can be as much as \$35,000 and are awarded based on an annual competition.

Center for Investigative Reporting

<http://centerforinvestigativereporting.org/projects/thedickgoldensohnfund>. The Dick Goldensohn Fund makes small grants to cover research, reporting and travel costs for freelance journalists working on international investigations.

Fund for Investigative Journalism

www.fij.org

Based in Washington, D.C., the Fund for Investigative Journalism gives grants of up to \$10,000 to investigative reporters who are working outside of major news organizations. Types of investigations the fund supports include corruption, incompetence and societal ills.

Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE)

www.ire.org/training/fellowships.

E-mail Jennifer Erickson at jennifer@ire.org.

In a new program, IRE will offer grants to freelancers working on investigative stories. IRE will distribute a limited number of annual fellowships of \$1,000 to \$2,000. Applications are due on May 1st each year, and fellows will be announced at IRE's annual conference in June.

The Nation Institute

www.nationinstitute.org/ifunds/

The Nation Institute's Investigative Fund provides grants for researching investigative stories. The fund is designed to support work on stories

about topics and issues that are often ignored by mainstream media.

The Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting

<http://pulitzercenter.org/> (Click on "Grants")

The center funds international travel costs associated with reporting projects on topics and regions of global importance. While broad in its description, the center has supported investigative pieces "with an emphasis on issues that have gone unreported or underreported in the mainstream American media." The grant amount depends on the specific project and detailed budget planning and ranges from \$3,000 to \$10,000. Some have been as much as \$20,000. All journalists, writers or filmmakers, both freelance and staff of any nationality, may apply.

University of California at Berkeley, Graduate School of Journalism

<http://journalism.berkeley.edu/>.

E-mail Marlena Telvick at investigativereportingprogram@berkeley.edu.

The university offers three yearlong postgraduate fellowships in investigative reporting that are open to all working journalists but with preference given to graduates of U.C. Berkeley's program in journalism. Selection will be based on qualifications as well as potential and on the proposed areas of investigation. Fellows will be provided with office space, phones and basic expenses and will be considered employees of the university with an annual salary of about \$45,000. ■

This information was compiled by Rachel Schaff, who is in her second year of the Masters of Library Science program at the University of Missouri-Columbia and has worked in the resource center of Investigative Reporters and Editors for several years while attending Missouri. She will join the staff at the library at U.S. News & World Report after she graduates in May.

Transparency Increases Credibility

A Web site and television show reveal how investigative journalists do their jobs.

BY MARK SCHAPIRO

Investigative reporters are rarely beloved. In making it our business to reveal the often uncomfortable truths behind the public reality, why should we be? But to be understood is another matter.

Early in 2006, the Center for Investigative Reporting (CIR) and WNET, the PBS station in New York City, joined forces to begin production of the television program, “Exposé: America’s Investigative Reports.”¹ Our goal was to illustrate through this television show what it takes to do investigative reporting by retracing the steps of some of the best in the business at newspapers, magazines, television and radio stations across the country. By revealing how it’s done, we thought that the show might contribute to taking some of the taint off the plummeting public image that the profession has endured—not to mention tell some dramatic tales.

In preproduction, WNET sent out veteran producer Tom Casciato to get a sense of the media terrain. Casciato had put his documentary skills to work on behalf of ABC News, National Geographic, and Bill Moyers before taking the job as executive producer of Exposé. He came back from that initial foray and reported, “You’re all optimists!” The belief that the “system can and should work” was a common quality he noticed in the many interviews he had conducted with investigative journalists, editors and producers at news organizations, small and large, across the country.

This surprised me; I’d never heard any of my colleagues or peers define themselves using quite such buoyant terms. Upon reflection, however, his

words started to seem like an accurate observation about the constellation of sometimes gruff, always driven journalists who pursue this line of work. They actually believe that bringing real information to the attention of the public might prompt change—in government policy, in the fate of politi-

Taking people inside the work of investigative reporters increases the story’s credibility and illuminates the immense effort that journalists put into such coverage.

cians and government officials, in the behavior of corporations, in individuals or in entities with a link to power. His observation certainly offered a contrast with the public’s typical view of investigative journalists, who tend to rank somewhere between lawyers (another profession given an arguably bad rap) and repo men (who might deserve it). And the 24/7 news cycle hasn’t helped when anyone from Katie Couric to the local cable correspondent staking out pot dealers across from a local high school can label him or herself an “investigative reporter.”

How is the public supposed to recognize the “real” thing?

We hope the program, Exposé, now in its third season and being aired as part of Bill Moyers Journal, can heighten viewers’ ability to differentiate the real from the not-so-real by providing the critical dimension of transparency.

Each episode tells through video the story-behind-the-story by showing in detail an investigative reporter’s methodical—often dramatic—assemblage of evidence. The program peels away layers of the often-mystifying process of doing investigative reporting.

In the first season, for example, the program portrayed the extraordinary efforts of the investigative team in St. Petersburg, Florida to reveal FEMA’s ineptitude in handling the destructive after-effects of Hurricane Rita, months before Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans and every newspaper in America was on FEMA’s trail. The segment followed the South Florida Sun-Sentinel’s I-Team as they pursued one Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request after another with FEMA and constructed a scathing portrait of the federal agency’s incompetence by comparing official documents with the experiences of local residents.

In its second season, “Exposé” followed James Steele and Donald Barlett as they evoked the relentless document and source trail they developed for investigating the defense department’s largest contractor, Science Applications International Corporation, for a story that appeared in Vanity Fair. [See Barlett and Steele’s article on page 50.] Like many other pieces shown as part of this series, this one demonstrated how these two veteran reporters went about gathering information. What they did and how they did it involved the use of tools and strategies that the investigative journalists use all the time, but this story gave a gritty glimpse of the process to those who are unlikely to think much about how stories like this one are reported.

¹ www.pbs.org/wnet/expose/

WATCHDOG GALLERY



George Seldes (1890-1995). In 1938 he founded a weekly newspaper, “In Fact,” in which he wrote frequently about the hazards of smoking cigarettes during a time when other publications refused to print such stories. *Loren Ghiglione/Courtesy Newseum.*

“Exposé” also tracks what happens after a story is published or broadcast: It then shares with viewers what happened to targets of an investigation and victims of malfeasance months after the initial story appeared. The show also is able to give a second life to revelations whose initial impact might have been limited to a local market.

Using the Web to Expose Reporting

Developing such themes on “Exposé” has enhanced the investigative journalism we do and support at CIR, a 31-year old nonprofit organization that produces investigative stories for all media. At CIR, reporters and editors

endeavor to use whatever journalistic tools we can to let readers have as much clarity as possible about how we report our stories; sometimes this means revealing the step-by-step process that leads to a revelation. Or reporters explain how they got the story in the first place, or where their journey in putting together its many pieces led them to go. Loretta Tofani wrote on the CIR Web site about her series, “American Imports, Chinese Deaths,” that appeared last October in the Salt Lake Tribune. This Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist first explained how she’d left journalism in 2001, when cuts at The Philadelphia Inquirer led her to take a buyout and open a store in Salt Lake City that sold Chinese ethnic furniture.²

Tofani then wrote about what pulled her back into journalism. Later she described what she went through in reporting the story of what was happening in these Chinese factories. A few of her words follow:

The store made me an importer, so I often traveled to China, where I had been a foreign correspondent for four years during the 1990’s for The Philadelphia Inquirer. As a businessperson, I saw a different side of Chinese factories than those I had been allowed to see as a foreign correspondent. Back then, I received the usual ‘foreign journalist as spy’ treatment: I was escorted by half a dozen Chinese officials who had prescreened the factories and preinterviewed the workers and managers. But as a businessperson, on a new passport, I had relative freedom to choose the factories I wanted to see, unencumbered by government escorts.

What I saw—and my inability to stop thinking about what it meant and what the stories would say—caused me to close my store and return to journalism. My series ... showed that millions of Chinese factory workers were touching and/or inhaling carcinogens—nickel, cadmium, lead, benzene, toluene, n-hexane, mercury—as they made products destined for the United States. While Americans worried about lead on toys imported from China, Chinese workers were dying from lead and other toxins. They were paying the real price of cheap American imports. Using shipping documents, I linked specific American imports to specific Chinese workers dying of fatal occupational diseases. I interviewed the workers and obtained their medical records. The series raised questions: If we protect American workers from fatal occupational diseases, shouldn’t Chinese workers making American products also be protected?

We are putting CIR’s Web site to use in other ways, too. It provides

² On the CIR blog—The Muckraker—reporters write about their investigative work and discussion takes place about investigative reporting. <http://centerforinvestigativereporting.org/blogs?category=31>.

readers not only with documentation that buttresses the reporting but also with explanations of how our reporters used it. It has graphic representations of a story's central findings and shows clearly the reporter's stepping stones of document collection and interviews. Our Web site figures into CIR's investigations, no matter in which medium the original story appears. Flash art is used to draw the links between people, documents and revelations. On companion Web sites for our documentary films and other major projects, we include everything from raw data to interview streams, so we can show the various pieces of the puzzle that went into putting the finished product together. In my recently published book, "Exposed," I adopted some of these techniques to carry readers along as I moved through complicated sequences of scientific evidence about the effects of chemicals on the human metabolism and into the differing responses

to that evidence in the United States and Europe.³

Taking people inside the work of investigative reporters increases the story's credibility and illuminates the immense effort that journalists put into such coverage. This helps especially with complex and controversial stories, where we've found that a high level of transparency about the reporting process translates into greater believability by readers. (According to a similar logic, many newspapers now inform readers about the reason for an unnamed source's desire for anonymity.)

CIR was the nation's first effort to put into practice the notion that if for-profit news organizations would not support in-depth investigations into abuses of power, then perhaps foundations and philanthropic individuals could. Back then no one foresaw the systematic unraveling of newsrooms that we are witnessing today. The implosion of traditional support within newsrooms

has heightened the necessity of finding alternative resources to support this kind of reporting. This prospect has helped to galvanize the work of the nonprofit institutions reflected in these pages. And perhaps the increasing attention to the role of nonprofit journalism reflects a broader phenomenon at work: recognition of how essential this combination of optimism and the methodical application of skepticism is to a healthy democracy. In telling the story of journalists and the efforts they make, perhaps investigative reporting can be seen for what it contributes as well as an unwelcome disruption to the status quo. ■

Mark Schapiro is the editorial director of the Center for Investigative Reporting and author of the book, "Exposed: The Toxic Chemistry of Everyday Products and What's at Stake for American Power," published by Chelsea Green in 2007.

³ <http://centerforinvestigativereporting.org/projects/Exposed>

Good Journalism Can Be Good Business

'Let's not pull the plug on for-profit journalism just yet.'

BY DANIEL BROGAN

Hardly a day goes by anymore without more bad news about the news business. Layoffs. Budget cuts. Once proud companies dismantled. Wall Street analysts predicting more gloom ahead. It's gotten to the point that even The New York Times is worrying that "Muckraking Pays, Just Not in Profit:"

Investigative reporting can expose corruption, create accountability, and occasionally save lives, but it will never

be a business unto itself. Reporters frequently spend months on various lines of inquiry, some of which do not pan out, and even when one does, it is not the kind of coverage that draws advertisers.¹

Things are so bad that, increasingly, we're seeing nonprofits such as ProPublica and MinnPost put forth as the last refuge for serious news-gathering.

While I applaud high-quality jour-

nalism by any means necessary, let's not pull the plug on for-profit journalism just yet. Four years ago, I made a commitment that 5280—Denver's city magazine, which takes its name from our mile-high elevation—would do more, not less, long-form and investigative journalism. It hasn't been cheap, but I'm here to tell you to forget the conventional "wisdom." There's good money to be made in good journalism.

A bit of background. Fifteen years

¹ <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/10/business/media/10carr.html>

ago, I started 5280 in my second bedroom. It was a classic bootstrap launch, funded by personal savings, a few small family loans, and a lot of credit card debt. As a former reporter at the Chicago Tribune, I fully intended that investigative and long-form narrative journalism would be an important part of our editorial mix. And in our early years, we made a few noble attempts, including the first in-depth interview with the principal of Columbine High School following the 1999 shootings and the first profiles of the jurors selected in Timothy McVeigh's Oklahoma City bombing trial. But reality quickly set in. Those kinds of stories were expensive, and we were barely keeping our heads above water.

To survive, we instead turned our focus to that mainstay of city magazines, service journalism. If you could list it, rank it, or rate it, you'd find it in the pages of 5280. Admittedly, this was not the kind of glamorous reportage that most of us went to journalism school to pursue. But for a small staff with limited resources, our lists of doctors, restaurants, neighborhoods and schools offered a cost-effective way to build an audience. Over time, we were able to translate that audience into ad dollars and, by 2003, we were turning a healthy profit.

However, as Denver grew and the Internet began to offer readers new sources of information, it became clear that simply being a good magazine wouldn't be good enough for very long. So I decided to take 5280's financial success and reinvest it in creating a great magazine, one that was the equal of any city magazine in the country. Since the start of 2004, we've tripled the size of our editorial staff, bringing on journalists from national titles like GQ, Red Herring, Sports Illustrated, and Skiing as well as some of the very best city magazines. At the same time, we doubled the budget for our freelance writers, photographers and illustrators. All told, we've increased our total editorial expenditures by nearly one million dollars a year.

Returning to Investigative Journalism

Our magazine has a ways to go before we reach our ultimate goal, but we've been doing a lot of important investigative work, including the following stories:

- We documented the holes in the first case brought against an Air Force Academy cadet accused of rape, in the article "Conduct Unbecoming."² When those charges were later dismissed, the cadet's father credited 5280 with saving his son from a life sentence.
- We revealed that the Army's flagrant physical and psychological abuse of its recruits during basic training was driving some mentally troubled trainees to suicide in the article "Private Stites Should Have Been Saved."
- We uncovered serious conflicts of interest in the mediation system set up to protect veterans who illegally lose their jobs when returning from Iraq in the article "Nobody's Hero."
- We told the story of sick and dying workers at the Rocky Flats nuclear weapons plant who are being denied promised health benefits, despite the government's unprecedented admission that the workers had been recklessly put in harm's way, in the article "Out in the Cold." Following our report, the workers' cases were reopened and are now being reviewed.

At the same time, we've also increased our emphasis on narrative storytelling, offering readers such compelling reads as a two-part profile of Focus on the Family's James Dobson, "And on the Eighth Day, Dr. Dobson Created Himself," and the gripping tale of a woman left for dead by a serial rapist who terrorized Denver in 2005, "Undefeated."

Other costs have come our way from pursuing these kinds of stories. We've had to fight off a subpoena from the

Department of Defense and, in another case, we sued the federal government when we discovered evidence that an order had gone out to destroy records we were seeking under a Freedom of Information Act inquiry.

But we've also experienced a tremendous return on our investment—financially and in terms of recognition from our peers. We've been nominated for two National Magazine Awards and received a flattering number of other awards, often being recognized alongside entries from publications such as *The New Yorker*, *Harper's*, *The Atlantic*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. Two of our stories became segments on ABC's "20/20" and the "NBC Nightly News." Recognition from our peers is gratifying, of course. On the business side, the returns have been just as gratifying. In the past four years, 5280's paid subscriptions have grown by more than 50 percent, while the number of magazines we sell on the newsstand—already strong for a city of Denver's size—has increased by a similar amount. Though Denver is the nation's 22nd largest market, only five other monthly city magazines sell more copies on the newsstand.

Last, but certainly not least, we've more than doubled our ad revenue during this same time. This means we continue to generate a very healthy profit margin, even as we continue to reinvest in the magazine's editorial product. I'm guessing that Wall Street wouldn't endorse our strategy. After all, 5280 is a small magazine in a relatively small city. But there's nothing about our business model that shouldn't be valid elsewhere. To sell ads, a publication needs to attract a worthwhile audience. To do that requires compelling content. All of which convinces me that good journalism can be good business. ■

Daniel Brogan is the editor and publisher of 5280 magazine, which he founded in 1993. He has a journalism degree from Indiana University.

² This article, and others mentioned, can be found at www.5280.com/back_issues.php.

Digital Journalism: Will It Work for Investigative Journalism?

The Nieman Watchdog Project's editor explores what might be missing and what might be found as journalists turn to the Web to assist in reporting.

BY BARRY SUSSMAN

It's beyond dispute that the finest investigative reporting being done by members of the press is marvelous. The problem is, there's not enough of it. Month to month, we find evidence that gaps in watchdog coverage grow. Where once newspaper reporters were assigned routine beats, such as poverty, labor, the courts, this doesn't happen so much anymore, or maybe a reporter gets three beats to cover when the average number used to be one. The state of race relations seems good for a Newsweek cover story every five years, but that's about it. What's happening in prisons? Forget it. The problems are as large and numerous as ever, but the press's watchful eyes, in large measure, have gone away.

When reporters are on a beat, they are known by those they cover. In time, they come to know who is doing what and learn why. They sniff out when something isn't working as it should and, pretty soon, if they are doing their job well, sources start to come to them. Stories that once seemed impossible to nail down now seem doable. One of the great losses of our day is that so much of this kind of daily legwork isn't happening, not to mention the enormous loss of so much valuable institutional memory vanishing by way of employee buyouts. For any editors who don't realize what this absence means, perhaps a reminder from a one-time secretary of defense might help; he'd surely put

these absent stories in the category of "known unknowns."

As someone who remembers when beat reporting served a valuable purpose—for the newspaper and the public—I wonder at times whether there will ever again be a time when

I wonder at times whether there will ever again be a time when substantial reporting occurs about the topics and issues on which beat reporters once kept watch.

substantial reporting occurs about the topics and issues on which beat reporters once kept watch. I am not holding my breath for that day to arrive.

The Web: An Investigative Reporter's Tool

What the Web does incomparably well is to provide information—instantly—on just about anything. Want to know about where there have been cases of bird flu? Or what can go wrong with voting machines? Or about the capital punishment of innocent people? Civilian deaths in Iraq? College enrollment and rising tuition costs? Googling not only provides answers, but it connects reporters and anyone else with possible places and sources to go to find out more. But the ways of the Web also mean that a "source" no longer has to wait for a reporter to call to get

word out about something. The Web is always waiting—available anytime for anyone to publish anything.

Determining how trustworthy a piece of information is or how reliable a source might be is what reporters do, or what they were once expected to do by those who read their stories. It is, therefore, not comforting to read a recent Harper's Index item that observed the following: "Minimum number of edits to Wikipedia since June 2004 that have been traced back to the CIA: 310." Nor is the habit Web audiences have of finding their way most often to

sites where like-minded people reside something that ought to comfort us, either. At least when we open a newspaper we aren't always sure what we'll find inside, and sometimes what we find gives us food for thought.

There are plenty of reliable, dedicated groups and individuals responsibly sharing important information through the Web. And at a time when surveys of public attitudes inform us that the public's trust in the press is exceedingly low, it seems inevitable that other avenues of seeking sources for "news" will be sought. We know already that the role the press once assumed as a gatekeeper of such information is no longer theirs. And with all of the changes brought by technology and with those happening in newsrooms, it is hard to know whether investigative journalism's future looks brighter for those of us

who believe in the essentialness of its traditional watchdog role.

During the four years I've been editor of the Nieman Watchdog Web site,¹ there's been, of course, an extremely rapid growth in digital media. Web sites of news organizations now display impressive multimedia displays of investigative pieces, such as those done by The New York Times and The Washington Post and other mainstream news outlets. A lot of other investigative work found on the Web is done, however, through nonprofit entities or by individuals, some of whom had distinguished careers in newsrooms before they began to publish on their own. Others with less familiar bylines have surfaced in recent years, and by now some have been around long enough that their work has shown itself to be credible and solid. Now on some important watchdog stories these Web-based writers are doing original reporting to the point where online sites, such as the Center for Investigative Reporting, the Center for Public Integrity, Talking Points Memo, and others are in the forefront of investigative reporting.

If editors believe, for example, that there should be more and better reporting about what is going on inside of prisons and with the courts—yet they lack the staff necessary to do this beat as day-to-day reporting—then there are ways that the Web can help. With well-researched information and links to news coverage in every state, The Sentencing Project's Web site, operated by a prison reform group in Washington, D.C., for example, can give reporters a good start in figuring out whether there is a story to be told. Or the reporter can go to the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law or to a range of similar sites. It's not exactly the way shoe-leather reporting was done but, in some ways, use of the Web will likely enable some aspects of reporting to take place that would

Revealing the Disinformation Industry

With complicated stories, a problem for reporters and editors always has been to wade through mounds of disinformation to get to the facts. Today the problem is even worse. There is an entire disinformation industry, consisting of corporate-funded think tanks, phony grassroots groups, co-opted citizens organizations, experts for hire, fake news and fake reporters, government officials on all levels who lie and promote disinformation, and a presidential administration that has worked to discredit the press and make it irrelevant. Nor has the Web been spared, as digital disinformation proliferates.

But the Internet also provides journalists with some online resources to help journalists sort what is real and solid from what is fake and disingenuous. A couple of good ones, among others, are the Web sites of Investigative Reporters

and Editors (www.ire.org) and the Project for Excellence in Journalism (www.journalism.org). And there is a new Web site—www.frontgroups.org—aimed directly at this disinformation problem. It is put out by Consumers Union and the Center for Media and Democracy with the stated goal of exposing “the people and organizations who function in our society as hidden persuaders. You'll find them at work posting to blogs, speaking before city councils, quoted in newspapers and published on the editorial page, even sponsoring presidential election debates. All this while pretending to represent the grassroots when in fact they are working against citizens' best interests.”

The disinformation industry is huge and well entrenched. Reporters need all the help they can get. ■—B.S.

never have been possible before.

Another example of that is a public interest group, the Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc.. Journalists probing the Bush administration's apparent efforts to weaken and possibly destroy the Medicare system will find this a knowledgeable source. In this case, as in others, experts serve as sources and do their own reporting through regular online releases. Its executive director, Judith Stein, has written occasional pieces for the Nieman Watchdog site that, in my view, provide authoritative, excellent leads for journalists. [See accompanying box for a description of Web sites journalists can use to help them ferret out disinformation campaigns.]

Sites like this one—and many others—give reporters guidance that can

jump-start an investigative story by confirming hunches they might have with solid data and by suggesting sources to which they can turn. Few investigative assignments, however, will be—or should be—completed online; I'm old enough and experienced enough to know the importance of working with actual sources—people who have stories to tell and documents to back up what they know. Databases, and the computer tools we have to work with, are a terrific resource, but there still need to be stories about real people and real people's lives. Readers—whether they get their news online or in a newspaper or on TV—aren't riveted by numbers and timelines. What they still crave are stories, in this case ones in which the powerful are held accountable for actions they've

¹ At www.niemanwatchdog.org academic experts, journalists and others pose questions they believe the press should be asking and share information about topics that might lead reporters to develop their own investigations.

taken and the circumstances of the vulnerable are brought to life.

In a letter in his 2006 Berkshire Hathaway annual report, Warren Buffett wrote that, when he was young, “No paper in a one-paper city, however bad the product or however inept the management, could avoid gushing profits.” Those days are gone. Now Buffett believes there are two paths for newspapers to take if they are to sur-

vive. One path leads to “civic-minded wealthy individuals [who] may feel that local ownership will serve their community well.” That’s a possibility, but a declining one, he wrote. Speaking about the Buffalo News, which Berkshire Hathaway owns, Buffett held out the hope that “some combination of print and online will ward off economic doomsday.”

Let me add a proviso to Buffett’s

two-path strategy. Unless newspapers figure out how—in print and online—to continue their essential watchdog role by providing substantive investigative reporting in well-told ways, then whether they survive or not, what they’ve meant to the survival of our democracy will have vanished. ■

Barry Sussman is the editor of the Nieman Watchdog Project.

Reporting With the Tools of Social Science

‘We had put the social scientists on notice that journalists increasingly would be competitors in their field.’

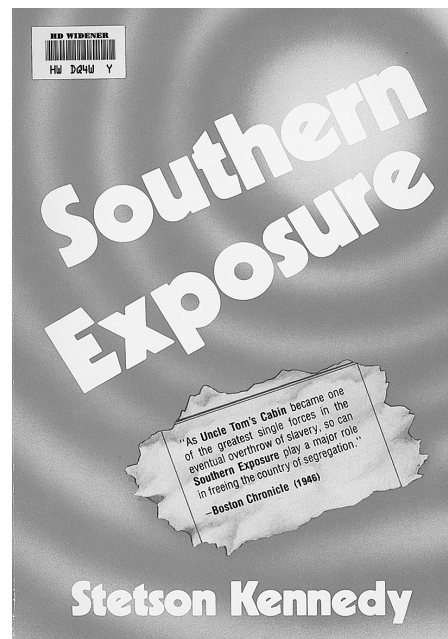
BY STEPHEN K. DOIG

Cynics would say “precision journalism” is an oxymoron, like unbiased opinion or civil war. But precision is an ideal to be sought in journalism, though not often achieved.

As defined by Knight Ridder reporter Philip Meyer in his groundbreaking 1973 book of the same name, precision journalism is the use of the tools of social science to replace, or at least supplement, reporters’ time-honored methods of citing anecdotal evidence and doing educated guesswork. Today, thanks to Meyer’s call, I’m one of hundreds of investigative reporters who have crafted serious stories using such tools as survey research, statistical analysis, experimentation and hypothesis testing. It’s social science done on deadline.

As it happens, I got a glimmering of these methods even before I discovered journalism as a career. In my freshman year at Dartmouth in 1966, I slogged my way to a so-so grade in calculus, the last math course I ever took. I remember little calculus today, but I did learn something my professor, John Kemeny, had coauthored two years earlier: the computer language BASIC. I thought it very cool that I could peck a few lines of English-like instructions into a teletype machine

WATCHDOG GALLERY



In 1946, Stetson Kennedy’s book “Southern Exposure” was published, revealing the circumstances of life for blacks in the American South.

and seconds later a mainframe computer somewhere on campus would calculate precinct-level vote percentages for my American Government homework.

However, it was 15 years later before I got a chance to start applying such methods to my journalism. The problem was that much of what Meyer recommended could best be done with a computer, which during the 1970’s meant big-iron mainframes that only universities or corporations could afford. It was nearly a decade before personal computers were developed and usable by nontechies like myself.

By then, in 1981, I was a reporter in The Miami Herald’s state capital bureau, and I had bought an Atari 800 computer to play with at home. I quickly realized that my expensive toy could help me do my job better. I relearned BASIC, then persuaded my editors to buy one of the new-fangled IBM PCs for me to use at work. At one point, I spent a week writing and debugging a program that would take a legislative roll call vote and produce cross-tabs not only by party but also by such other revealing political demographics as race, gender, geography, leadership position, and source of campaign contributions. It would even write the roll call agate we appended to legislative stories. (Today, of course, such an application could be built in minutes with off-the-shelf database software.)

Building a Toolbox for Precision Journalism

Want to add social science methods to your toolbox of investigative reporting skills? What follows are some ways to consider doing this:

Read “Precision Journalism: A Reporter’s Introduction to Social Science Methods” (4th edition) by Philip Meyer.

Fuzzy with math? Read “Numbers in the Newsroom: Using Math and Statistics in News,” by Sarah Cohen, the Pulitzer-winning Washington Post database editor.

Get the boss to buy you a copy of SPSS 16.0: This is a widely used statistical analysis software package. It’s pricey, at \$1,700, but it will do most of the kinds of analyses precision journalists are performing these days. Better yet, the SPSS documentation, manuals and practice data serve as a good tutorial in statistical techniques.

Join Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE): It offers training in computer-assisted reporting in general and precision journalism in particular.¹

Subscribe to NICAR-L: This e-mail listserv is frequented by most of the reporters who are using precision journalism tools.²

Consider signing up for the annual advanced newsroom statistics boot camp at Arizona State University.³

Sign up for the annual “Mapping Data for News Stories” boot camp at IRE’s headquarters at the University of Missouri.

Take a statistics course and a geographical information systems course at your local university. Most professors will be intrigued about helping you become a precision journalist. ■—S.K.D.

¹ For more information on the IRE, go to www.ire.org/. Books mentioned above are available at www.ire.org/store.

² To join this listserv go to www.ire.org/membership/subscribe/nicar-l.html. Fast help is available there while climbing the learning curve.

³ Details can be found at www.ire.org/training/arizonastats08.html.

A couple of years later, I got to meet Meyer for the first time. He did a day-long training seminar at the Herald attended by a few of us, including Richard Morin, who later would go on to be the polling director for The Washington Post for nearly 20 years. Rich and I, in particular, came away from that seminar inspired to be precision journalists.

So I spent the next decade at the Herald teaching myself, in bits and pieces, the social science tools I hadn’t had enough sense to study when I was in college, from statistics to car-

tography. An example of my academic cluelessness came in 1991, when I was working with Knight Ridder colleagues Dan Gillmor and Ted Mellnik on a project about racial segregation in the United States using just-released census data. I spent days trying to noodle together some way to measure the degree of segregation in a community, but nothing useful emerged. I finally mentioned my frustration to Mellnik, who then mentioned it to a friend who was a sociologist. “Oh, you want the dissimilarity index,” the friend promptly replied, giving Mellnik

a citation for an article describing it in a scholarly journal from the 1950’s.

Armed with that already-invented tool, a month after the decennial census data was released we produced our analysis of how segregation had—or hadn’t—changed in every state, county and city across the country since 1980. For expert comment on what we had found, Gillmor called William Frey of the University of Michigan, one of the nation’s leading demographers. He was stunned. “My god, I had no idea newspapers could do that kind of work,” Frey told Gillmor, adding that he hadn’t even started thinking about the grant applications he would write in hopes of doing a similar analysis in the next few years. We had put the social scientists on notice that journalists increasingly would be competitors in their field. And I’m proud to say that we also beat Meyer, by then a Knight Chair at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, to the story; unknown to us until later, he was a consultant to USA Today reporters who were working on a similar analysis.

By then, there was a growing band of investigative reporters doing ever-more sophisticated studies using precision journalism techniques. One of the best-known examples at the time was the “Color of Money” project that used hard data to document so-called “redlining” by banks that were denying mortgage loans to black residents of Atlanta, which won a 1989 Pulitzer for young Atlanta Journal and Constitution reporter Bill Dedman.

In a case of chance favoring the prepared mind, my opportunity to use precision journalism on a huge story arrived on August 24, 1992, when Hurricane Andrew tore across the south end of Miami with winds exceeding 150 miles per hour. Andrew destroyed or heavily damaged more than 80,000 homes—including my own. In the weeks that followed, as Herald reporters were covering the daily events of recovery across the battered region, our investigative team met to see how we might determine whether the extent of this disaster was simply an act of God or the inevitable result of our collective stupidity.

I realized that I could merge our growing database of damage reports with the property tax roll, which would allow us to study the storm's damage patterns. When I ran the numbers, I found the first smoking gun of my career. There was no pattern to be seen when I compared storm damage to such variables as home value, type of construction, location or distance from the shore. But there was a strong, counterintuitive pattern connected to the year of construction: The newer the home, the more likely to be destroyed. We went on to uncover the reasons for this in other datasets we gathered, including millions of records of often-hasty building inspections and millions of dollars in campaign contributions to politicians who had approved weakened building codes at the urging of the construction industry. Our report, called "What Went Wrong," was published three months after the storm.

After that, Herald reporters and I investigated other big social problems by using hard data, including an examination of South Florida's overwhelmed criminal justice system and a probe of immigration's effect on our region and the country.

Teaching the Tools

I left the Herald in 1996 to become a professor of journalism. Each semester, I teach our best students some of the precision journalism techniques that I still wish I had learned back in college. I also continue to work with investigative reporters who are following the path

WATCHDOG GALLERY



Edward R. Murrow reported "Harvest of Shame" about the conditions of migrant farm workers. This "CBS Reports" program was originally shown on Thanksgiving evening, 1960. *Film image courtesy of CBS Photo Archive, CBS Worldwide, Inc. ©*

... I'm one of hundreds of investigative reporters who have crafted serious stories using such tools as survey research, statistical analysis, experimentation and hypothesis testing. It's social science done on deadline.

first laid out by Meyer. For instance, in advance of the 2000 Census, USA Today database editor Paul Overberg and I taught hundreds of reporters the

tools needed to interpret the data—including the dissimilarity index—in a series of workshops around the country organized by Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE). And with the help of numbers-savvy IRE stalwarts like Jennifer LaFleur and Holly Hacker,¹ I host an annual three-day statistics boot camp for reporters who are ready to move beyond spreadsheets to learn tools like correlation, regression, sampling, hypothesis tests, and probability.

Finally, the use of such tools has become so common that three years ago I joined with IRE to create the Philip Meyer Awards² for precision journalism honoring the best investigative reporting done each year using social science techniques. Winners and other strong entries have used clever statistical methods to uncover cheating scandals in public schools, backdated stock options, flaws in ballot designs, origins of the methamphetamine epidemic, and systemic problems with veterans' medical care, among many noteworthy stories. What Meyer dreamed of 35 years ago—a cadre of journalists who use the scientific method—precisely has come to pass. ■

Stephen K. Doig is the Knight Chair in Journalism at Arizona State University's Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication. Precision journalism projects on which he worked during his 19 years at The Miami Herald won the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service, the IRE Award, and the Goldsmith Prize for Investigative Reporting.

¹ Hacker and Oklahoma State University journalism professor Stan Ketterer are working on a book about using advanced statistics in reporting.

² This year, the Meyer Award was given to The Dallas Morning News for "Faking the Grade." This series, by reporters Joshua Benton, a 2008 Nieman Fellow, and Holly Hacker, uncovered strong evidence of cheating on standardized tests by more than 50,000 students in Texas public and charter schools. [See Nieman Notes, page 107.]

Reporting Is Only Part of the Investigative Story

‘In “Billions Over Baghdad,” we knew that simply reporting the costs of the Iraq War in mind-numbing billions wasn’t good enough.’

BY DONALD L. BARLETT AND JAMES B. STEELE

Hardly a week goes by without someone lamenting the death of investigative reporting. It’s a familiar litany: The media are cutting back; crucial stories aren’t being covered; democracy will suffer.

All of this is true, but consider this: With a few notable exceptions, even in the best of times investigative reporting was little more than window-dressing in the American press. To be sure, notable examples of reporters and their publications ferreting out wrongdoing and exposing public corruption run through the past century. But the stories, like Paul Y. Anderson’s Teapot Dome dispatches for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* in the 1920’s, were the exception to the rule.

What’s more, investigative articles often were published only when indefatigable reporters spent nights and weekends pursuing leads after covering their regular beats. A favorite line of editors was, “Why don’t you spend a little of your time and see what you come up with?”

More often than not, editors embraced investigative stories with all the enthusiasm of a drunken sailor at a prayer meeting. When Seymour Hersh documented the My Lai massacre, a Vietnam atrocity in which U.S. soldiers slaughtered more than 300 infants, children and unarmed women and elderly men, he did so without the support of any newspaper. That more than a year went by between the March 1968 massacre and Hersh’s November 1969 disclosure spoke volumes about the news media’s attitude toward investigative reporting. As Hersh noted at the time, “A source of amazement among all those interviewed was that the story had yet to reach the press.”

A little-known example of the hos-

tility that some reporters have had to endure from editors who were less than thrilled by their investigative efforts is the tale of Alvin S. McCoy. In 1953, as Kansas correspondent for

WATCHDOG GALLERY



A magnifying glass used by I.F. Stone (1907-1989). *Photo from the Newseum collection/Courtesy Newseum.*

The *Kansas City Star*, McCoy began writing about the questionable business dealings of the chairman of the Republican National Committee, C. Wesley Roberts. The articles did not please the *Star*’s powerful editor, Roy Roberts, who was a pillar of the Republican Party. (They were not related.) Nevertheless, McCoy kept plugging away, and eventually Wesley Roberts was forced to resign.

It was a remarkable journalistic coup, but McCoy’s great reporting might never have been given its due had it not been for someone who had no connection to *The Star*: Joseph Pulitzer, Jr., editor of the *St. Louis-Post-Dispatch*. He nominated McCoy for a Pulitzer, effectively forcing *The Star* to submit the articles to the Pulitzer board. In 1954, McCoy was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for local reporting. The *Star* dutifully reported the news in a

four-paragraph story headed, “Award for Alvin McCoy.”

It’s good to remember that before the 1970’s the number of newspapers with even one person assigned specifically to investigative reporting as a full-time beat (as was the case at most papers for coverage of the movies or city council) could be counted on the fingers of one hand. During the 1960’s, the tide had begun to shift. In 1965, *The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer* became one of the first newspapers to carve out a beat devoted exclusively to investigative reporting. So, too, *The Miami Herald and Newsday*. *The Philadelphia Inquirer* established formal investigative beats in the 1970’s, as did *The Boston Globe*. Many medium-sized and smaller newspapers followed suit.

Even during these so-called “golden years” of investigative reporting, many subjects remained off limits in some newspapers. While reporting about labor corruption always found a receptive home, corporate malfeasance went largely untouched. Also, an unwritten rule with some editors was that investigative stories had to document illegal acts. This rule existed even though the practices most in need of exposure—ones with the largest impact on ordinary citizens—are usually legal, such as when health insurance companies deny medical treatment, campaign contributions inspire favors, and tax policies get rigged for the benefit of special interests. And investigations that touched on the unsavory practices of advertisers were always off limits, except at publications where the commitment to independent reporting ran deep.

Through the years, we have been fortunate to work for editors who were dedicated to pursuing stories wherever

they led and who never wavered in that commitment. Yet in newspapers' current state of uncertainty—with shrinking newsroom staffs and declining, but still comparatively substantial, profits—owners and editors find the perfect excuse for abandoning investigative reporting. Instead they concentrate on the “he said-she said” school of journalism, requiring much less investment in staff and time but rendering a huge disservice to readers by often concealing the truth.

All is not bleak. The Internet and emerging technologies have democratized the process of newsgathering in general and investigative reporting in particular. For the first time, reporters at small newspapers have access to the same tools as those at larger ones. And while unimaginative editors and those too insecure to support aggressive reporting might turn a blind eye, there are more options than ever for getting information to the public. Without minimizing the chilling effect the Bush administration has had on the flow of public information, reporters—and the public—have access to government documents and business records on a scale unlike anything we could have imagined just a few years ago. And the possibilities are breathtaking.

For example, we now take for granted the availability of documents of public companies filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission. Yet not so long ago it was difficult, time-consuming, and often prohibitively expensive to obtain those records unless you were based in Washington, D.C., or near a depository of such documents. Today they are always available free of charge to anyone who has an Internet connection.

With every story we do these days, we are reminded of the Web's limitless possibilities. In our recent article in *Vanity Fair*, “Billions Over Baghdad,” we told how billions of dollars in U.S. currency intended for the Iraqi people simply vanished in the months after the U.S. invasion of Iraq.¹ A pivotal

part of the story focused on an obscure company in San Diego that the Pentagon hired, ostensibly to keep track of the money. The company's mailing address was a post office box in the Bahamas. Thanks to the Internet and a search engine, in just minutes we turned up an astonishing fact: The same mailbox also had been the locus of a Caribbean stock swindle involving hundreds of millions of dollars in fraudulent transactions. The box number was listed in a Florida court document that had been posted on the Web.

Only a few years ago, we would never have been able to make that connection.

Putting Reporting in Perspective

Just getting the information, of course, is not enough and never has been. All too often our readers and viewers are left to connect the dots or a potentially riveting story is related in a boring or dense way that turns off potential readers. A great, ongoing challenge is to translate the details of our reporting into ideas and language and visual images and constructions that will attract and sustain the interest of readers and viewers.

In 1988, we wrote a 50,000-word series for *The Philadelphia Inquirer* called “The Great Tax Giveaway.” The articles told how Congress had inserted tax breaks into legislation for some lucky individuals and corporations. Lawmakers didn't identify the beneficiaries by name, but singled them out in the legislation by the date of a business deal, the state where their company was incorporated, or by some other very specific piece of information, like this: “For purposes of section 2656(b)(8) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, an individual who receives an interest in a charitable remainder unitrust shall be deemed to be the only noncharitable beneficiary of such trust if the interest in the trust passed to the individual under the will

of a decedent who resided in Tarrant County, Texas, and died on October 28, 1983, at the age of 75, with a gross estate not exceeding \$12.5 million, and the individual is the decedent's surviving spouse.”

That provision applied to a lucky Texas widow. In all, we identified scores of beneficiaries. But to explain to readers the outrageous nature of what Congress had done, the story needed a lead that would link our findings on this complex issue with an example that everyone could relate to. Our editor, Steve Lovelady, conceived this lead:

Imagine, if you will, that you are a tall, bald father of three living in a Northeast Philadelphia row house and selling aluminum siding door-to-door for a living.

Imagine that you go to your congressman and ask him to insert a provision in the federal tax code that exempts tall, bald fathers of three living in Northeast Philadelphia and selling aluminum siding for a living from paying taxes on income from door-to-door sales.

Imagine further that your congressman cooperates, writes that exemption ... and Congress then actually passes it into law.

Lots of luck.

The more than 80 million low- and middle-income individuals and families who pay federal taxes just don't get that kind of personal break ...

But some people do.

Investigative journalism succeeds only when the work brings this kind of personal perspective to an issue of public significance. It's not enough to drop a big number into a story—as difficult as it might have been to find that number—and expect people to be wowed or even grateful. A lot of our effort involves coming up with a perspective that will succeed in connecting our findings with the experiences and/or feelings of those we hope will read about them.

¹ www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2007/10/iraq_billions200710

In “Billions Over Baghdad,” we knew that simply reporting the costs of the Iraq War in mind-numbing billions wasn’t good enough. The figure—and the related malfeasance it represents—is so large that merely stating what we had learned would hold little meaning for most potential readers. To provide the necessary context—and a pretext for readers to take a chance on hearing more of what we had to say—we came up with words that paint a stark comparison to the reconstruction realities of an earlier war:

To date, America has spent twice as much in inflation-adjusted dollars to rebuild Iraq as it did to rebuild Japan—an industrialized country three times Iraq’s size, two of whose cities had been incinerated by atomic bombs.

Our highest responsibility is to make information meaningful. In this regard we would each do well to carry with us at all times a quote that is often cited by Lovelady, our longtime editor at the Inquirer and Time magazine. He credits this wisdom to the leg-

endary editor, Barney Kilgore, who transformed The Wall Street Journal: “The reader is always looking for an excuse to stop reading—at the end of every sentence and at the end of every paragraph.

“Don’t give it to him.” ■

Donald L. Barlett and James B. Steele, the longest-running investigative team in American journalism and twice winners of the Pulitzer Prize and the National Magazine Award, are contributing editors for Vanity Fair.

When Video Is King

For local TV news, a difficulty will come in figuring out how to make watchdog reporting stand out in a digital world.

BY STUART WATSON

Appointment TV is dead; video is more vibrant than ever. Over-the-air broadcasting is shrinking; journalism is not. What does all of this add up to for a struggling local TV investigative reporter, whose work is sporadic already? What comes to mind are the words “make it relevant.” Better figure out how to tell great stories and how to sell them hard, inside and outside the newsroom. Otherwise, what is a struggling breed will be headed toward extinction.

Traditional (analog) broadcasting in the United States has less than one year to live. On February 18, 2009 broadcasters will move their signals from the analog spectrum—the channels we’ve traveled through during our lifetimes—to the digital spectrum. It’s not like your favorite department store moving from downtown to the suburban shopping mall. It’s worse. Instead it’s like all the department stores moving away at the same time.

I can hear us now: “Please join us in our new location. Pleeeeease, for the love of God, join us in our new location,” because like these stores that are competing with online entities like Amazon and discount places like Wal-Mart and Costco as they’re also relocating, local TV news will be competing with online sites like washingtonpost.com (and its local equivalent) and with YouTube and Tivo in the midst of changing its location.

At a November 2007 conference called “Future of Television,”¹ one executive put this scenario in stark terms as he looked ahead to early 2009. By then, the presidential election cycle and the Olympics—two big TV events and potentially fat revenue producers for local TV—will be behind us and, with the economy looking a bit iffy, this economic circumstance plus the channel change means local broadcasters will likely confront a 25 percent hit off their bottom line.

All of those situations add up to this: It will be tough for local TV news folks to find the resources or the incentive to serve up meaty investigative pieces and expect viewers to follow to the new digital channels. More likely, when the analog signal goes to snow, the “clicking” sound will be heard not on the remote control but as viewers turn on their laptops, flip on their cell phones, plug in their iPods, or scroll to a video game on their BlackBerries.

Each device plays video, which after all is the broadcaster’s medium, in a different way. For decades, this has been our means—almost an exclusive means—of telling true stories, and sometimes we’ve done it very well. But to thrive as investigative reporters in the digital era, we’ll have to produce great video journalism as we stretch ourselves in two directions at once. We’ll have to stay rooted in basic journalistic values, something

¹ <http://www.televisionconference.com/index.shtml>

our audience deserves and expects, while simultaneously racing forward to find ways to make the best use of video on each emerging platform. It won't work to transcribe scripts for an online print version of our report. Similarly, the video package that was crystal clear on a hi-definition flat panel TV won't translate well to a postage-stamp sized screen.

No investigation can work without conceptualizing it, reporting it, and producing it using a multiplatform approach. That means thinking about interactive mapping, timelines in Flash, putting data sets online in a searchable format, and asking ourselves what works best in print. In my job as an investigative reporter at local TV stations in North Carolina, I've worked for more than a decade with print colleagues as partners on a wide variety of projects. In the 1990's, I shared data on medical malpractice in the U.S. military with Russell Carollo and Jeff Nesmith of the *Dayton Daily News*. Their reporting on this story was awarded the 1998 Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting. And the investigative story we produced at WRAL-TV in Raleigh—disclosing mismanagement in the military health care system—won the Peabody and duPont Columbia awards.

Since then I've worked closely at WCNC-TV in Charlotte, North Carolina with our news partners at *The Charlotte Observer*. Our relationship has evolved so that when editors and reporters there conceived a year-long project on immigration, I was invited to sit at the table with the photojournalist, graphic artist, online editor, investigative reporter, business reporter, immigration reporters and their editors as they discussed their approach to doing this investigation. The result was a multimedia package that made the best use of each medium for various elements of the storytelling. Now, at WCNC, we never think of launching a substantive investigation without brainstorming with all of the various media that might best tell and sell the story to the widest possible audience. These days television net-

works launch projects simultaneously with broadcast, DVD, downloadable video, graphic novels, online games, and music. Local news broadcasters would be wise to expand their vision way beyond their most commonly heard, and outmoded, refrain—"film at 11." After all, we don't shoot film anymore, and an ever-smaller fraction of news airs at 11.

To maintain our audience, however, I'd argue that sticking to our core principles—our essential mission as journalists—means giving them solid investigative reporting. When an issue touches their lives, viewers love this kind of reporting, because it stands out from the clutter. (Viewers can sniff out a fake at a country mile.) And when it's done smartly, it can be what differentiates a local station from all the rest. These days, the market for stupid TV is pretty crowded, and I know there exists a rich, deep, broad audience in the smart and independent-minded demographic. Like disaffected voters, many have tuned us out. It's our job to figure out how to get them back by being an independent watchdog of those in our local communities who hold positions of civic and economic power.

Fitting In

In Charlotte, the city council operates its own cable channel. It's not a cable access channel, but a regular channel dedicated to programming by and about what's happening in local government. The public schools also pay to program another cable channel. The community college has its own channel, and the county funds yet another over-the-air TV station. The local police department produces several cable TV shows.

It's conceivable that viewers could feel that they are getting all the "news" they think they need about local government and civic affairs from those who pay for these stations. Yet the programming done by these entities is, by definition, self-serving. It is pretty much certain that no investigative reporting will emerge, since government

will not investigate itself (or if it does, it's unlikely to trumpet its findings). Nor will it even report voluntarily how much all this TV exposure costs the taxpayers. Viewers won't find out here about a school administrator running a private consulting firm on taxpayer time, nor about independent information concerning a police shooting.

It's irresponsible of us to cede authority over such information to members of the city council, administrators at the school department, or police department officials. Do citizens really want their elected officials to just send them a notice when the taxes are going up, or when the schools want a bond referendum passed, or when the cops need help in tracking down a suspect?

Even if we concede that most of what is broadcast, including TV "news," doesn't qualify as high-quality journalism, and that most high-quality journalism is not broadcast, we recognize that video literacy has become critical to reaching any news audience today, at least as part of a balanced media diet. (A media diet with no video is as imbalanced as a media diet with only TV.) As broadcasters, we appreciate the tremendous power of the moving image. We see how shifty eyes and tearful ones, trembling faces and arched eyebrows (and Richard Nixon's sweaty upper lip) convey to voters something important about those who seek powerful positions in our democratic republic. When we hear the tremor in the voice or catch the speaker's inflection, we trust that these sounds add dimensions that the written word can't fully convey.

To survive and thrive, journalists will have to preserve what we do best, which is to connect the nerve endings to the reflective center and feed it back as a compelling story to the body politic. It also means we're going to have to join the audience in their new locations. ■

Stuart Watson, a 2008 Nieman Fellow, is an investigative reporter at WCNC-TV in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Are Reporters Doomed?

Citizen journalism is here to stay. But in the rush to embrace new media we risk destroying the soul of traditional reporting.

David Leigh, an assistant editor of The Guardian with a special responsibility for investigative reporting, delivered the Anthony Sampson Chair Inaugural Lecture at City University in London on November 1, 2007. He adapted an article for The Guardian based on his lecture, and that article, published on November 12, 2007, is reprinted here. His investigative reporting has earned him seven distinguished awards, including the 2007 Paul Foot Award for Campaigning Journalism (shared with his colleague, Rob Evans) and Granada's Investigative Journalist of the Year, as well as an award from the United Kingdom Campaign for Freedom of Information.

I was dismayed to read Roy Greenslade's recent blog about the rise of citizen journalists. "Journalistic skills are not entirely wiped out in an online world, but they are eroded and, most importantly, they cannot be confined any longer to an exclusive elite group," he wrote.

As a result, media companies of the future will require fewer staff, and their job will be to process materials from freelancers, bloggers and citizen journalists. Greenslade continued—and this is the scary part: "It is also clear that media outlets will never generate the kind of income enjoyed by printed newspapers: Circulation revenue will vanish and advertising revenue will be much smaller than today. There just won't be the money to afford a large staff."

I am afraid he is right, that the journalistic future will be a future with less money around. That won't be good. Too much competition leads to a race to the bottom. And you can't report if you can't afford to eat.

Yet the old media are clearly on the way out. So are we reaching the end of the era of conventional reporting? Certainly, we must soon imagine a world without—at least—weekday printed papers. I believe we are going to see a new model of newspaper production in all the British nationals within the year. But my fear is that everyone is too obsessed with new platforms, and not enough people are talking about values.

The Internet is an incredibly rich information resource and a great tool for worldwide sharing. But as well as overloading us with instantaneous horrors, it also degrades valuable principles—the idea of discrimination, that some voices are more credible than others, that a named source is better than an anonymous pamphleteer (that's what they used to call bloggers in the 18th century, when they published, for example, the politically dangerous Letters of Junius). The notion of authoritativeness is derided as a sort of "top-down" fascism.

I fear that these developments will endanger the role of the reporter. Of course, there will always be a need for news bunnies who can dash in front of a camera and breathlessly describe a lorry crash, or bash out a press release in 10 minutes. There will probably be a lot more news bunnies in the future. There will probably also be hyperlocal sites—postcode¹ journalism fuelled cheaply by neighborhood bloggers. But not proper reporters.

I have just returned from the University of California, Berkeley, where I spoke to Lowell Bergman, a professor at the journalism school who is an investigative reporter with The New York Times and producer/correspondent for the PBS documentary series

"Frontline." I found him in a glum frame of mind. Reporting staffs are being cut all over the United States, he said. Virtually no investigative journalism goes on any more. Millionaire donors are being courted to fund online reporting operations that will do the kind of things that The Wall Street Journal, newly taken over by Rupert Murdoch, is likely to abandon.

You might have heard a few of the old warhorses on Radio 4's "Start the Week" last month. Andrew Marr asked if all news organizations were cutting back. "Yes, indeed," said the BBC's veteran international correspondent John Simpson. "Reporters are under real threat. More than ever before. They [media owners] say, 'You're not needed—we just want people's opinions about what's happened, not the facts.' I'm becoming an endangered species, and people are less and less interested in the wider world." Max Hastings, ex-editor of the Daily Telegraph and the London Evening Standard, said: "It's even more true in newspapers. All sorts of areas of the world are now thought to be too boring to keep a correspondent there. The commentariat has taken over."

There are several reasons for this. The mass media can shine a light. Or they can reflect back light. The Daily Mail and Fox News, for example, are highly profitable businesses that make their money out of telling people what they think they know already. They reflect back their audience's existing beliefs. They reassure them by hammering the world into a shape that suits their prejudices. This is less an information service than a form of cheap massage.

Too much interactivity, commentating and blogging can end up inad-

¹ A postcode in the United Kingdom would be the equivalent of a zip code in the United States.

vertently doing the same thing. It is cheaper and excitingly faster, but it is not always a source of light. People shout past each other. They enjoy the sound of their own voices and confirm their own prejudices through the delicious experience of self-publishing. Paradoxically, more becomes less.

I'm in favor of the future, of course. We all have to be. It is coming to get us, whether we like it or not. We have to come to terms with what is going on. More than come to terms—we have to embrace it. But we should spend less time fretting about platforms and more about the loss of honesty in our trade. There is yet to be a proper accounting for the disgraceful loss of journalistic integrity on both sides of the Atlantic that cheerled us into the Iraq War on a false prospectus.

You can get junk food on every high street. And you can get junk journalism almost as easily. But just as there is now a Slow Food movement, I should also like to see more Slow Journalism. Slow Journalism would show greater respect for the reporter as a patient

assembler of facts; a skilled craftsman who is independent and professionally reputable; a disentangler of lies and weasel words. And who is paid the rate for the job. Aren't such people essential for probing the dodgy mechanisms of our imperfect democracy and our very imperfect world?

But the power of reporting does not lie entirely—or even mostly—in the nobility of its practitioners or their professional skills. Or their celebrity status. It also lies in the preservation of media outlets that are themselves powerful.

When I reflect on the investigations I have been involved in, I realize that the reporter does have influence. We [at The Guardian] have written about the scandal of tax-dodgers with private jets pretending to live in Monaco but still working four days a week in a London office. The government now says it will close that loophole. We wrote some rather savage articles about plans to restrict use of the Freedom of Information Act. They dropped the plans. And [my colleague] Rob Evans

and I have written scores of articles detailing the corrupting influence of the defense ministry's arms sales department. The government now says it will shut the department.

There is only one reason why these stories have an effect. I like to think, of course, it is down to our own personal brilliance. But it is not. It is because a story on the front page of The Guardian carries clout. So do reports on the BBC, for example—that's why Andrew Gilligan's stories about alleged sexed-up dossiers caused such panic and rage in Downing Street.

That is perhaps one of the biggest dangers of the media revolution. When the media fragment—as they will—and splinter into a thousand Web sites, a thousand digital channels, all weak financially, then we will see a severe reduction in the power of each individual media outlet. The reporter will struggle to be heard over the cacophony of a thousand other voices.

Politicians will no longer fear us. And if that day comes, I'm afraid it really will be the end of the reporter. ■

NEWSROOM INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING

Changing Equations in Investigative Reporting

An editor proposes that journalists seek new partners in their mission of monitoring those in power.

BY JOHN ROBINSON

Ferrel Guillory, director of the Program on Public Life at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, told a group of public administrators that North Carolina's major newspapers—including Greenboro's News & Record where I am editor—bore indirect responsibility for a scandal taking place at the State Department of Transportation.

When newspapers stop assigning reporters to keep an eye on such a large and important state agency,

he said, corruption and bureaucratic ineptitude flourishes. The public's business is replaced by monkey business. It's a truth that journalists covering government have long known.

Guillory isn't the typical academic shooting at the news media. He's a former newspaperman and a long-time newspaper lover. But he falls into the trap so many former and current journalists do: thinking that the newspaper operation is the same now as it was back in their day. Oh,

how we wish it were.

In response to Guillory, I wrote the following words on my editor's blog:

Welcome to the world of hard choices. It's always been this way. We don't cover everything. We don't even cover what we used to. Newspaper staffs are getting smaller, yet the number of meetings and events, of commissions and government agencies grows. Partly as a result, newspapers are also moving away from devoting as much energy to

WATCHDOG GALLERY



In 1969, Seymour Hersh's reporting about the killing of civilians in My Lai, South Vietnam, led to the 1971 conviction of platoon leader Lt. William Calley (in front). *Photo by Joe Holloway, Jr./Courtesy of The Associated Press.*

covering 'buildings.' Not only are there fewer reporters, but there is evidence that readers aren't as interested in what traditionally is produced by that coverage: stories about meetings and bureaucracy. For every big scandal story, there are 100 smaller process stories required to get there.¹

What's happening at newspapers has been well documented—with endless reams of copy about downsizing, layoffs and takeovers. Editors are—or should be—sparring with the bean counters who want to “do more with less,” which is either a misunderstanding of what it takes to produce journalism or an insult to hard-working journalists everywhere. Meanwhile, newspaper readership sinks, advertis-

ing revenues decline, and editors search for relevant content to draw in new audiences.

What often gets kicked to the curb is what takes the longest to produce: investigative reporting. I know. My paper has gone through downsizing, layoffs and tight budget controls, and is now being shopped around. We strive to cover the traditional beats, plus develop unique enterprise reporting, all at the same time we are learning how to extend our journalism with video and audio, plus become hyperlocal.

At such a time, the question isn't how we can do more investigative reporting; it's more like how can we do any investigative reporting.

I believe many agree we're now at a defining moment in newspaper

history. The era in which we, as professional journalists, impose our judgment as the determining factor of what is considered newsworthy—or even how to cover what is happening—is fast fading. The days of newspaper omnipotence and omnipresence are over.

When it comes to investigative journalism, however, the professional journalist still sits in the catbird seat. But in the not-so-distant future, that seat seems all but certain to get a bit more crowded—with citizen journalists and bloggers and others.

Sometimes it can be hard to think about this in traditional terms. Shining light in dark places is a birthright of those of us who were part of the tidal wave of reporters who rushed into journalism after Watergate. Now

that tide is ebbing, at least for many of us who work at small and midsized papers, even as we cling to our fundamental belief that a core purpose of the job we do is to serve as an independent monitor of power. “As history showed us, it more properly means watching over the powerful few in society on behalf of the many to guard against tyranny,” wrote Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel in “The Elements of Journalism.”

Nurtured in journalism with this sense of purpose, I believe newspapers must devote the necessary resources to investigate corruption and wrongdoing within its community. The tried-and-true method of putting reporters' feet on the street—talking to lots of people, tracking leads, unearthing and searching through records—still works at holding people in power accountable. But it's not the only way. The times we work in and technology we have demand new thinking about how investigative reporting can happen. Even if we, as an industry, have not shown ourselves to be especially innovative or entrepreneurial when times were good, perhaps the threat to one of our core competencies will serve as a powerful incentive in these troubled times.

Dan Gillmor, director of the Knight Center for Digital Media Entrepreneurship at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University, often says, “My readers know more than I do.” Back in the late 1960's, as a teenager, I learned this lesson well as I sat near my father as he read a story about someone arrested for building a bomb. My dad sold explosives for DuPont, and he knew immediately that the reporter had gotten some information wrong. I'll never forget the tenor of his voice as he exclaimed, “Why wouldn't they call someone who knows what they're talking about before they print garbage like this?”

With new assignments arising all

¹ To read more of what Robinson wrote in his blog reply to Guillory, go to <http://blog.news-record.com/staff/jrblog/2007/11/> and scroll down to his November 5th entry, entitled “The future of journalism.”

the time—and deadline pressures constant—there are natural limitations on how much expertise, inside information, and insight a reporter can bring to each story. But there is an excellent chance that there are people who live in our community—and those who live thousands of miles away—who might be able to help us exceed those limitations. It's our job, as an industry, to figure out how to bring these "experts" into the work we do in gathering information to monitor those in power.

Let me raise some new strategies being tried.

Beat blogging: It is an idea conceived by Jay Rosen, a New York University associate professor and author of the influential media blog PressThink. He envisions a social network of experts who are connected to the reporter and to each other. "Maybe a beat reporter could do a way better job if there was a 'live' social network connected to the beat, made up of people who know the territory the beat covers and want the reporting on that beat to be better," he wrote at the time the idea was launched in late 2007. In all, 13 news organizations, including The Dallas Morning News, ESPN, the Houston Chronicle, and The Chronicle of Higher Education are participating in a variety of ways.² Young people, most of whom are not newspaper readers, use Facebook, MySpace and LinkedIn to spread news and stories. Perhaps there are ways to use these social networks to develop in-depth and insightful investigative journalism.

Citizen journalism: Possibilities exist for pairing an amateur with an interest in a topic with a professional journalist. [See story by Betty Wells on page 65 for a description of this strategy at The News-Press in Fort Myers, Florida.] Often, the amateur arrives with technological know-how that the journalist doesn't have, which can put them on a coequal footing when

it comes to meshing their talents to address the task at hand. Collaborations of this sort between citizens and newsrooms are developing but are in their infancy with more work to be done on making them true partnerships. Strengthening this partnership is both logical and vital, for citizens can bring us knowledge and interest and insight and perhaps some skills we can benefit from having. Combined with the tools of the trade we possess, some deeply textured and incisive journalism might emerge.

Hyperlocal journalism: An extension of the citizen journalist idea is well represented by the concept of EveryBlock.com, a project still being developed by Adrian Holovaty, creator of *chicagocrime.org* and recipient of a \$1.1 million grant from the Knight Foundation. As a hyperlocal news site, EveryBlock.com will aggregate public information and databases about neighborhoods and publish stories written by local residents. Ideas, information and sources will surface here. This is the kind of place where newspaper editors can discover what people want to know more about, whether it is the U.S. presidential election or the race for presidency of the neighborhood association.

Bloggers: With an early reputation as independent gunslingers, the most well-traveled blogging sites have evolved into consortiums of journalism and opinion, such as Josh Marshall's Talking Points Memo (and his TPM Muckraker) and The Huffington Post. Bloggers' tenacity is well-documented, and with so many government records online, it is becoming a lot easier to find good stories. It's easier for newspaper reporters and for bloggers, too. Partnering in some fashion can make sense.

Crowdsourcing: This method of reporting essentially outsources some of the work to the audience, who

add information to the mix. Gannett papers have adopted crowdsourcing as a way of gathering news. The News-Press in Fort Myers, Florida, asked readers for help in examining the high cost of being connected to water and sewer lines. According to a 2006 article in *Wired*, response was quick and powerful: "Readers spontaneously organized their own investigations: retired engineers analyzed blueprints, accountants pored over balance sheets, and an inside whistleblower leaked documents showing evidence of bid-rigging."

Partner with the local television or radio station: Though reporting styles can differ, those who work at these media have something of value to teach print journalists about the use of audio and video in visual storytelling. [See Stuart Watson's story on page 52.]

These suggestions don't begin to touch on all of the possible reporting pathways to be pursued. They do open a window on different methods of watchdog journalism. They won't necessarily save money, especially when newspapers get over the hurdle—as they inevitably will—that people will do high-quality work for free. Newspapers, with their digital presence, will survive by finding ways to report deeply on their communities—and in doing so produce a local news product that can't be matched anywhere else. Key to that survival is the willingness to dig deeply into how government works and where injustice is occurring.

In full disclosure: the *News & Record* does not do enough investigative reporting. We must do more, and writing this article has prodded me to push us more aggressively in that direction. ■

John Robinson is the editor of the News & Record in Greensboro, North Carolina.

² More details about how these news organizations are participating are available at BeatBlogging.org.

Instilling a Watchdog Culture in the Newsroom

‘Watchdog work is not just about projects; it’s about an approach to beat coverage that should be reflected in daily and longer-form work.’

BY LORIE HEARN

It was 2005, and San Diego, once a model of good fiscal management, was flirting with bankruptcy, and “America’s Finest City” had been saddled with a new moniker, “Enron-by-the-Sea.” At The San Diego Union-Tribune, the region’s major metro, we’d been writing day-to-day about the fissures in the financial foundation and attempting to trace the origins, largely due to enormous pension obligations. At the same time reporters in our newsroom were mobilizing to dig deep into the city’s financial mess, our Washington bureau was exposing a personal real estate deal that Republican Congressman Randy “Duke” Cunningham made with a government defense contractor.

The region and the newspaper would never be the same.

During the next year, we made our watchdog reporting of city hall the priority in our newsroom. Computer-assisted reporting (CAR) provided a bedrock, as we produced nearly two dozen takeouts worthy of the “Watchdog Report” label we put on them. They were true enterprise, high-impact reports deserving of top play on the front page. And they created a buzz in the region that elected officials could not ignore.

Simultaneously, our reporting—combined with the investigative work of Marcus Stern and Jerry Kammer at the Copley News Service bureau in Washington—on Cunningham gave federal prosecutors the grist for a case that drove him out of office and eventually to prison, where he is serving an eight-year, four-month sentence.

Experts called it one of the worst cases of corruption involving a member of Congress. And the Union-Tribune (along with the Copley News Service correspondents) earned its first-ever Pulitzer Prize for it. [See article by Stern and Kammer on page 15.]

Most importantly, both of these watchdog efforts—involving question-

round of buyouts. The Copley Press Inc. sold the smaller newspapers in the chain, leaving the Union-Tribune—long its flagship—as its main holding. By late fall 2007, the owners had offered more buyouts, including some taken by our Washington staff, and closed the Los Angeles and Mexico City bureaus. At year’s end, we had suffered

a substantial number of layoffs, something this family-owned company has only done a handful of times in its 100-plus-year history. Our newsroom is now 25 percent smaller than it was in those heady days of 2005; the newsroom staff now numbers just shy of 300.

Putting out a daily newspaper, meeting the increasing demands of the Web, and plugging the holes left by departing staffers pushed much of our watchdog work to the sidelines.

able actions and decisions by public officials from San Diego—drew inspiring praise from our readers.

While it’s tough to prove that good journalism translates into increased circulation, we know it retains civic-minded readers who don’t want to be told what to think but don’t mind being told what to think about. Doing this cements our bond with what is called in the industry our “core audience,” which many of us believe is the key to the survival of high-quality journalism. Notice that I didn’t say newspapers’ survival. As much of a newspaper junkie as I am—I grew up in a two or three-newspaper-a-day household—I’ve given up on being choosy about the delivery system. Delivering quality journalism is the point.

The Newsroom Shrinks

Fast-forward to 2007. The Union-Tribune newsroom underwent a painful

Putting out a daily newspaper, meeting the increasing demands of the Web, and plugging the holes left by departing staffers pushed much of our watchdog work to the sidelines. The commitment continued, though, particularly in our five local bureaus, including our office in Tijuana. There, we led national coverage of battling drug cartels and their cross-border tunnels, as well as the escalating violence in that region, which is popular with international tourists.

In spite of the cutbacks in the newsroom, Editor Karin Winner is determined not to allow the quality of the paper to diminish. She established a blueprint for the future with six initiatives that will set the agenda going forward: Watchdog reporting is at the top of her list. With an overwhelming amount of information now available wherever and whenever someone wants it, Winner argues that our newspaper has to concentrate on providing unique

content and capitalize on our expertise and credibility. This means reinforcing our watchdog role and insisting it permeate everything we do, even if, as she acknowledges, there are obvious risks in holding powerful people accountable, especially if they turn out to be important advertisers. But she says our readers expect nothing less from us, and we intend to see to it that we meet their needs.

A Watchdog Committee was formed, which I chaired along with our news editor. We embraced Winner's direction and set out to create a plan that would make watchdog journalism a cornerstone of Union-Tribune coverage. Much of what we recommended—and intend to carry out—is not new, but it represents for us, in these changing times, a reinvigorated zeal to continue the high caliber of investigative work we provided our readers in 2005. What follows are some of our committee's key recommendations:

Establish watchdog reporting as a newsroomwide goal. Make this a goal for everyone from editors to reporters, copyeditors to graphic artists and photographers. Include this among expectations in performance evaluations. Watchdog work is not just about projects; it's about an approach to beat coverage that should be reflected in daily and longer-form work.

Create a new oversight position in the newsroom. It's not fair to make such a demand without providing avenues to succeed. To help meet the goals, a new position, Watchdog Editor, has been established. That editor has Winner's imprimatur to negotiate staff resources throughout the newsroom to see that watchdog work is not just a good intention but also a lived reality.

Designate a core watchdog team. Such a team has been established. It's small but versatile and influential. It includes two full-time reporters with CAR skills, two database experts, and a Web developer. It is working

on refining a newsroom Intranet so databases we have collected, such as check rosters and contracts from local cities, voter registrations and campaign donations, are easy to search, even for fast-moving daily reporting. The team also is working on providing more of our data on the Internet for the public to scrutinize and use. For example, the team worked with multimedia-savvy graphic artists during the wildfires of October 2007 to create interactive maps that tracked the progress of the flames and the homes destroyed.

Encourage beat reporters to suggest investigative stories. Beat reporters from across the room, including metro, business, sports and special sections, pitch short-term and project-level ideas to the watchdog and other editors. We are planning investigations on subjects ranging from the military and the environment to sports and food. As their topics are chosen for investigation, they are rotated on to the team and joined by one or more CAR specialists for the duration of their project.

Examine how beats receive continuous coverage. One general assignment reporter from metro has been designated to beat-hop, filling in for reporters who rotate onto the watchdog team. Other reporting gaps will be filled in the traditional way—doubling up reporters on beats.

Training watchdogs. Training is an essential component of this effort. Because money is scarce and research staff has been cut, reporters with special CAR or other investigative skills will be the trainers. We plan a variety of sessions, including brown bag lunches about the nuts and bolts of election coverage and public access issues, as well as hands-on training to explain how to work with databases and conduct advanced Internet searches. We encourage attendance at important conferences and cover some expenses (including paid time

off) for educational experiences such as the National Institute for Computer Assisted Reporting and the annual conference of Investigative Reporters and Editors.

Engage with readers. We have plans for community outreach and promotion about our renewed watchdog efforts. Reporters and editors get out in the community and speak with business and community groups about watchdog journalism, explaining why our newspaper does it and how. We also do in-paper and online promotions of the work.

Let readers know when watchdog reporting appears. Finally, although it may seem obvious, we label our watchdog work for readers, who have told us they appreciate having those stories highlighted in print and on the Web. We are working on a destination page on our Web site,¹ so we can provide easy access to our current and archived watchdog journalism.

In 2008, San Diego's financial woes are far from over. Ballooning pension obligations continue, and with financial reports still outstanding the city can't go to the bond market. The Union-Tribune will reexamine the city's money mess, particularly in this year when the mayor is facing reelection and four council members must be replaced because they have served their full terms. Our real measure of success, however, will be how well we instill the watchdog culture across the newsroom and how that translates into results. ■

Lorie Hearn, a 1995 Nieman Fellow, was metro editor of The San Diego Union-Tribune for nine years until February, when she was named senior editor for watchdog journalism.

¹ www.signonsandiego.com

Redefining a Newspaper's Watchdog Approach

At The Oregonian, a new training program for reporters focuses on investigative skills needed by specific reporters for their daily beats.

BY LES ZAITZ AND BRENT WALTH

On a soggy December morning, a hillside above a busy Oregon highway gave way, and a torrent of mud, rock and trees buried the road, destroyed homes, and smashed cars. Our newspaper, The Oregonian, dutifully reported on the landslide and its immediate effects. One reporter then went further.

Michael Milstein, who covers natural resources, soon told readers that a state forestry college had clear-cut trees above the site. Engineers surmised the clear-cut set the stage for the slide.

Milstein showed readers that the newspaper was willing to probe beyond the headline of the moment and shine a light on those in authority who were accountable.

That's watchdog reporting.

This kind of journalism remains a fundamental duty of a free press. In today's unsettled news environment, watchdog reporting also is necessary for our survival. It sets professional journalists apart from bloggers and cell phone videographers, providing added value that readers and viewers simply can't get anywhere else. Readers and viewers respond to watchdog stories, and we believe the stories build loyalty by helping keep journalism viable and relevant.

But reporters and editors face a growing challenge to their ability to produce watchdog reporting. It's a matter of math. Fewer reporters keeping an eye on public and private institutions means diminished chances for discoveries such as Milstein's.

At The Oregonian, we want to improve those chances. The newspaper's editors targeted watchdog reporting as one emphasis to help sustain Oregon's largest daily newspaper, both in print and online. The newspaper has a

reputation for aggressive reporting. Yet many of us within the newspaper believed we weren't doing enough watchdog work. It wasn't for a lack of trying. As veteran investigative reporters, we had conducted a lot of in-house seminars over the years to teach fundamentals of watchdog reporting. The newspaper had also invested plenty of money to send journalists to conferences around the country.

In today's unsettled news environment, watchdog reporting also is necessary for our survival.

But money for travel and conferences is disappearing from newsroom budgets, and freeing up reporters to attend training is ever more difficult. Despite the hunger and enthusiasm for our training sessions, we were never sure how much good we had done. Reporters rushed out of our training sessions all charged up about watchdog reporting, but what we preached didn't seem to stick.

When we explored why, we discovered a few important reasons:

- For starters, people had different ideas of what we meant by watchdog reporting; a lot of folks thought it had to mean big, eye-popping projects, but few had the time to tackle them.

- We also found some editors and reporters lacked a shared understanding of what it took to find these stories. Despite the talk from editors, reporters were under no pressure—and often saw too little encouragement—to do more watchdog reporting and were too often on their own to deploy whatever lesson they had learned.
- Watchdog reporting isn't something you do once in awhile; it requires a continuous effort. Our short bursts of training weren't enough for real change to endure.

How Training Works

So we sought a new idea—one mindful of cost, staff time, and effectiveness. We think we hit that trifecta with our current offer of a one-on-one coaching program of about 10 weeks to any reporter who wanted to take part. We figured five or six reporters would sign up. About 20 applied. The enthusiasm was so high for the idea that one reporter tracked us down to take part after just hearing a rumor about such a program.

We had a diverse pool apply—from suburban police reporters to seasoned veterans. In brief notes, they explained why they wanted in. A political reporter wanted help being tougher in interviews. A business reporter wanted help on pushing routine stories into watchdog stories. A transportation reporter wanted fresh skills to more closely examine state and regional agencies.

We began our work as coaches with each of us taking on four reporters (with plans to offer the same engagement with everyone else on our waiting list later this year). At first, we spent a long time with each reporter, learning

WATCHDOG GALLERY

about his or her work experience, beats and skills. From a list we provided, they ranked the reporting techniques they wanted to learn: hunting down public records and access to them, using and understanding documents, source development, beat development, interviewing, time management, online research, and how to better find, choose and frame stories. We made sure to include editors in the conversation.

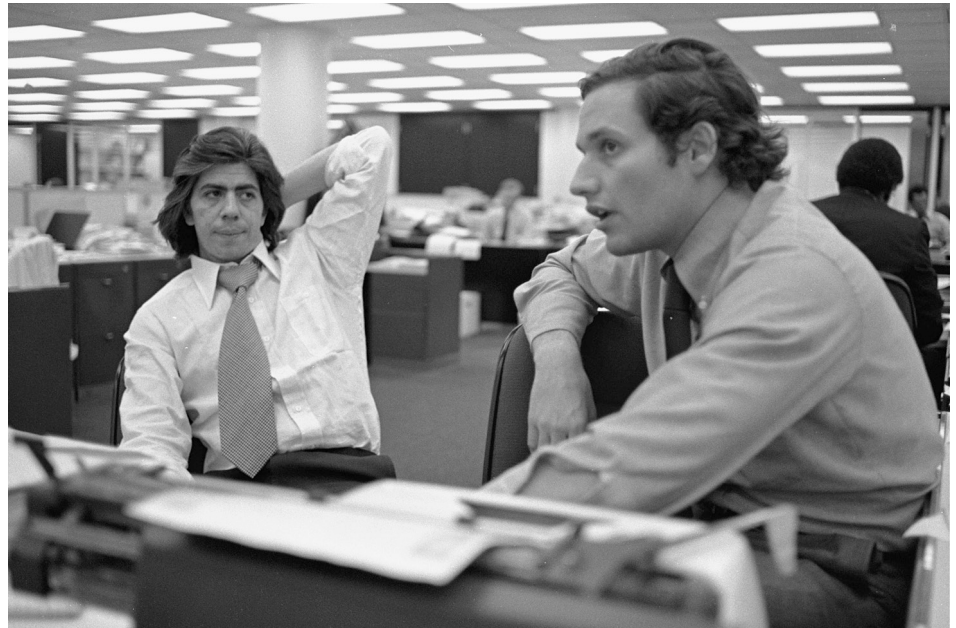
Launching the program meant dialing back on our own reporting responsibilities, but the dividends seem worth it to us and to editors. We're each pressing on with our own investigative projects, spending no more than a quarter of our workweek on coaching. This approach was carefully designed not to drag heavily on our time—or that of the reporters we're coaching.

We produced an individual watchdog curriculum for each reporter. For the reporter who wants to better prepare for interviews, we help with the organization of questions, their precision and order. If help with conducting an interview is requested, we will tag along and even participate. Our intent is to show, not to tell.

It's also helped to have a clear understanding of what we mean by watchdog reporting: journalism done to protect the health, welfare and safety of citizens, to stand up for justice and equal rights, to guard the public treasury, and scrutinize the integrity of our institutions and leaders. Watchdog reporting trains an eye on the powerful, speaks for the voiceless, challenges the conventional wisdom, and always seeks out opportunity to have an impact.

Our crucial step, though, is to show reporters how they can feather this work into the daily newspaper. This is not about project reporting. It is about the relentless deadline for tomorrow's report. That's what most reporters face the most often. And that's where most of the additional watchdog reporting will develop at *The Oregonian*.

We've designed this to push reporters to put new skills to work immediately. If there is a breaking



The *Washington Post* won the 1973 Pulitzer Prize for Public Service for its investigation of the Watergate scandal, led by reporters Bob Woodward, right, and Carl Bernstein. Photo courtesy of *The Associated Press*.

development on the transportation beat, the reporter seeking help with interviews will be guided through some specific exercises that both teach *and* get the story in the paper. If we don't counsel on a story, we'll be there the next day to engage in a probing discussion. Was there a watchdog element to the story? What could have been done to get one? What public record was used? What new source was developed? What source could have been developed?

Longer conversations will circle around the reporter's beat, looking at how the coverage is organized and how that might change to generate more watchdog content. That will include looking at what institutions and agencies are covered—or being overlooked. The same with sources. Who's not getting talked to? Who is best placed to point the reporter to watchdog stories?

Along the way, editors keep their control. In our role as coaches, we are neither assignment nor line editors. We're keenly aware that good communication among the coaches, the reporters, and the editors is vital.

Success in this program will mean both reporters and editors are happy with the results.

How will we know success? In the short run, we're looking for stories that demonstrate the use of more questioning and probing reporting. Over time, though, we want to see more reporters sustain their watchdog approach to their beats. This effort doesn't seek to turn every staffer into an investigative reporter. But we think it will give more reporters the tools they need to provide compelling news coverage that no other information source can match. ■

Les Zaitz and Brent Walth, a 2006 Nieman Fellow, are reporters at The Oregonian, who now are serving as watchdog coaches in the paper's newsroom. They continue their assignments on the newspaper's investigative team, where Zaitz shared the 2006 George Polk Award for National Reporting, and Walth shared the 2001 Pulitzer Prize for Public Service reporting with colleagues at the newspaper.

A Vital Responsibility in Need of Support

‘... our industry, as a whole, cannot afford to abandon or cut back on investigative reporting, particularly on local and regional issues.’

BY RICK RODRIGUEZ

Melvin Claxton, whose courageous reporting on crime and corruption won The Virgin Islands Daily News the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service in 1995, today is rehabbing houses in Detroit. Claxton, a highly accomplished, old-

“Ultimately, I believe it is a critical mistake to look at journalism simply in economic terms,” he said in a phone conversation. “I believe a major part of that equation has to be public service.”

Claxton’s case exemplifies one of

pressure to do more with less. How can you continue to put out a quality newspaper, assume ever-expanding responsibilities for 24/7 Web site operations, and teach longtime print journalists how to do video and audio reporting with a shrinking staff, fewer resources, and ever-increasing competition from the Internet? Some very tough choices are being made, and some papers are finding that they can no longer afford long-term, in-depth investigative journalism.

Before I left my job at The Sacramento Bee in October, we had worked hard to create a watchdog culture in my more than nine years as executive editor. And it was working. I felt we were doing some of the best investigative work for a regional paper in the country. But it wasn’t always easy staying the course, given the competing pressures for resources. I was constantly questioning myself about how best to deploy people. Should we shift more people to the Web? Are we taking too long on stories? Should we pull the plug on some investigations? How are we going to develop the skills to transition to the Web?

Editors across the country are grappling with similar questions and circumstances, and their job today is consequently so much more difficult than it’s ever been. Still, at the Bee, I decided to stay focused on watchdog journalism, because I believe it is the kind of unique content that will help news organizations flourish in the future. And I contend that our industry, as a whole, cannot afford to abandon or cut back on investigative reporting, particularly on local and regional issues. It is what will set news organizations apart from the Web aggregators and commentators as the Web becomes the dominant medium

WATCHDOG GALLERY



Reporting by Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein in The Washington Post led to the 1975 conviction of John D. Ehrlichman, a key figure in the Watergate scandal. *Photo courtesy of The Associated Press.*

school investigative journalist who also was a Pulitzer finalist in 2003, took a buyout last August from The (Nashville) Tennessean. He said he didn’t want to leave the profession but didn’t agree with the future direction of the paper and the direction of much of the industry.

many dilemmas in American journalism. At a time when newspapers are competing for their long-term existence, proven talent is sitting on the sidelines. Why? In part, because investigative journalism is expensive and time consuming, while editors and publishers are under tremendous

What Are Newspaper Journalists Investigating?

What follows are a few examples from the wide range of investigations being done by mainstream media outlets throughout the United States. The examples—grouped by general topic and compiled by Rachel Schaff, a graduate student at the University of Missouri-Columbia, and Brant Houston, former IRE executive director and now Knight Chair in Investigative & Enterprise Reporting at the University of Illinois—are culled from Extra! Extra!, an online service provided by Investigative Reporters and Editors at www.ire.org/extraextra.

Disasters

Before and after the August 2007 bridge collapse in Minneapolis, Minnesota, both print and broadcast outlets did numerous stories on deficient bridges and the underfunding of repairs to bridges across the United States. To a large extent, reporters used the National Bridge Inventory—a database on bridges and their conditions—as a launching point for investigations. Using this information, local journalists showed the location of defective bridges, did additional reporting about what is wrong with them, and examined why structural fixes have

not been made.

Wildfires, especially those last year in Southern California, resulted in some strong investigative journalism. The (Riverside, Calif.) Press-Enterprise mapped new home permits and fire threats and in doing so discovered that many new homes were going up in areas highly susceptible to wildfires. USA Today employed a similar approach using census data and showed that since 2000, nearly 450,000 people have moved to Western areas with a high risk of being affected by wildfires. The San Diego Union-Tribune made good use of interactive maps and provided online access to information as part of their investigations.

Pollution

Water pollution was well covered by newspapers such as USA Today and The Post and Courier in Charleston, South Carolina, as each showed how mercury had tainted lakes and rivers. The San Jose Mercury News reported on pesticides contaminating land in Santa Clara County, while the Star Tribune in Minneapolis analyzed databases and pollution reports to identify 20 locations of groundwater contamination in the suburbs around

the city and the threat to the drinking water supplies. In Connecticut, The Hartford Courant found that 17 of 35 companies covered by the Clean Water Act were dumping toxic chemicals into the state's waterways under permit limits that have expired and, in California, the Contra Costa Times reported on an aging maritime fleet that was shedding toxic metals in the local bay.

Criminal Justice System

Investigative reporters at many news outlets throughout the country examined inequality in the criminal justice system. Several investigations revealed disparities in sentencing: The Dallas Morning News reported that in Dallas County more than twice as many convicted murders receive probation than go to death row, while the Chicago Tribune found that mandatory minimum sentencing guidelines were being applied unfairly. Several investigations focused on prisons: both The Dallas Morning News and the Seattle Post-Intelligencer revealed misconduct and abuse in detention centers. The San Francisco Chronicle found that overcrowding and understaffing in

Continued on page 64

for news reporting. Not only is this decision vital to our democracy but also to our industry's future.

"Investigative journalism is at risk. It depends on how many cuts you have and how much resolve you have as an editor," said Sharon Rosenhouse, managing editor of the South Florida Sun-Sentinel, which has maintained its investigative team. "You can't do anything more local or useful than watchdog journalism."

Even Claxton hasn't given up on the industry. He is part of a coalition hoping to bid on his old paper, The Virgin Islands Daily News, which is on the market. And might his opinions of the business side of journalism change

if he becomes a part-owner? "Not at the expense of quality journalism," he told me. "You have to be a business. You have to make a profit, but you have to understand the paper is a unique product."

Neither have I given up on the industry's commitment to investigative journalism. I was heartened by the resolve I saw and the response I got from editors three years ago when, during my term as president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), we had vigorous discussions about the topic I chose to feature, "Unleashing the Watchdogs." When I attend Investigative Reporters and Editors conferences, as I did last

summer in Phoenix, I am heartened to find reporters filling rooms to hear speakers late on a Saturday afternoon and talking late into the night about how to improve journalism. When I speak with journalism educators and students, their enthusiasm about the future of investigative reporting is infectious.

It is my hope that public service-oriented foundations and individuals—some of whom have already stepped forward to do this—will provide funding to support independent investigative organizations as they work separately or in concert with newspapers. But the newspaper industry must also develop business models by which it can sustain

prisons cost the state more than \$500 million in overtime pay.

Real Estate Crisis

Subprime lending practices and high foreclosure rates are the topic of an increasing number of investigative reports by journalists. Excellent coverage of this widespread problem was done early by reporters at The New York Times, and this was followed by other newspapers using a variety of approaches to examine the direct impact of the crisis. The Sacramento Bee dissected 61,000 mortgages to reveal the devastating effect of no-proof loans on the area's housing market, while The Orange County Register focused its reporting on just one street to show how predatory lending negatively had affected a community of neighbors. Similar investigations were done by news outlets in North Carolina, Florida, Arizona, Pennsylvania and Colorado. Meanwhile, The Wall Street Journal revealed that crisis extended well beyond subprime loans and included other adjustable rate loans.

Following the Money in Politics

Campaign finance took center stage as the 2008 election cycle began. The

Washington Post revealed suspicious, multithousand-dollar donations made by very young children. The Los Angeles Times broke the story about a prominent fundraiser for Hillary Clinton having been a fugitive for the past 15 years. The Seattle Times kicked off an occasional series on congressional earmarks, tracking those companies that benefit from their passage and the political fundraising connected to these pork projects. The Oregonian reported that lawmakers from its state chose not to place limitations on how campaign money could be spent despite promising campaign finance ethics reforms. Increased focus was put on exploring the ties between nonprofits and the funding of activities related to political campaigns.

Sports and drugs

Reporters at the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel built a database of every baseball player who George Mitchell named in his report, which detailed the former senator's findings about steroid and human growth hormone use among Major League players and analyzed how their performance improved over the time they were allegedly using prohibited substances. The Salt Lake Tribune found major discrepancies in how drug tests are

administered among Division 1-A schools, while The San Diego Union-Tribune reported that it was common for trainers to dope up racehorses.

Drug Companies

Numerous investigations were done about pharmaceutical companies and prescription drugs. The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer found that the FDA's "Fast Track" drug review program proved to be beneficial to investors while doing little or nothing to speed up the availability of new medical treatments, compared with expedited review options that existed before the drug industry lobbied to create Fast Track. The Rochester (N.Y.) Democrat and Chronicle investigated the growing use of mind-altering drugs on foster children, as it uncovered cases of children as young as one-year old being prescribed psychotropic drugs. The (Baltimore) Sun reported that the drug buprenorphine, which is prescribed to addicts to help them kick their addictions, is now showing up on the streets where abusers are using it to get high. The Wall Street Journal reported on conflicts of interests by authors of articles that appear in medical and scientific journals. ■

the work of investigative journalists. When the economic downturn subsides, pressures on newsrooms might ease, allowing investigative journalism to grow as reporters and editors find ways to take full advantage of the Internet.

Digital Tools

There are so many digital tools that enable reporters to do better, more comprehensive investigations. Those who've mastered database reporting already improve the speed and accuracy of investigations, particularly those in which complex records searches and analyses are needed. No longer is there

the same need to depend on outside sources to reveal what numbers are able to tell us. And given the extraordinary information that reporters can now harvest, it is essential that investments are made in newsrooms to give editors and reporters the training and tools this kind of reporting requires.

To find a secure foothold in the digital media environment, news organizations need to establish themselves in the role of the verifier so they can be recognized as a trusted place to which people will turn for information and news. Using the Internet smartly, news organizations can complement the printed word with video, audio, links to documents and to related

stories. Using the Web's interactive features, news tips can be solicited. And audiences far beyond our traditional circulation borders will be reached by what we do, giving the stories we tell an impact that many of us could never have imagined.

With all of this within our grasp, this should be a golden era for investigative journalism. And it still can be, but it will take resolve. When I began my year as ASNE president in April 2005, the industry's financial situation was not nearly as dire as it is today. But even then there were many competing tugs at newspapers' budgets. I knew that in order for investigative journalism cultures to flourish in the future, not

only editors needed to be on board but so did publishers. That is why, at the outset of my term, I asked the Poynter Institute to work with ASNE to host editors and their publishers at a first-of-its-kind conference aimed at creating watchdog cultures. More than 30 editors and publishers participated, along with members of the Poynter faculty and representatives from top public service journalism groups.

Midway through the conference, the participants broke off into small groups. Their thoughts were recorded in an article by Poynter Distinguished Fellow Butch Ward. What follows are some of their suggestions that bear repeating:

- Watchdog journalism needs to be more accessible, more digestible to readers. We need to frame our stories with our audiences in mind,
- not journalism contests.
- Too much of our watchdog journalism feels like scolding. We need to put more energy into solutions—not just problems. We need to invite the community, through partnerships with broadcasting and through forums, to help us with this.
- Technology is our friend.
- There is a strong business argument for watchdog journalism, based not on short-term profit but on the longer-term idea of being essential in the life of the community. To remain essential, we must use our significant resources to tell people what is really happening and why—to get to the bottom of things.
- Beyond the business argument, watchdog journalism is our core mission and cements our importance and influence in the community. In the words of Pulitzer Prize-winning

reporter Katherine Boo, “We have a responsibility to give voice to the voiceless.”

To give voice to the voiceless is a responsibility that—even in the worst of times—we must not forget. Investigative journalism is not only a cornerstone of our past, it must be one of the building blocks for our digital future. ■

Rick Rodriguez left The Sacramento Bee in October after more than nine years as executive editor and five years as managing editor. A former American Society of Newspaper Editors president, Rodriguez is now a consultant to the Bee's parent company, The McClatchy Company, and is joining the faculty at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University.

Using Expertise From Outside the Newsroom

After ‘crowdsourcing’ worked to expand reporting, The News-Press reached out to nearby residents to form Team Watchdog.

BY BETTY WELLS

Back in 2006, The News-Press in Fort Myers, Florida, a paper owned by Gannett, got noticed not so much for what happened inside of its newsroom but for what happened outside of it, when residents became part of an investigative team. They did so by telling us about their experiences with soaring water and sewer assessments, and they did so through a method of reporting called “crowdsourcing.”¹ The idea was born of technological possibility, with the use of easy online communication tools, and implemented as part of a major investigation we undertook into rising assessment costs faced by homeowners in our area. This experience of mesh-

ing what “citizen journalists” could provide with information our reporters found proved to us that there are a lot of involved, intelligent people in our community who are passionate about holding local government accountable.

After this endeavor, some of us in the newsroom saw the possibility of a natural evolution of this experience. We’d enlist a panel of volunteers who could bring into our newsroom a range of expertise to supplement the work of our staff of reporters and editors. As we began discussing this initiative in early 2007, we believed that by inviting inside of our newsroom this kind of informational help from

citizen journalists, we would improve our investigative reporting and also extend our reach into the community by engaging (and invigorating) new audiences.

As special projects editor, I was put in charge of this effort. At first I thought we’d attract a few volunteers. I figured I’d organize them and then this entity would pretty much take care of itself. At things turned out, I was either wrong or ill-prepared for much of what happened, including the following:

- We discovered a big reservoir of intense public interest.
- We encountered resistance to the

¹ This project can be found at www.news-press.com/capewater.

project in our newsroom.

- I vastly underestimated the day-to-day work required to manage the participants, both inside and outside of the newsroom.

The first step was easy—deciding what type of person should serve as a volunteer citizen journalist. Southwest Florida has a large population of retired professionals who have settled here after living and working all over

interviewing in groups of five, I gave their resumés to reporters so we could complete background checks.

After get-to-know-you interviews, we introduced these 20 people to our readers, online and in the newspaper, and to each other and our paper's journalists at a social event. They were articulate, passionate and committed to the First Amendment and to holding government accountable. During our one-day orientation session

project was launched. But it did not take long for a range of difficulties to arise. Despite meetings about this project, staff members' inclusion in the process, memos about the new approach, and our editor's message that this was a priority, pockets of resistance to Team Watchdog existed in the newsroom. I wasn't surprised that some editors thought this collaborative approach would create more work or to learn that some didn't trust the motives or skills of the new team members. What did surprise me was to discover the number of reporters who believed that the project was designed to eliminate jobs. "It's just a way for you all to be able to cut the staff," one told me.

At a time when reporters in many newsrooms are losing their jobs because newsroom budgets are being cut, it was probably natural for some to see this project as a threat to their livelihood. However, this was not the case and, after about three months, we found ways to work through most of those reservations from staff members.

By then, too, some of the first efforts of Team Watchdog members had developed into front-page stories. Some examples follow:

- One member worked with our newspaper's child welfare reporter on building a database of day-care inspection reports.
- Another requested, received and analyzed government documents that led to our paper's exclusive story about how the district in which he lived had accumulated an excess of taxpayer funds that were not being used for the services the district was charged with providing.
- A watchdog member with experience in school administration consulted with our education-beat reporter for a story about teachers' use of "time-out rooms" to discipline disabled students.

As these and other projects got underway, relationships among the staff and volunteers improved. One reporter who'd expressed reservations was assigned a volunteer to help with some

WATCHDOG GALLERY



On June 2, 1976, Arizona Republic reporter Don Bolles was gravely wounded when his car was dynamited; he died 11 days later. He had been investigating land fraud and organized crime. *David Heller/Courtesy Newseum.*

the country and throughout the world. They are retired scientists, educators, CEOs, lawyers, judges—even spies. In the call for volunteers that I put on our Web site and in the newspaper, I was specific in citing "retired professionals such as lawyers, CPAs," and I appealed to their competitive natures by requiring a resumé and cover letter as part of the "application."

Within two days of putting a notice on our Web site and in the newspaper, 40 responses arrived. When we published the notice on the front page of the Sunday paper, entries flooded in until we had about 100 to sort through. Though difficult to do, we narrowed the list to 20 and, before

with them, we engaged in detailed discussions about journalistic ethics and conflicts of interest and how the newspaper and newsroom work. We described our goals for the project and then we brainstormed story ideas; in all, we listed more than 200 topics or specific projects. Nearly everyone on this new team—we call it "Team Watchdog"—had a story or project he or she wanted to pursue. I didn't want to discourage our new recruits, but most of our staff reporters had story lists a mile long. So I tried to pitch to editors the best ideas that came from these team members who were connected with a staff reporter.

With orientation behind us, the

monotonous research. When the Team Watchdog member completed the task quickly and perfectly and asked for more work, a convert was born.

In the first six months, members of Team Watchdog made more than 70 contributions—story tips, online research, or original reporting. Among the assistance they provided was the time when a retired FBI agent accompanied a columnist on a tour of a corrections facility after inmates complained about conditions there. Or when a retired CPA worked with a reporter to help examine budgets and records on a utilities project.

Over time, skepticism in the newsroom eroded and it became second nature for editors and reporters to

think of ways to use the team members: When an enterprising reporter discovered that Social Security numbers were included in some county court documents, a retired lawyer on the team spent hours wading through the records looking for more; a retired Miami police detective is monitoring jury selections for our paper's investigation of the courts and, this spring, a half-dozen team members will seek public records as part of our paper's Sunshine Week project.

Team Watchdog requires more of my time than we'd initially predicted. But the time I spend on it speaks to its success as team members have become very involved and engaged. Their infusion of energy lessens some

of the tedious work our reporters need to perform as part of their investigative efforts. Their expertise from a lifetime of work in a particular area can offer our reporters—and ultimately our readers—valuable insights. ■

Betty Wells is special projects editor at The News-Press in Fort Myers, Florida. She spent 23 years with Knight Ridder—at The Wichita (Kansas) Eagle as a reporter and editor, in the Knight Ridder Washington bureau as a reporter, and at the Post-Tribune in Gary, Indiana as managing editor and executive editor. She joined The News-Press in 2004.

GLOBAL WATCHDOGS

Beacons of Hope: Investigative Journalism Centers

Training and support for investigative journalists are increasing, and collaborative projects are happening worldwide.

BY BRANT HOUSTON

In the United States, journalists are raising legitimate concerns about how investigative reporting will be done given financial constraints being imposed in many newspaper newsrooms, where the bulk of this reporting gets done. At the same time, we should be heartened by reporters overseas creating nonprofit investigative journalism centers and associations to deliver the necessary training and support to those doing this work.

Now, on every continent, we find examples of journalists exposing corrupt practices by those who serve in government and run businesses. Reporters also probe environmental and health issues and programs, investigate organized crime, and are alerting the public to the international trafficking of humans, drugs and weapons.

These independent centers and as-

sociations help journalists develop and distribute their stories by providing training for reporters and establishing vital online networks. Since 2000, the number of such investigative centers and associations has more than doubled—going from 15 to nearly 40, according to a recent report for the Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA). [See box on page 70 for information about a recent study done by CIMA.] And more will be established soon by journalists in Africa, South America, and Asia.

What is most surprising about this global effort to strengthen investigative reporting is its vibrancy despite the many threats and challenges investigative journalists face in so many countries. Censorship, criminal trials, imprisonment, physical assaults, and sometimes death are not uncommon

risks for many investigative journalists. A less perilous hurdle, but certainly a more pervasive one, is the lack of access (and even absence of the right to have access) that journalists endure when it comes to securing government documents or even being able to speak with government officials.

Yet journalists persist, and they regard these new efforts at supporting what they do as a way to encourage them—and others—to circumvent what are often timid, badly financed, or corrupt mainstream media in their country. For example, organizers of the Romanian Centre for Investigative Journalism know that what enterprising journalists are doing can and must be improved. As they explain on their Web site¹ “... Romanian investigative journalism hardly has 10 years of existence. Due to the lack of experi-

¹ http://old.crji.org/e_index.htm

Confronting Pressure From Donors

The following words are reprinted from an article written by Aung Zaw, editor of The Irrawaddy, a magazine about Burma and Southeast Asian affairs located in Chiang Mai, Northern Thailand. In this section of his article, Zaw addressed the difficult question of how much editorial freedom a publication and its journalists can have when it depends so heavily, as his does, on funding from foundations and governments. To read his complete article go to the Summer 2006 issue of Nieman Reports in the archives of the Web site at www.nieman.harvard.edu.

Burmese publications in exile must also assert their independence from other influences, namely the international donors upon which they rely for financial support in the absence of

a sustainable business model. In the long run, some publishers and editors are concerned that this may prove to be the greatest challenge to editorial independence. Many Burmese publications in exile seek to diversify their donors, as they worry that depending upon a single source of financial aid makes them vulnerable to pressure from donors that take issue with the publication's reporting or editorial policies.

The Irrawaddy is among those exiled publications that receive funding from several international donors from European countries and the United States. Without these generous contributions, The Irrawaddy and most other publications produced in exile would not survive for long. But grants from international funding agencies

can also bring their share of troubles to publications operating in exile. An incident relating to The Irrawaddy can serve to illustrate the perils of relying on international donors.

In 2002, at a Burma Night panel discussion at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Thailand in Bangkok, I came under fire from the former charge d'affaires of the U.S. Embassy in Rangoon, Priscilla A. Clapp, for allegedly condoning the attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001. (The charge d'affaires has been the highest-ranking U.S. diplomatic official in Burma since the United States downgraded its diplomatic ties with Rangoon in 1988.) Clapp, who was a guest of honor at the Burma Night discussion, was invited to make a closing remark on a panel discussion,

ence in this domain, the Romanian investigative journalism very often means sensationalist stories with no core and no impact. In fact, the investigative journalism in Romania has a very low credibility." Now, through the efforts of this center, journalists who sit at 10 news desks in Romania have been trained in how to do this kind of reporting and are producing solid reporting about government corruption—stories that are having an impact.

At training seminars being held in many countries, journalists are gaining knowledge about Web-based investigative tools. In Nigeria, journalists attending a recent workshop soon realized they could obtain information from the Securities and Exchange Commission Web site about alleged bribes paid to Nigerian officials by multinational companies such as Halliburton. They could also find out on the Foreign Agents Registration Act Web site the identity of lobbyists—for example, former U.N. Ambassador

Andrew Young—working on behalf of Nigeria in the United States.

As much as anything else, the Web has been responsible for the rapid growth of these investigative journalism centers. With little funding, journalists operating these centers use new media technology to connect reporters with resources, including information and technological tools, and also post their stories. This enables reporters to avoid the all-too-common shutdown by authorities that traditional newsrooms face and also circumvent government censorship. Through e-mail, listservs and blogs, journalists are able to be in touch with other investigative reporters. This allows for the kind of close collaboration on projects that wasn't practical a short while ago. Linked via the Internet, reporters share ideas, information and strategy.

Collaborative Investigations

At Farmsubsidy.org, for example, a small group of journalists has ag-

gressively pursued the acquisition of databases and information pertaining to how farm subsidies are handled by the European Union in its multibillion Euro Common Agricultural Policy program. Displayed on the project's Web site, the assembled data are being used by journalists associated with this project—and others—to inform their reporting on this ongoing story.

One of the three coordinators of the farm subsidy project is Danish journalist Nils Mulvad, who took a strong interest in computer-assisted reporting and databases in the mid-90's and became a leader in using open records laws for getting data for investigative stories from European governments. In 2006, with funding that included a grant from the Hewlett Foundation, he and his colleagues, Jack Thurston and Brigitte Alfter, began to collect the information.

To launch their investigation, they submitted requests for the subsidy data to each country in the Union. The countries greeted the requests

which included this author.

She first praised the “very good journalism of The Irrawaddy” before she said, “I remind [the editor of The Irrawaddy] that he is highly supported by the American government, and we did notice his editorial in the Thai press saying that America deserved the attack on September 11.” She continued sternly, “That does not go unnoticed in Washington.”

Just after the September 11th attacks, I wrote an editorial on U.S. foreign policy that appeared on The Irrawaddy’s Web site, as well as in the Bangkok Post. This opinion piece was indeed critical of the Bush administration’s foreign policy but did not say that the United States deserved the attack. Clapp apparently believed she was entitled to make this

unwarranted and undiplomatic assault on me, because I am the editor of a magazine that has been receiving grants from the Washington-based National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a congressionally funded organization. NED supports several Burma-related projects promoting democracy, human rights, and media development.

More recently, in March 2006, another Burmese media group, the New Delhi-based Mizzima News agency, was told by NED to retract an essay that it claimed advocated violence. Mizzima pulled the article, but the damage was done. A radical campaign group known as Dictator Watch issued a statement criticizing NED, calling it the “National Endowment for Hypocrisy.”

NED insists that it was not engaging in editorial interference when it

called for the withdrawal of the commentary, but was merely taking action because Mizzima had violated one of the conditions of its grant agreement. (Under its charter, NED is specifically prohibited from funding groups that engage in armed struggle. Ironically, the chief editor of Mizzima was a former hijacker who commandeered a Thai Airways International plane to Calcutta from Bangkok in 1990.)

At home and abroad, Burmese journalists face sometimes daunting obstacles in their struggle to survive and preserve their editorial independence. Though the kinds of journalistic courage called upon in each circumstance differ, without strongly adhering to the stance of independence neither entity will function as it should. ■

with varying degrees of cooperation. In an ingenious move, the project’s organizers posted these responses on their Web site, noting which ones were good, partial or denied. Journalists and the public could readily see the level of transparency shown by officials of each government.

Using this Web site’s information, journalists in several countries have reported on some questionable subsidies received by wealthy corporations and by politicians. Their articles have also illuminated how subsidies can enable European agricultural corporations to sell products well under their market value in developing countries, thus undercutting those countries’ economies, not to mention the farmers who produce these same products closer to home. In a surprising finding, project reporters came across “pony clubs”—land on which horses can graze—that had qualified for agricultural subsidies. It turned out that recipients do not have to do any farming to receive a payment; the

only requirement is the ownership of eligible land.

Investigative centers in the Balkans have initiated similar projects, with issues ranging from corruption that resulted in skyrocketing utility rates to human trafficking. The story about utility rates, which was recognized with the Shining Light Award at the Global Investigative Journalism Network conference last year in Toronto, involved reporting from journalists from several countries and was coordinated by the Center for Investigative Reporting in Bosnia.

The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), which was created by the Center for Public Integrity in Washington, D.C., also has brought together investigative journalists who have worked on investigations into war profiteering, water rights, and tobacco smuggling. [See the article by Fernando Rodrigues about his work with ICIJ and concurrent efforts to train journalists in Brazil on page 71.]

Associations for Training and Networking

Person-to-person interaction at conferences still holds great value in the age of the Web, and professional associations of investigative journalists serve this purpose—and more. In 2002 in Brazil, journalists formed Associação Brasileira de Jornalismo Investigativo (ABRAJI) after a renowned broadcast reporter was killed while investigating child prostitution. With financial support from the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas at the University of Texas at Austin, ABRAJI initially created a listserv to communicate with its members and offered online training; more recently, ABRAJI has convened conferences for its more than 1,000 members.

Often, as in the case of ABRAJI, investigative journalism centers and associations are primarily funded by foundations or governments. Indeed, the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, which started in 1989

Strengthening Global Investigative Journalism

In 2007, David Kaplan, who for many years was the chief investigative correspondent at U.S. News & World Report, studied the condition of global investigative journalism. Part of his mission was to determine the need for training and other assistance that can bolster such reporting. To do this, Kaplan surveyed the work of 37 investigative centers in 26 countries and conducted extensive interviews with international investigative journalists.

His report, “Global Investigative Journalism: Strategies for Support,”¹ was commissioned by the Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA), a project of the National Endowment for Democracy. The center works on improving media assistance programs and highlighting the role independent media play in the democracies around the world.

In his executive summary, Kaplan highlights these findings:

Greater support of investigative journalism programs. Despite its frontline role in fostering public accountability, battling crime and corruption, and raising standards in the news media, investigative reporting receives relatively little in international development aid—and comprises a significant gap in media development funding. A substantial increase in funding of this vital area could have a major impact overseas.

Think long-term. Improving investigative journalism overseas requires sustained support over years, not weekend workshops. On-the-ground

trainers working closely with committed local media can produce dramatic results.

Support investigative reporting centers. Central to any strategy should be support to the world’s nonprofit investigative reporting and training centers. The centers have proved themselves dynamic agents of change and form an increasingly vital link in world journalism. Endowments, long-term funding, and training in business and fundraising skills can make a major contribution by ensuring stability and a longer-term focus.

Consider different models for different countries. Investigative reporting centers vary in size and function and include reporting groups, training institutes, professional associations, and funding vehicles. Different models will be appropriate in different places. In regions where centers may not work, international programs should partner with motivated and established local media.

Encourage global networking. Better networking among the various investigative centers can substantially increase their access to reporting, databases, training materials, and other resources and further cross-border collaboration among them. The Global Investigative Journalism Network has the potential to become an international secretariat, with a central Web site, listserv, and resource center. Information about this global network, including names of organizations and journalists who are members and conferences it

convenes, can be found on its Web site.² The Center for Public Integrity oversees another global initiative, the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, through which collaborative reporting projects are done by teams of international journalists.³

Support investigative training conferences. Investigative reporting conferences play a key role in training and networking journalists, particularly from developing countries, helping to cost-effectively broaden the scope of their reporting. Especially useful are fellowships for journalists in less developed countries to attend the annual Global Investigative Journalism Conference and regional conferences.

Evaluate based on quality. Training and reporting projects aimed at creating a culture of investigative reporting should be evaluated based on their quality and impact, not on broad numbers of people trained and stories produced.

Insist on high standards. Because of their influence and high visibility, investigative reporting programs should represent the highest professional standards—in reporting, editing and ethical conduct. Outside audits by veteran investigative editors could help ensure that the high standards are adhered to. Sponsoring or subsidizing awards competitions can also draw attention to and encourage top-flight investigative work in a given region. ■—B.H.

¹ The study is at www.ned.org/cima/CIMA-Investigative_Journalism_Report.pdf.

² www.globalinvestigativejournalism.org/index.html

³ www.publicintegrity.org/icij/

and is now regarded as a model for other investigative centers, has at times received nearly a third of its annual budget from the Ford Foundation. Donors in the United States (the Open Society Institute, The Ford Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation) and agencies of the U.S. government (USAID) also play strong roles, such as funding of such centers and associations in Africa. (The Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Germany has also been a major donor on the African continent.) Another key funder has been the governmental entity, SCOOP, in Denmark; it provides extensive Danish funding for efforts in Eastern Europe and Russia. SCOOP funds also helped support the cross-border work on the utility rates investigation.

Other international investigative journalism training groups include Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE) in the United States, the Centre for Investigative Journalism in London, and the Institute for Advanced Reporting at Wits University in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The Global Investigative Journalism

Network bolsters efforts taking place in individual countries. It was founded in 2000 as a way of connecting investigative journalists to one another; this network of journalists held its first conference in Copenhagen in spring 2001 that was attended by more than 400 journalists from 40 countries. The four-day conference—structured in much the same way IRE conducts theirs—provides a valued platform from which veteran journalists share knowledge and techniques in a practical and readily useful way. Out of this gathering e-mail lists were created and eventually a Web site. Despite difficulties posed by international travel after 9/11, these conferences have continued to take place every two years; in 2007, 600 participants from 40 countries gathered in Toronto, Canada.

Even with the remarkable progress these various efforts represent during the past eight years, many hurdles remain. Without more in-country financial and political support, some of these burgeoning centers will struggle as underfunded mavericks, while their members risk intensified censorship

and government crackdowns. Some have already folded even before they gained much of a foothold. Also, without securing local and regional support, these centers carry the burden of being perceived by some as envoys of external governments or ideological foundations. When this happens, they can face the kind of criticism—and actions against them—that the Russian government has brought against nongovernmental human rights organizations operating in that country.

It goes almost without saying that these centers—and those affiliated with them, by dint of what they do—will undoubtedly continue, in varying degrees, to be closely watched by those in power and in some cases harassed. Investigative journalism is seldom popular with those whom it is the responsibility of the press to hold accountable. ■

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Global Efforts at Investigative Reporting

A Brazilian journalist explores the benefits of collaboration and describes how and why watchdog reporting has changed in Latin America.

BY FERNANDO RODRIGUES

When I was invited to become a member of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) about 10 years ago, most journalists in Brazil still wondered what the words “investigative journalism” actually meant. This wasn’t because they weren’t knowledgeable about journalistic investigation. In fact, the opposite was true; quality news outlets in Latin America have a long-standing tradition of putting some degree of good investigation into all journalism assignments. To

see these two words forced together, as though designating something special, seemed strange. How could we do our jobs without embracing investigative techniques?

Generations of journalists in Latin America cut their teeth and trained themselves for decades under enduring dictatorships and other sorts of autocracies. Being a journalist simply meant going after the scoundrels within the government. Scrutinizing corrupt and colluding politicians serving as members of Congress was

also a daily beat for us. Our watchdog role was very clear, and everybody in a newsroom would easily know who should be under severe journalistic surveillance.

Well, that description fit our newsrooms back then. Now, most Latin American countries are democracies, many of which are thriving. For journalists this means that things are not so clear-cut anymore when it comes to chasing newsworthy stories. While it used to be easy to identify the good and the bad guys in government, the

political leaders now in power were the ones who used to feed journalists information about the dictators and generals. This changed situation puts a newer—and arguably a greater—demand on journalists to plow even deeper into the records, policies and practices of these new leaders since the incumbents and opposition politicians should receive the same scrutiny from journalists. And in these times, high-quality newspapers and broadcast stations (TV and radio) throughout Latin America have come to understand the benefits of adopting fully the concept of investigative journalism. So much so, in fact, that the words have become a synonym for superior reporting practices used in extensive coverage of major news stories.

Through my connections with ICIJ, I've had the opportunity to be in touch with highly respected investigative journalists from many countries during the past decade. At ICIJ meetings, I've participated in intense exchanges about experiences and techniques of this kind of reporting, and year-by-year the phrase "investigative journalism" has become much more real to me.

One indelible memory is from almost 10 years ago, when I first learned about encryption software, a novelty at that time. Back in Brazil I shared it with some well-positioned sources within the federal government, and immediately I developed a secure channel for exchanging critical information with officials who otherwise refrained from talking with me. Today this software, called Pretty Good Privacy (PGP), is widely known, even if a little outdated.¹

ICIJ's Consortium

ICIJ describes itself as "a collaboration of the world's preeminent investigative reporters." Assembled in 1997 as a project of the Center for Public Integrity,

ICIJ now involves nearly 100 journalists in 50 countries who have come together in person only infrequently during the past decade because of the high cost of getting everyone to a single location. This absence of regular personal contact among members is perhaps the major obstacle to fully realizing the consortium's collaborative mission.

When we have been brought together—thanks to the tireless efforts of Chuck Lewis, ICIJ's visionary founder—the person-to-person exchange of information and experiences proved to be a major asset for the members. [See Lewis's article on page 23.] We have a secure (and private) online

**Consolidating a trustworthy
network of professional
journalists in various countries to
collaborate on specific projects is
an ongoing effort.**

listserv to which all members belong, but it is hardly a substitute for face-to-face conversation, especially when the actors involved are nongregarious animals, also known as investigative journalists.

Through ICIJ, I've taken part in some cross-border investigative projects. Such endeavors are another goal of the consortium in this era of globalization. Consolidating a trustworthy network of professional journalists in various countries to collaborate on specific projects is an ongoing effort. In theory, this digitally connected group would be able to gather (and share) the kind of information that none of them could find on their own and thus draw public attention to newsworthy stories that otherwise

would not exist.

My first ICIJ project happened in 2000 when a group of us investigated U. S. military and intelligence aid to major Latin American nations since the cold war's end. At that time, most Latin American countries had already embraced some sort of democratic path, and nearly all U.S. aid to the region since 1990 had been earmarked for the drug war, irrespective of whether it had been provided by the departments of defense or state, the Central Intelligence Agency, or the Drug Enforcement Administration. The result of our work on this investigation was a disappointment to those of us who worked on this project. Possibly this was because it was one of ICIJ's first concerted efforts, and the team wasn't yet extensively trained to work together.

After that, in 2003 and 2004, I embarked on a bolder ICIJ enterprise assignment: the Global Integrity Index. The aim was to track corruption, accountability and openness in 25 countries with democratically elected governments. Journalists in each country worked on the ground with the help of researchers, social scientists, and peer review panelists. In the end, we created a set of "integrity indicators" that were designed to measure the presence and effectiveness of anticorruption mechanisms.

This project evolved into an independent organization called Global Integrity. As a direct consequence of my ICIJ membership, I helped to create the Associação Brasileira de Jornalismo Investigativo (ABRAJI)² in 2002. According to a study published by the Center for International Media Assistance in 2007, ABRAJI is now one of the world's largest investigative journalists' associations—with more than 1,000 members and most of them active—having trained more than 2,500 journalists in computer-assisted reporting (CAR), corruption

¹ It can be downloaded at www.pgpi.org.

² www.abraji.org.br

coverage, and security issues.

My many years of being involved with these associations leaves me with two lasting impressions:

1. There are the enormous benefits that come from conferences and seminars that enhance networking and allow for the sharing of experiences with other journalists through which one always learns new reporting techniques and improves skills such as CAR. This kind of invaluable training can't be found in any other way.
2. Investigative journalism still lacks support and funding from major media organizations throughout the world, with few exceptions. The initiatives I've participated in so far have been journalist-driven and have lacked the kind of solid institutional support that would make a big difference in their success. In general, funding comes from membership association fees and from nonprofit foundations throughout the world. Neither ICIJ nor ABRAJI accept government funding.

Funding Global Reporting

At ABRAJI, in the beginning we relied a little on membership fees and a lot on donations made by entities like the Knight Center for Journalism at the University of Texas at Austin and the McCormick Tribune Foundation. Those grants were used as seed money to get started, but ABRAJI still has what I'd call a feeble infrastructure. (Only one person works full-time for the association; all the others contribute on a voluntary basis.)

Fortunately, investigative journalism is visible now in newsrooms in nearly every country. Given this, associations that foster learning in investigative techniques might draw greater attention from journalists in the years ahead. With the risk of sounding hubristic, I'd like to believe that news outlets will start to notice the relevance of these training initiatives and collaborative opportunities and would begin to support them more vigorously. Realistic as I am, I recognize this as more wishful thinking

than a feasible prediction.

My experience tells me that to some degree investigative journalism—including its training and practice—is hardwired within journalists themselves. If this is so, it can be a waste of time to lament the dismal amount of support that this work we do receives from those who own major news media outlets. Doing so leads only to inertia. Instead, quit carping and take a look at ICIJ and Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE) in the United States, or seek out associations in your own backyard. Or start one, if one isn't already there. We took a dive in those waters in Brazil, and each year we're swimming a bit stronger. ■

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Squeezing Substance Into the 'Sensational and Superficial'

Experiences in the Philippines taught a journalist that 'the space for watchdog reporting must be created before new structures congeal.'

BY SHEILA S. CORONEL

On the moonlit evening of February 25, 1986, I stood outside the massive, iron gates of the presidential palace in Manila. It was the third day of the uprising against the dictator Ferdinand Marcos, and thousands of Filipinos had gathered there, barred from entry by rows of barbed wire and armored vehicles. But as four helicopters lifted off from the palace grounds with the Marcos family, their entourage, and hurriedly packed possessions on board, the troops guarding the palace fled as

well, and the crowd surged through the gates like a giant wave, forcing its way into Ferdinand's study and Imelda's boudoir.

I knew then that the 20-year rule of the Marcoses was over.

I was a neophyte journalist then, but already scarred from bruising battles with censors. Now, overnight, "people power" set the press free, and all the rules that had once held journalists in thrall were no longer in force. It was heady.

Looking back 22 years later, I realize

that we were too distracted by the possibilities of the moment to see the perils that lay ahead. Transitions—whether from dictatorship to democracy, from socialism to a market economy, or old media to new—have not been known to be moments of clarity.

But they are moments ripe for breaking out of the mold. Many new ventures emerged in the Philippines during that period; some of them succeeded, many others failed. Our own experiment was born out of our frustration with the way the post-Marcos



Filipinos, outside one of the mansions President Joseph Estrada built for a mistress, during the protests leading to his arrest in April 2001. *Photo courtesy of Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism.*

media system was evolving. We wanted a space where we would be freed from the restraints of the market and the state. We had not intended it, but the transition enabled us to create a prototype for watchdog journalism in an emerging democracy.

Finding a New Way

In the beginning, it hardly seemed necessary. For the most part, we felt like we had died and gone to media heaven. Suddenly there were dozens of new newspapers and radio and TV programs that gave voice to anyone who wanted to be heard. Deprived of information during the Marcos years, Filipinos were hungry for news and hard-hitting opinion. As in other places where authoritarian regimes have fallen, enterprising proprietors rushed to feed that hunger.

Soon, however, many of the newspapers died, casualties of a competitive and crowded market. The public affairs



Uprising of Filipinos against Estrada. *Photo by Sid Balatan.*

programs gave way to entertainment. Left alone, with little state or any other intervention, we saw the media system

in the Philippines congealing to its default mode, becoming as oligarchic and as obsessed with profitmaking as it had been in the past. The only difference was that new owners had replaced some of the old ones, and the draconian restrictions were gone.

In their place was unbridled competition that through the years drove news coverage to lower and lower depths. In most of Manila's newsrooms, reporters rushed from one assignment to another, filing three, sometimes even more, reports a day—a frantic pace of story chasing that did not allow for much reflection. We were missing out on crucial stories that required more time and resources for research and reporting.

In 1989, after having already unhappily walked out of a couple of newspapers, my colleagues and I—then mostly in our 20's or 30's—set up shop in an office borrowed from friends. We had a second-hand electric typewriter, an old computer, and



Protesters calling for Estrada's resignation. *Photo courtesy of Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism.*

a few desks and chairs we bought in a used-furniture sale.

Our digs were modest, but we gave our new venture a grand name: the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, PCIJ for short. It had a full-time staff of two: myself, unpaid but given the fancy title of executive director, and an office assistant. Our goal: to introduce investigative reporting to a media culture that put a premium on the sensational and superficial.

Freed from the need to attract a mass audience, avoid alienating advertisers, turn a profit—or, for that matter, to justify a salary—we focused instead on what we wanted to do. We would work on investigative stories and sell them to newspapers.

The first report I wrote for PCIJ was on banana plantations. I visited the workers, many of them prisoners, in the miserable barracks where they lived, no better off than they had been in the past. Although touted as the



Estrada was arrested in April 2001. *Photo courtesy of Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism.*

beneficiaries of the government's land reform program, all the workers got were nearly worthless shares of stock.

PCIJ's initial stories were about places like these that had fallen off the news map and were rarely visited by

journalists. We sent reporters across the islands to investigate logging and published a series linking the large-scale destruction of forests not only to natural disasters but also to the power of logging lords, many of whom had been elected to the freshly minted Congress.

Over the years, we built the most comprehensive database on Congress, showing the wealth of legislators, their relatives in public office, and the laws they sponsored. Later we posted the database online. We found that two of every three congressmen were members of families that had been in public office for two or more generations—raising fundamental questions about representative democracy in the Philippines.

As we ratcheted up the depth and breadth of our reporting, we saw the impact of muckraking: Several members of the Cabinet, a Supreme Court justice, and assorted bureaucrats resigned because of PCIJ's exposés.

Investigations had been initiated because of the wrongdoings we had uncovered.

In 2000, we began our most ambitious investigation: uncovering the wealth of the incumbent president, Joseph Estrada, a flamboyant and popular former movie star. He was a scandal waiting to happen. He had five wives. He was also a gambler with a taste for high-priced French wine. We heard he was deeply corrupt as well and so formed a team to ferret out his wealth.

In the course of a year, we uncovered the companies he and his wives had formed to set up businesses and found the dozen or so fabulous mansions he was building for them. We found he had acquired \$40 million of real estate after just two years in office and unmasked the dummy companies that fronted for the purchases. We proved that there was no way Estrada could legitimately account for his acquisitions.

Not long after they were published, our articles were used as evidence in the president's impeachment. When it looked like his trial was going to be compromised, thousands of Filipinos went out to the streets in protest, sparking off an uprising that ended with Estrada fleeing the presidential palace on a barge—not unlike Marcos's flight I witnessed in 1986.¹

Advantages of Being Nonprofit

Why did it take a small, independent newsroom to uncover a story of this magnitude? For many papers, this kind of reporting was simply too labor intensive. Press tycoons also feared the business repercussions of exposés on a popular president prickly about

critical reporting.

The PCIJ's edge is that it can dedicate its energies to investigations. Funded by foundations, it does not need to bow to market pressures or to please politicians and press proprietors. The center's 14-person staff can take risks with projects that may not see publication in a year or even two. It can invest in projects like online databases that are not assured of revenues but

As we ratcheted up the depth and breadth of our reporting, we saw the impact of muckraking: Several members of the Cabinet, a Supreme Court justice, and assorted bureaucrats resigned because of PCIJ's exposés.

provide a public service commercial news organizations will not offer. To do this, the center relies on an annual budget of \$500,000—about a third of which is funded from proceeds of an endowment.

This has also meant that PCIJ can experiment with new reporting techniques; it introduced computer-assisted reporting to Philippine newsrooms, and its Web site was among the first to feature original multimedia reporting.

Today the PCIJ blog is the top political blog in the country.² In 2005, it posted the full tape of wiretapped conversations between the current president, Gloria Arroyo, and an elections official in which they talked about rigging the vote. That tape set off the most serious crisis of the Arroyo presidency, and PCIJ was threatened with sedition and libel suits because of it.

As a small nonprofit, the PCIJ is vulnerable: It can lose its assets in a single lawsuit. Its long-term financial sustainability is uncertain. Then there's

staff burnout and the challenge to keep its best reporters from jumping ship. But PCIJ's work proves there's an audience for deeply reported stories. Through training courses and reporting fellowships, we have helped build a cadre of investigative reporters in newsrooms around the country. Today there are investigative teams in newspapers and TV networks, and investigative reporting is taught in schools. The center has also helped set up or train investigative units in other Asian countries.

Last year, I left PCIJ to take up the directorship of the Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism at Columbia University. The lessons from PCIJ that

I have taken with me: Transitions are tricky, and media and social structures limit what we can do. But the period of flux and uncertainty provides opportunities for innovation that defies those structures. They are often best seized by people who aren't constrained by current models or traditions. But the window they have is limited: The space for watchdog reporting must be created before new structures congeal. ■

Sheila S. Coronel is director of the Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism at the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University. She cofounded the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) in 1989 and is the author and editor of more than a dozen books, including "The Rulemakers: How the Wealthy and Well-Born Dominate Congress," and "Pork and Other Perks: Corruption and Governance in the Philippines."

¹ To learn more details about this investigative project, go to www.journalism.co.za/ijw/a-step-by-step-manual-by-sheila-coronel-2.html.

² www.pcij.org/blog/

Circumventing Censorship With Technology

When news stations in Georgia refused to broadcast an investigative report about a high government official's actions, the news story found a home on the Internet.

BY KARL IDSVOOG

Put yourself in this situation. You are working as a TV news director in a competitive market with an audience hungry for news. Like all news departments, there is a limited budget. A freelance production company offers a fully produced investigative report that documents unethical, illegal activity by a high government official. The production was done by two journalists with an established, well-respected track record, and their report includes on-camera interviews with multiple witnesses who confirm key facts, facts that are truly disturbing.

This investigative report tells the story of how a high government official ordered state police to arrest two innocent citizens who were jailed, tortured and convicted. It took several months for the production company to put this report together and, during that time, they worked on nothing else. Technically, the production is beautifully shot, wonderfully edited. In a country with a history of often broadcasting rumor and innuendo, here is an example of meticulously fact-based, fact-checked journalism.

The production company's asking price to broadcast this story? Free. The takers? None.

This is what is happening in the republic of Georgia. The production company is Monitor Studio, started by journalist Nino Zuriashvili and editor/videographer Alex Kvatashidze. They had worked for years on the first investigative TV news program at Rustavi 2, the television station that



Georgian journalist Nino Zuriashvili (left) and editor and videographer Alex Kvatashidze.

put free speech on the air following the collapse of the Soviet Union. But since the “Rose Revolution,” when in November 2003 the corrupt government of Eduard Shevardnadze was overthrown in a bloodless change of power, the press has taken a giant step backwards in Georgia. Rustavi 2, a station that once prided itself on hard-hitting reports about government corruption during the era of President Shevardnadze, has become a voice of the government.

Frustrated by the lack of serious reporting, Zuriashvili and Kvatashidze sought independent funding and start-

ed their own investigative production company. Finding stories was not a problem; finding a place to broadcast them was. When they offered Tbilisi TV stations this report free of charge, news managers didn't have any editorial questions; they didn't ask for a shorter version (the report runs 23 minutes); they didn't ask for exclusivity. All they said was “no.”

The news contained in the investigative report came as no surprise to the Georgian news managers. They knew the story, and their reporters were already aware of it. Georgia's Public Defender, Sozar Subari,¹ had called a

¹ Sozar Subari was elected in 2004 by the Parliament of Georgia to serve a five-year term as Public Defender (Ombudsman) of Georgia. Prior to doing this, Subari was a member of the Liberty Institute, a journalist for Radio Liberty, and an editor of *Kavkasioni*, a newspaper in Georgia.

The Investigative Journalist's Digital Tool Kit

BY JOE MURRAY

Working, as we do, in our digital, converged-media school of journalism at Kent State, we are learning to use the new technology to educate the next generation of journalists. When my colleague Karl Idsvoog first showed me the video of the investigative report made by the journalists in Georgia, I was confident that our technology could overcome the circumstance of not being able to have their report shown by news outlets in their country.

Our work began with using a Web template (Adobe Dreamweaver) as the container for the story's supporting photographs and text, which we wrote in English while we awaited the Georgian translation. An online poll was built into the Web package, added in a few minutes with an inexpensive Web service.¹ Free blogging software² provided interaction and feedback for users and, finally, the DV tape Karl had brought back from Georgia was converted to a file³ and uploaded to our fastest media server.

Once the Web site was constructed, I sent its URL to Alex Kvatashidze to review. With a nine-hour time difference between Kent State and Tbilisi, I didn't see his response until morning,

when his note arrived with bad news. The video wouldn't play in Georgia even though it looked fine on my Mac, so I began testing the video on other computers and in

For Georgians, overcoming the censorship of this investigative report was possible in only one week.

different browsers. I could find no problem, so I exported it again using different formats with new compression settings and uploaded each for Kvatashidze to try. Each test we did concluded with an e-mail from Georgia containing the same disappointing message, "We can't see the video."

The few hours we'd anticipated this project would take stretched into a week. I consulted others for alternatives and insight. "Do you think it's bandwidth?" one of my colleagues suggested. "Is the government blocking ports?" volunteered another. "Maybe it's a server problem." Amid this uncertainty, one of my students offered what turned out to be a way to make this work. "I upload my videos to

Google—they work great," he said, referring to the free video hosting service provided by the Internet search engine. Like YouTube, these services make it easy for anyone with an Internet connection to share video with users around the world—even in Georgia. Provide content, and these services provide the server space and resources that allow users to search for and link to your video, submit content, and even embed it in their own Web pages.

After we uploaded the video from Georgia to Google, it worked perfectly.

"In the long run of history, the censor and inquisitor have always lost," said historian Alfred Griswold. For Georgians, overcoming the censorship of this investigative report was possible in only one week. For me, the experience of finding the best solution reinforced that to teach is to learn twice—from following my student's guidance to remembering why I always need to keep Ockham's razor⁴ in the top drawer of my own digital toolkit. ■

Joe Murray is an assistant professor at Kent State University's School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

¹ www.viewletpoll.com

² Murray and Idsvoog used www.blogger.com, but www.wordpress.com is a good alternative.

³ Final Cut Studio was used to capture the video, but free programs, such as Movie Maker and iMovie, would suffice.

⁴ This principle is often paraphrased as, "All other things being equal, the simplest solution is the best."

press conference in which he enumerated the same serious charges against government officials and departments. It was a typical press conference, with all the stations there with cameras and microphones taking in the words he said. Key points from Subari's press conference were put into the report Zuriashvili and Kvatashidze produced. That night on the news, however, Georgian citizens never saw a frame of video or heard his words. News managers in the post-Rose Revolution Georgia weren't about to touch this report, which posed such direct criticism of President Mikheil Saakashvili's government. For them, it was a non-story. This was true even for Imedi Television, majority owned by News Corporation, where reporters have done stories critical of Saakashvili's government when the other Georgian TV stations have not.

Once it became clear the stations would not touch this story—either as a report from the press conference or as the longer contextual piece by Zuriashvili and Kvatashidze—the decision was made to use technology to circumvent censorship and cowardice.

Using the Internet

The story of how this news report found its way to the Internet begins in a classroom at the Caucasus School of Journalism, when Zuriashvili and Kvatashidze came to show their report to the journalism school students I was teaching. Since 2001, I had trained professional and student journalists in the Republic of Georgia. During my first year there, I had worked with these two investigative journalists. Now, after seeing their report, we talked about how it might be possible to tell this story when the Georgian stations wouldn't broadcast it. My students—from Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia—responded with a single voice: the Internet.

When I returned to Kent State University, where I teach journalism, I brought with me a mini-DV copy of the investigative report. Immediately, I brought it to my colleague, Joe Murray, who was the former director of the New Media Center at Kent State who joined the faculty at the journalism school in 2007. When reporting goes online, Murray is the one who

teaches students how to get it there as cost efficiently as possible. In this case, despite several challenges we faced in making this video work for a potential audience in Georgia, the investigative report that no station in Georgia would broadcast was soon able to be seen everywhere.² [See accompanying box by Murray.]

Having a chance to work on this project with these Georgian journalists reminded us of what we train our students to do—use the most appropriate communication tools that are readily available to design a multimedia site so stories can be told to anyone who has a computer and Internet connection. Censorship and fear of repercussions from powerful officials will never go away. But thanks to the Internet, it is now nearly impossible to kill a story that needs to be told. ■

Karl Idsvoog, a 1983 Nieman Fellow, is an assistant professor at Kent State University.

² This story can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/39v34f>.

Democracy Can Complicate the Job of Journalists

When a decade of conflict ended, 'what many Nepali journalists did not anticipate was that the worst had yet to come.'

BY DHARMA ADHIKARI

What happens when a newly minted soldier marches into the battle theater, half-armed but expected to deliver the optimum? His options aren't many—nor are they good ones: attempt an ambush and risk humiliation, suffer a deadly assault, or somehow convince the enemy to embrace peace. Or perhaps just retreat.

The contemporary circumstance of Nepal's press is not unlike that of the besieged soldier. A not-so-good similar combination of odds exists in journalists' efforts to report on the country's messy transition to a democratic system of government.

During the past decade, journalism in Nepal has experienced impressive growth and modernization, as well as

an expansion in its frontlines, even if these benefits surfaced in fits and starts. Just as news organizations were reviewing their overcrowded news agendas in an emergent democracy following the adoption of a multiparty system in 1990, the country plunged into political turbulence. Conflict then became the dominant story, as news outlets' play of their reporting confirmed the

adage that if it bleeds, it leads.

Journalists, too, were thrust into headlines for the atrocities they suffered at the hands of Maoist rebels and the royal government and for their bold defiance of repressive press directives and censorship. As many as 24 journalists have been killed, with hundreds of others arrested, jailed and rendered jobless. When the Maoists abandoned their brutal “people’s war” in the spring of 2006, and King Gyanendra stepped down the next year, journalists were relieved. The anguish of covering one of the deadliest Asian conflicts in modern times was over.

When the War Is Over

What many Nepali journalists did not anticipate was that the worst had yet to come. In a free Nepal they are subjected to more vicious assaults from a new breed of ethno-political rebels and criminal groups. They have to also fight moral battles within their newsrooms about judgments made in covering the government and other competing interest groups. Covering peace has proven far more difficult than covering the blatant drama of war.

Nepal echoes some of the experiences of other postconflict societies, such as East Timor, Chechnya, Kosovo, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and Haiti. In particular, journalists’ professional independence and their own engagement with the peace process in the nascent, flawed and troubled democracy have been severely tested. Ideally, postconflict reporting requires more brains than coverage of violence and war and a temperament of restraint. It also calls for a devotion to creativity and a commitment to balance, follow-up, interpretation and independence.

An additional requirement for journalists in situations such as this is their sustained moral support for peace, something that has been a shining spot of Nepali journalism in

recent times. In large part, the credit for bringing the Maoist rebels and the Seven Party Alliance (SPA) to negotiation goes to news organizations. Those who worked for privately owned newspapers and a rapidly expanding network of FM radio stations across the country helped stir up public opinion against violence and in favor of peace. Since the peace accord, however, the role that journalists need to assume has expanded.

News on crucial issues of peace-building remains haphazard and superficial. Political dialogue, elections, restructuring and human rights have received sustained attention from the press, but coverage is almost always prompted by government and interest-group sponsored events, speeches and official trial balloons typical of the “he

Reporters from some of Nepal’s leading news organizations lament that news executives are not enthusiastic about doing follow-ups or investigative stories, citing economic logic and safety concerns.... It will require a roving investigative journalist to break through political rhetoric, which is the mainstay of the nation’s journalism.

said/she said” construct. The victims of war, relief activities, the displaced, and some 800 missing persons receive sporadic, scattered and half-hearted attention.

“Social inclusion” has become a fashionable idea in Nepal, but news coverage relating to it has been mostly confined to agitating ethnic groups, like the Madhesis of Terai plains, who are fighting for equal representation and autonomy, or gender communities. Many of the 59 officially recognized

ethnic groups and some 48 nationalities or marginalized identities, as well as faith communities, remain overlooked by mainstream news media. Children in Nepal, who are among the most vulnerable of all its citizens, were found to be among the 10 overlooked global stories in 2006, according to the U.N. Department of Public Information in its annual survey. Many children here were brought into the conflict—forcibly recruited into the Maoist army—and as many as 40,000 remain displaced.

It has been more than a year since a violent uprising occurred in Terai, resulting in as many as 300 deaths. Months have passed since a large massacre happened in Nawalparasi, a town in Terai, where family members and even minors were dragged out of their homes and murdered. It was

about two years ago that Maoist rebels abandoned Rolpa, the epicenter of the conflict, leaving behind ravages of war and mass suffering. Victims of war and the displaced, in many numbers and for many years, have lived a life of isolation and trauma. These and similar other stories merit follow-up, but they are largely ignored, and lessons in the consequences of war, reconstruction and relief efforts and peace-building are lost.

Such oversights demand a review of story formats, deadlines and approaches. Reporters from some of Nepal’s leading news organizations lament that news executives are not enthusiastic about doing follow-ups or investigative stories, citing economic logic and safety concerns. Most of the nation’s resourceful journalists live and work in the capital city, and only when conflict flares do a few descend into hot zones in the countryside. It is only rarely that an enterprising story on the complexities of transformation appears in periodicals, such as Nepal and Himal, or in a TV documentary. It will require a roving investigative journalist to break through political rhetoric, which is the mainstay of the nation’s journalism.

Opinion journalism is incredibly diverse and vibrant, and it has fostered public debate and interpretation. No topic is off-limits in periodicals, which include mouthpieces of political parties and interest groups as well as newspaper op-ed pages, television talk shows, radio phone-in programs, and blogs. But debate often is inflammatory and distorted. It typically excludes opponents, demonizes them, and is usually steeped in prejudices and partisan ideologies. Mainstream opinion journalism vacillates between progressive and radical ideologies, with little or no space given for the views of the right or monarchists.

This is also reflected in sourcing and story selection. News abounds with Maoist and SPA attributions, but journalists rarely quote ordinary people or victims. Reporting is focused excessively on personalities, with three main alliance leaders always competing for headlines. Maoists gain prominent coverage in the government news media, which have now become their mouthpieces. Not surprisingly, during a wave of terror launched last year by the Young Communist League (YCL), a Maoist youth wing, the official organs remained silent. The former rebels control the Ministry of Information.

Challenges to Good Journalism

The Maoists scrutinize corporate news media that they accuse of being anti-people, capitalist and pro-American. They have attacked journalists and news organizations, demanding positive coverage. A Maoist trade union, agitating for press workers' rights, forced three large dailies to temporarily halt publication last year—an unprecedented incident for Nepali journalism.

In the run-up to the Constituent Assembly elections, there are widespread attempts at propaganda and news manipulation by various political parties. These have bred mass confusion. Resentment and fear is building among rival groups and political parties. Worse, a customary culture of secrecy pervades government affairs,

despite constitutional provisions for the public's right to information. The last formal government press conference was organized on November 21, 2006, following the peace accord. Reporters have no direct access to government officials' discussions and meetings, and they often have to rely on tedious press statements and, if lucky, personal contacts or party insiders.

Reporting conditions in Terai have worsened. Armed Madhesi factions, the YCL, and a dozen other newborn rebel groups accuse journalists of downplaying their cause and demand—with the threat of violence against journalists—romanticized, front-page coverage of their activities. Some demand that national newspapers publish news in local languages. (There are more than 100 languages spoken in the country.) Others force reporters to be their cadres. Rebels have killed two journalists since the peace accord and attacked or abducted others; many others have moved out of the region. "It is ironic," observes Kunda Dixit, editor of Nepali Times, "it has been much more difficult for the Nepali media to safeguard its independence and ensure the security of journalists in the post-April 2006 period than during the conflict."

Besides freedom from government control or rebel attacks, journalists' independence also requires their freedom from conflict of interest, inaccuracies or personal biases. Yet many journalists are partisan scribes. Many reporters simultaneously work for multiple news outlets, as well as for political or business interests. Speculative, inaccurate and unverified news on casualties and the extent of damage often blur the truth and provoke tensions. In the southern town of Kapilavastu last year, inflammatory reporting triggered looting of mosques and vandalism. And in December 2007, there was another exaggerated news report of a discovery of a mass grave near Kathmandu.

Many stories lack background and context about the peace process, such as its genesis and the policies and records of the conflicting parties. News organizations, except for

a few with fair reputations, rarely hold budget meetings and have no standardized approaches to news, so this leaves many journalists on their own, relying on personal methods and idiosyncrasies.

The challenges of Nepali journalism are apparent at all levels of the news process: the system, media organizations, individual journalists, and the larger society. These directly affect the quality of press performance required of any postconflict society that is dealing with crucial issues of peacebuilding. Rank and file journalists have rarely been sensitized to approaches and issues involved with postconflict reporting, although media rights groups and international donors have spent some resources in this area.

To achieve what in Nepal is often referred to as "healthy journalism," there is a need for a coordinated approach to a newsgathering process that emphasizes a deeper understanding of what is meant by journalistic independence and provides support for creativity, collaborative reporting, diversity and tolerant working conditions. Regular assessments of news coverage are also necessary to prioritize news agendas.

Under the repressive regime, achieving democracy was the overriding concern for Nepali journalists and other civil society groups, and relentless criticism was their means. They earned widespread public support in that cause, and they deservedly basked in the glory of being crusaders. Today, they are doing battle with different issues and circumstances as they strive to reach a level of professional competence in which more will be required than a journalism of assertion. ■

Dharma Adhikari has worked as a journalist in Nepal. He has been a Fulbright Scholar at the Missouri School of Journalism in Columbia, Missouri and has held teaching positions at Missouri and at Georgia Southern University. He is now a visiting faculty member at the Institute of Advanced Communication, Education and Research (IACER) in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Words & Reflections

“More often than not, the enhancement of public knowledge gained by published secrets far outweighs the damage that government officials claimed would be or was done,” concludes Washington Post national security reporter **Walter Pincus** as he examines the journalistic record in the handling of government secrets. Sharing some of his experience with such situations, Pincus speaks to ways in which reporters and editors handle difficult decision-making involved with the public disclosure of government secrets in a reflective essay about journalist Ted Gup’s book, “Nation of Secrets: The Threat to Democracy and the American Way of Life.”

“It is the central thesis of ‘When the Press Fails,’ that the press has become excessively deferential to political power in Washington and has forfeited its (occasional) role as independent watchdog of government,” writes former Star Tribune Deputy Editorial Page Editor **Jim Boyd**, who assesses how well this thesis corresponds with what he observed about the timidity of the press during the walk-up to the Iraq War. As his newspaper’s principal editorial writer on Iraq, Boyd recounts how the Star Tribune was virtually alone in its blunt opposition to the war. “We suffered for it; our corporate masters strongly disapproved of our behavior; they wanted us flying well under the radar screen,” he says.

Media critic **Danny Schechter** finds persuasive the argument set forth in “The Last Days of Democracy: How Big Media and Power-Hungry Government Are Turning America Into a Dictatorship,” though he doubts many other journalists will feel as he does. “... we know how hard it is, if not impossible, for those in the news media to delve into the role their own institutions might be playing in threatening our democracy,” he writes, yet he urges others to read this book since it reminds “us that it is time to sound the alarm about these internal threats we are facing while we still can.”

Providing a back cover quote for Edward Alwood’s book, “Dark Days in the Newsroom: McCarthyism Aimed at the Press,” would be easy, contends former newspaper reporter **Morton Mintz**, as he shares the words he’d use: “Every serious journalist should read this fascinating, superbly researched, thoroughly documented, and invaluable historical account of a frightening, sustained and vicious assault on robust journalism—an assault that has great resonance today.” In his review of Alwood’s book, Mintz offers glimpses of how McCarthy’s intimidating tactics were aimed at—and hit—members of the press.

The online book, “Journalism 2.0: How to Survive and Thrive,” is looked at from the perspectives of a journalism professor in Hong Kong, **Rebecca MacKinnon**, and a global health reporter, **Christine Gorman**. MacKinnon turned to it when textbooks weren’t up-to-date with changing media technology she needed to teach. Gorman applauds the book’s multimedia lessons, then focuses attention on emerging arenas of 2.0 reporting. ■

Secrets and the Press

‘Some secrets deserve to be kept, and even secrets uncovered might not merit being put in public print, on television or on the Internet.’

BY WALTER PINCUS

Nation of Secrets: The Threat to Democracy and the American Way of Life

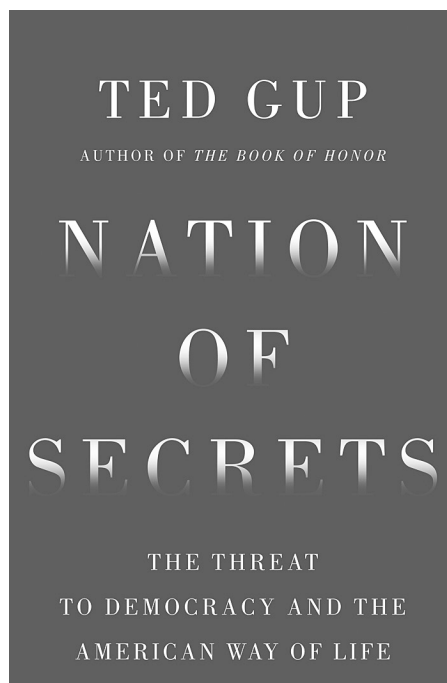
Ted Gup

Doubleday. 322 Pages.

“Kept from the knowledge of others,” is the shortened definition of a secret in Webster’s New World Dictionary. We all have secrets we keep from others, whether family, friends or the public at large. To be honest, I’ve kept secrets from colleagues—the home or cell phone number from a particularly good source who asked for it be kept private—and even from editors; the original tip came from someone I will not admit ever spoke to me.

Government institutions and their officials, corporation officers and employees, arts organizations, colleges and universities, social groups and sports teams, music groups and symphony conductors, movie and television personalities all have their secrets. But why something is secret and from whom is another thing altogether.

Ted Gup, a dogged investigative reporter who shares that gift now with journalism students at Case Western Reserve University, has taken on this subject in his book, “Nation of Secrets: The Threat to Democracy and the American Way of Life.” [See Gup’s article on page 21.] After a 10-year career exposing secrets in newspapers and magazines, and two years studying the subject, Gup writes about his concern that “Today America is a nation of secrets, an increasingly furtive land where closed doors outnumber open ones and where it is no longer ‘the right to know’ but ‘the need to know’ that is the measure against which access is determined.”



As someone who has worked at reporting on government for some 50 years, I can’t argue against aspiring and practicing journalists tacking that sentence up on the wall and remembering it as they go about their business. But there is, as Gup alludes to, another way to think about this. Some secrets deserve to be kept, and even secrets uncovered might not merit being put in public print, on television, or on the Internet. Much as reporters ought to realize that everything an official says publicly might not deserve to be published, just discovering something that is being kept secret, even by government officials, doesn’t mean it needs to be exposed.

Gup concedes the point, saying honestly that “where genuine national interests could be adversely affected, I have also remained silent.” He, in fact, is trying to find the correct midpoint, saying “Secrecy and democracy are not irreconcilable, but the former

often advances at the expense of the latter.”

How Secrets Become Public

The question is, always, who decides what government secrets become public? At the most serious level, when lives are obviously at stake, it has to begin with those inside government who have been trusted with the secret. In all instances, even in spying, those outsiders trying to get the secret must find a government source who willingly or even inadvertently turns it over. Since decent journalists—and I confine myself to that category—don’t steal secrets, any discussion on who is to blame for secrets getting out to the media has to go first to the government’s inability to protect its own closely held information. If an administration doesn’t like leaks, officials need to get their own people to respect the need to keep them secret.

At the next level, the journalist or the intermediary who passes the secret on makes his or her own decision on the secret’s import and value. The journalist, I would hope, in deciding to write a story would first seek to determine the truth of the secret—a step that inevitably means going back to the government officials who are involved to try to get verification, context or at least a comment.

Here, in the normal handling of such things, government officials have a second chance to protect things that are genuinely important. They can make their case to the reporter, his or her editor, and even the owner of the enterprise. At The Washington Post and other news enterprises, such discussions over the years have even involved the President of the United States talking to the paper’s owner.

Then there is an equally important step for journalists in deciding whether it is worth publishing a secret just because up to now it has been secret. Does its publication help public understanding of some issue? Or is putting it out there just being done to show that you know something the government wants to keep secret? For example, does a story about a secret intelligence operation you have uncovered, and think the public ought to know about, need to have the actual names of covert agents included, if somehow you find them out? Over the years, The Washington Post has made it a policy to not put those names in the paper when they are not essential to the story.

In the end, it is the judgment of owners, editors and reporters at news organizations—including those people who distribute information on the Internet—that decides whether to publish or not.

When Secrets Are Disclosed

Despite frequent complaints by government officials that we, as journalists, don't understand the implications of what we are doing, I believe the record over time supports the following conclusion. More often than not, the enhancement of public knowledge gained by published secrets far outweighs the damage that government officials claimed would be or was done. The uproar caused by the December 2005 New York Times publication of stories about the Bush administration's warrantless terrorist surveillance program neither halted the program nor prevented it from continuing to function. But in defending such instances of publication in the many talks I have given over the years to groups of intelligence and military officers, I've always stressed that someone in government with access to the information made the first decision that a secret could be disclosed by sharing it with a journalist.

Gup pushes for transparency as he also takes on the complicated issue of open and closed institutions, not just governmental but also corporate

and educational. Here again, there are limits. In some cases, I believe, transparency and openness can be detrimental to public policy. In retrospect, one of many errors I have made journalistically was to write uncritically of the idea of televising the sessions of Congress, first in the House in 1979 and later the Senate in 1986. I should have known better, having covered congressional debates in the late 1950's and worked twice in the 1960's running investigations for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee when it was chaired by Senator J. William Fulbright.

One occasion stands out. On the evening of December 15, 1969 I was lucky enough to be one of a handful of staff members on the floor during a closed Senate session when an amendment related to the then-secret U.S. bombing in Laos was debated with all 100 senators present and no one in the galleries. It was a real debate, with senators such as New York's Jacob Javits, Clifford Case of New Jersey, and Fulbright from Arkansas taking on Richard Russell of Georgia, Mississippi's John Stennis, and Henry (Scoop) Jackson of Washington. Questions were posed and answers given, or sometimes not given. As a result of this free-swinging discussion, minds were changed, and the first amendment prohibiting then-President Richard Nixon from using funds to introduce ground troops into Laos and Thailand was eventually passed.

That kind of open debate no longer takes place in Congress. Today's so-called "debates" are seriatim speeches, often with members presenting contrasting information but no direct exchanges between opponents. Why? The reason is television, and the glare of constant public scrutiny with the prospect that a slip of the tongue during floor debate could be used against the incumbent in the next election—or employed even sooner in exchanges that characterize Weblogs.

As a consequence of these experiences, I am opposed to efforts to put the Supreme Court on television. I make it a practice of trying to see as many Supreme Court arguments as I

can, a habit I picked up from watching a son of mine argue many times before the court. Those arguments represent the most vigorous and interesting discussions—and the truest intellectual debates—taking place in Washington, D.C. today. Put a television camera in there and the whole situation would change. The public's "right to know" is satisfied by the delayed radio broadcast of these arguments. And the country would be much better off if the floor sessions of Congress went black and senators and members of Congress went back to freely discussing and debating issues.

When What Is Known Remains Secret

In its pursuit of secrets, today's news media suffer from a problem that the intelligence community also wrestles with—concentrating so much on getting what someone doesn't want it to know that it disregards important information already in the public domain, in other words, not secret.

In the 1960's I wrote about money and politics at a time when finance records of presidential and congressional campaigns hardly existed. In the wake of the reforms after Watergate, disclosure records became so voluminous that private watchdog groups and opposing campaigns, rather than reporters, became the prime source for campaign fund information.

Even in the era of Bush administration secrecy, each day dozens of government reports are printed, contract offerings and awards are listed, hearings held on Capitol Hill with witnesses' prepared statements released, tax court decisions are issued, and a Federal Register published along with the Congressional Record. Who can possibly read all of this material? Yet, if it isn't examined and information culled from it by journalists, in effect, what has been investigated and "reported" remains secret to the public at large.

Gup takes on that other oddity in journalism—secrecy within the news media. Having appointed ourselves—with support from the U.S.

Constitution—as the guardians of truth for the public, it is incumbent on owners, editors, publishers, news directors, producers, anchors and reporters to practice what we so often preach. But of course we don't.

The past six years, since 9/11, have illustrated both the best and worst of journalism. Underlying a great deal of our failures—Saddam Hussein's supposed stockpile of weapons and early acceptance of torturing terrorists and Iraqi prisoners, to give two examples—has been the interwoven problems of secrecy and fear. There has been the fear of this so-called new phenomenon of terrorism, in which everybody, at all times, seems to be at risk, with the reminder that we are all in it together. This fear seems to extend to a real concern about how the repercussions of challenging the government's pressure to keep everything secret could involve us.

Subpoenas to reporters in the Valerie Plame case created far more anguish within the journalistic community, which is so sensitive of its prerogatives, than it should have. At The Washington Post, where two of us were subpoenaed, the case was handled more as a criminal matter rather than a First Amendment issue. Reporters are citizens who, at times, develop confidential relationships with sources. But when our sources agree to speak to prosecutors, so can we—albeit getting their permission beforehand. If they don't speak to a prosecutor, and thereby don't release us from our agreement, then we, like they, must face the legal consequences.

The settlement reached by news organizations in the Wen Ho Lee case, which Gup explores in some detail, illustrates the other side of the confidential sources' coin. In this case, my confidential sources did not come

forward, nor did they release me and other reporters to speak. Each reporter went to court and each claimed a privilege to protect his sources. The courts ruled against us. Then we faced the bad choice of ignoring the law, as it was stated by the U.S. Supreme Court, or settling. The Washington Post, as did the others, decided to settle and pay to keep our pledge to our sources.

As one of the reporters involved, I take issue with Gup's conclusion that Lee was guilty only of "a crime of common carelessness, not espionage" and was "a victim of secrecy and what appeared to him to be a terrifying alliance between the government and the press." But right now, my basis for writing this will have to be one of those secrets that I will keep. ■

Walter Pincus reports on national security issues for The Washington Post.

Loud Noises, Sharp Elbows, and Impolitic Questions

A former editorial writer examines why the inquisitive, argumentative and forceful voice of journalists is quieter these days.

BY JIM BOYD

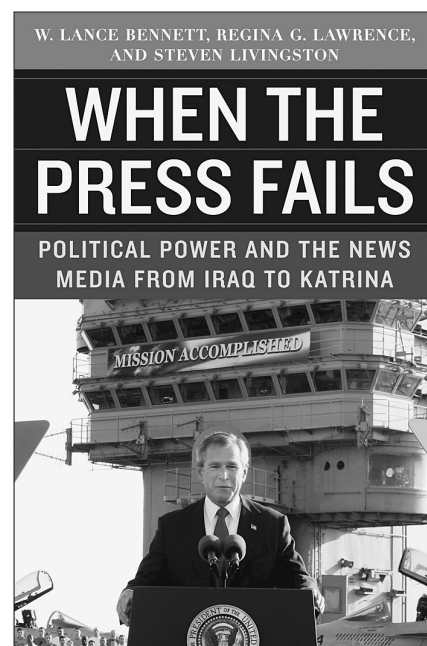
When the Press Fails: Political Power and the News Media From Iraq to Katrina

W. Lance Bennett, Regina G. Lawrence, and Steven Livingston
University of Chicago Press.
263 Pages.

I was deep into this book, "When the Press Fails: Political Power and the News Media From Iraq to Katrina," when General David Petraeus, in charge of American forces in Iraq, appeared before Congress, followed by a prime-time address by President Bush telling the American people he (and, more to the point, we) are in

Iraq for the long run. I switched on CNN an hour before the President's address—and could not believe what I was seeing. Jack Cafferty and this new guy, Rick Sanchez, were tearing Bush and his policies limb from limb. Sanchez's specialty seems to be "then and now"—playing a clip of Bush saying something several years ago ("We will hold the Iraqi government to these benchmarks," for example) and comparing it with today's reality.

Wow, I said to myself, have times changed. Actually, the three authors of this volume—W. Lance Bennett, Regina G. Lawrence, and Steven Livingston—would say what changed specifically was the power quotient in Washington. Bush was down, and there was no longer an imperative among



representatives of the mainstream press to be as abjectly deferential to the administration as they had been in the run-up to the war and its first couple of years. CNN had obviously made the calculation that there was market share to be gained by putting a lot of distance between themselves and the Bush stenographers at Fox. I liked the results at CNN, but I doubted the motive was anything to celebrate.

It is the central thesis of “When the Press Fails” that the press has become excessively deferential to political power in Washington and has forfeited its (occasional) role as independent watchdog of government. The rule of the press road in Washington now is to run every story through the filter of political power and, unless another strong actor (say, Congress) raises a stink, the press will dutifully report whatever the administration says, without challenge. When you add into the mix an administration that admits to no requirement that it be truthful and straight—indeed, quite the reverse—we have the embarrassing story of press failure to challenge the deceitful case for war in Iraq.

Katrina proves the point, the three scholars write: It caught the administration unprepared, its spin and deceit machine on vacation, and the press, thus left to its own devices, showed that it can sometimes get to a truthful telling of an important story. (Made me wish they’d started their research with the press role in the Clinton scandals. Would have complicated their thesis a bit.)

Confronting Spin

The authors’ description of the press failure on Iraq certainly squares with what I saw and lived and the scars I bear. But they tie it up a bit too neatly for me. When they describe the press-management machinations of Karl Rove and others, for example, they express a belief that the press should have focused on the spin. In effect, they wanted the press to preface each sales pitch from the Bush administration with a warning to the public that it was about to get taken for a ride, that

there was something improper about “a war being promoted through a sales campaign.” I can’t grasp how that was possible or wise, although that might just be my own lack of imagination, for I wholly support their criticism of the press’s failure to aggressively investigate the veracity of the claims contained in that sales campaign.

Some of what they propose could have happened. At the Star Tribune, I recall doing a lengthy editorial that was a point-by-point refutation of claims made by Vice President Dick Cheney during an appearance on “Meet the Press.” Early in the piece, I recall chastising Cheney for behaving like a public relations agent for the war rather than as a vice president required to speak truthfully to the American people. But the real story was the content of his lies. Even in exposing that content, the authors seem to expect more than the press is likely to deliver. “The lead-up to war was paved by ferocious government spin,” the authors write, “against which the mainstream press proved no match.” Elsewhere, they lament the inability of the mainstream press to provide “a sustained and coherent alternative perspective” to the administration’s.

But, in actuality, there is no “the press” and certainly not one capable of sustained and coherent perspectives. Nor was it the press’s job to “match” the spin. The press did a horrible job (with the cackle-warming exception of the brave Knight Ridder Washington bureau and a few others), but even if it had performed with exceptional skill, the outcome might have been the same.

I recall my early days of writing editorials about state government. I could drift into paralysis worrying over the impact of my writing and often had to remind myself that I was not the governor, not a committee chair, not responsible for the outcome. I had to do my best to offer well reasoned, informed opinion, but I was not the government.

What I would have liked to have seen prior to the invasion of Iraq was a bunch of aggressive, independent media actors—I. F. Stones on steroids—all

trying their damndest to investigate the truth of the claims being made by the Bush administration. I envisioned a cacophonous, disjointed, episodic, competitive free-for-all effort to test everything the Bush administration was saying. Might have carried the day, might not. That’s all the press owes, nothing more. It is not the government.

But even my middling scenario did not happen. In explaining why, I think the authors are on firmer intellectual ground. The most pernicious influence is the fiduciary obligation that owners of our highly concentrated media believe they owe to shareholders. That obligation is not to be sneezed at, but neither should it be allowed to crowd out the sacred duty to perform in service to the public, which is the reason we even have a First Amendment. I believe that “crowding out” is almost complete now and find myself longing sheepishly for the early days of Gannett, when old school print guys like John Quinn guided the journalism of that corporation. He and others from the print world brought to their corporate journalism jobs sensibilities about the role of the press in American life that now are missing, and we are much the poorer for it.

Strident Opposition

Many of the incidents included in this book remain powerful for me. As deputy editorial page editor at the Star Tribune in Minneapolis, I was the principal writer on Iraq for the newspaper’s editorial page. We broke with Bush on Iraq when he broke with the United Nations. We became increasingly strident and began to draw national attention and a national Web audience. We suffered for it; our corporate masters strongly disapproved of our behavior; they wanted us flying well under the radar screen.

Our stridency I justified, then and now, by the ferocious, deceitful Bush spin machine that the authors of this book describe. This was an unusual situation in which the reasoned tones of traditional editorials—The New York Times and others who argued against

the war in sonorous, measured tones from the ivory tower—weren't going to make a dent. We needed to slug it out. We used facts and reasoned arguments, rather than ad hominem attacks and name-calling. But we were unyielding in our opposition to the war.

When the Downing Street Memo story broke, I retrieved the text from the Internet, and we ran the entire thing on our op-ed page, to my knowledge the only newspaper that did. When Senator Richard Durbin, a Democrat, compared U.S. treatment of detainees to Nazi behavior and created a maelstrom with his words, I wrote that he had been right and had nothing to apologize for and that his critics were simply seeking to change the subject from detainee treatment to Durbin rhetoric. That one earned me a heated dressing down from our publisher, who said we were becoming laughingstocks.

Apparently the prevailing wisdom in corporate media boardrooms is

that workers—even when they are journalists—don't serve shareholders well by making waves. We make nice, which dovetails powerfully with the inclination to defer to power. So we go along to get along and, as our readership slides and market share plummets, we make nicer and nicer and nicer—until we can't even grasp that serving the public frequently requires asking impolitic questions, making loud noises, and employing sharp elbows.

The boldest thesis in this book, the one I was most delighted to see—and least able to assert is really true—is that this attitude of timidity and obeisance is actually bringing on the decline in readership and viewership that it, in part, seeks to avoid. Americans are fed up with the partisanship, game playing, and general ineptitude of the political class, the theory goes, and by deferring to that class, the press has succeeded in getting itself lumped together in the public mind

with it. If the press could reassert itself as a truly independent anchor of this democracy—scrappy, skeptical, proudly and fervently scornful of the “insider” perquisites so many journalists seem to treasure—then it might have a chance at pulling out of its economic woes.

Instinctively I think that is right, but it is unfortunately counterintuitive to those who now guide corporate media strategy. It has the added benefit of mixing back into journalists' behavior the dedication to public service that these authors are so eager to have happen. Do well by doing good, we might say, or do well by taking names and kicking ass. Wish I could say otherwise, but I am not holding my breath. ■

Jim Boyd, a 1980 Nieman Fellow, is former deputy editorial page editor at the Star Tribune in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Urgent Issues the Press Usually Ignore

A focus on smaller stories ‘too often fails to connect the proverbial dots and avoids too much digging into or interpreting the larger picture.’

BY DANNY SCHECHTER

The Last Days of Democracy: How Big Media and Power- Hungry Government Are Turning America Into a Dictatorship

Elliot D. Cohen and

Bruce W. Fraser

Prometheus Books. 333 Pages.

Con-spir-a-cy, noun

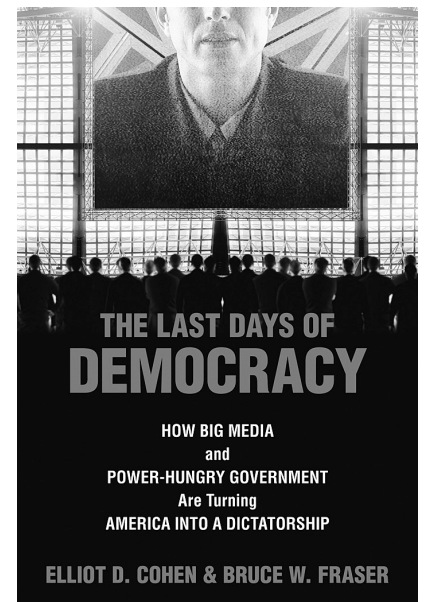
1. A plan or agreement between two or more people to commit an illegal or subversive action
2. The making of an agreement or plot

to commit an illegal or subversive action

3. A group of conspirators

As a general rule, I don't trust conspiracy theories, and neither should other journalists. These theories usually assume too much clarity of purpose and skill in top-secret coordination to be credible, even though many of us have chronicled the rise and fall of “geniuses”—heroes who quickly become zeroes—and the ultimate folly of what appear to be initially well-executed schemes, from public policy to wars.

Even so, plots and conspiracies do happen in real life when transparency is not high on the political or corporate agenda. Powerful people find clever



ways to mask intentions and cover up their tracks in concentrating power in their offices or cabals. RICO (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act) enforcement might be applauded when used to prosecute criminal conspiracies but, when it comes to political misdeeds or institutional malfeasance, conspiratorial thinking is consigned to the planet of the nuts.

I raise the specter of conspiracy theories, in part, because of the provocative subtitle Elliot D. Cohen and Bruce W. Fraser give their book, “The Last Days of Democracy.” Are they really going to be able to prove that “big media and power hungry government are turning America into a dictatorship” without resorting to claims and theories (some might call them doom-and-gloom scenarios) that seem too dark to be taken seriously, at least initially? Most of us start off being suspicious of such sweeping statements; we wonder about having to connect too many dots.

I can hear some cocky editor chortling “the death of democracy, indeed!” Don’t these pointy-headed PhD’s watch TV and see all the people turning out for political events? Don’t they realize that the American system in its genius corrects for the overstepping of unwise politicians? Don’t they know that checks and balances work, eventually?

Journalism’s Failings

Yet this book, written in a footnoted, academic style and broken into chapters that could easily be lesson plans, chronicles trends and offers analysis that should not be dismissed, though it probably will be. If it is, its dismissal will be, in part, because the authors hold journalistic institutions to account alongside some of the perversions of democracy going on within our judicial system and being committed by the Bush administration. And we know how hard it is, if not impossible,

for those in the news media to delve into the role their own institutions might be playing in threatening our democracy.

To First Amendment worshippers, this proposition sounds preposterous. Yet we, like other societal institutions, should be judged by what we actually do (as well as by what we fail to do) and not by what we might think we do.

I won’t recycle here familiar critiques of journalism’s failings or the worries many of us have about mounting media concentration and corporate ownership. Nor will I replay my own criticism of how most news organizations failed in their reporting in the walk-up to the Iraq War.¹ What I will do, however, is suggest that big stories are not being covered well because our tendency to focus on smaller stories too often fails to connect the proverbial dots and avoids too much digging into or interpreting the larger picture. Increasingly, we see journalists who do this kind of digging being purged from top newspapers. Seymour Hersh now works for *The New Yorker*, and Robert Scheer, who used to write for the *Los Angeles Times*, now runs a Web site. Reporting on “softer news” continues to undermine one of our core societal roles and, as economic pressures hollow out newsrooms, the values that animated their work shrink as well.

Yet denial of what is happening around them remains strong among those who cling to old routines of news coverage. A German theologian once said, “When they came first for the Jews, I was not a Jew so I didn’t protest. Then they came for the Communists, and I was not a Communist.” He concluded with these words: “And then they came for me.”

In the aftermath of 9/11, it was “terrorists” they came for, and Americans—including most journalists—looked the other way even as many Afghan farmers were tossed into our Guantanamo

dungeon only to be released quietly years later. It is wholly inadequate to respond to this by saying, “Well, mistakes were made,” when the entire policy is what needs to be examined. Why did it take so long—in an open society—for us to find out that the U.S. Attorney General promulgated secret orders to permit torture? How many other secret decisions have been made by an administration that has shown contempt for the constitutional process of checks and balances?

It took Naomi Wolf, writing in *The Guardian*, a newspaper in Great Britain, to remind Americans that open societies can quickly be turned into dictatorships by stealth plans and actions: “If you look at history, you can see that there is essentially a blueprint for turning an open society into a dictatorship,” Wolf wrote. “That blueprint has been used again and again in more and less bloody, more and less terrifying ways. But it is always effective. It is very difficult and arduous to create and sustain a democracy—but history shows that closing one down is much simpler ...”

Being born in freedom makes it hard for us, as Americans, to even consider that it is possible for us to become as unfree as people in many other nations are today. In schools, children don’t seem to be learning as much about our rights, our responsibilities, and our system of government. The citizen’s role of being aware of the Constitution has been outsourced to lawyers and lobbyists so much so that we scarcely see the signals telling us that our government’s checks and balances (the ones our founders put in place) are being systematically dismantled. Yet George Bush and his administration are using time-tested tactics to close down an open society.

In his *New York Times* review of “The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism,” by another *Guardian* columnist, Naomi Klein, former World Bank Economist Joseph

¹ Schechter has written two books about Iraq War coverage, “When News Lies” and “Embedded: Weapons of Mass Deception: How the Media Failed to Cover the War in Iraq” and made a documentary, “WMD: Weapons of Mass Deception.”

Stiglitz wrote: “It’s not the conspiracies that wreck the world but the series of wrong turns, failed policies, and little and big unfairnesses that add up. Still, those decisions are guided by larger mindsets. Market fundamentalists never really appreciated the institutions required to make an economy function well, let alone the broader social fabric that civilizations require to prosper and flourish.”

Stiglitz is right when he posits that while ignoring sweeping indictments of what’s wrong isn’t wise, we need to try to get into the details of the interplay of real-world forces and interests that undermine our democracy and devalue it. In their book, Cohen and Fraser confront these same fears in focusing on certain disturbing trends, even though they don’t linger long on the resistance and revulsion these trends have bred. And they are not alone; on the night before I wrote this essay, Jon Stewart on “The Daily Show” expressed his fears about the coming of fascism. Is he an alarmist, too?

Sometimes, it’s too easy to dismiss the questions raised by people who are often dismissed for being too conspiratorial. A few examples: When activists chanted “No blood for oil,” suggesting the Iraq War was driven by the desire to dominate oil reserves, they were dismissed. Now, years later, former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan endorsed the idea, and suddenly this notion is considered more credible. Ditto for those who worried about the idea that oil production would peak. These “peak oil” theorists were dismissed. On October 22, 2007, *The Guardian* quoted a high-level report saying, “World oil production has already peaked and will fall by half as soon as 2030,” according to report issued by the German-based Energy Watch Group that “also warns that extreme shortages of fossil fuels will lead to wars and social breakdown.”

Most anticonspiracy critics love to

debunk the 9/11 theorists who support a range of discordant and often competing theories to challenge the U.S. government’s al-Qaeda “done it alone” narrative. To even question this “reasoning” is to risk being labeled a kook. One such “kook” is the Canadian journalist Barrie Zwicker, who told *The Toronto Star*: “... people who just shrug off these questions with the ‘conspiracy theorist’ epithet should be asked what they stand for. Unquestioning acceptance of the official narrative? Sure, there are outlandish theories out there—aliens, Atlantis—but there have also been real and huge conspiracies.”

Stories Not Being Told

Two stories I’ve done demonstrate the dire consequences when adequate and accurate press attention is not paid. The first involved the 2000 presidential election results in Florida that I covered for a film called “Counting On Democracy.” My reporting led me to conclude that the left’s argument that George Bush et al. “stole the election” was simplistic. While I have little doubt that the Republicans tried to do just that, I also found that many Democrats were not attentive to the details of the voting process and did not educate the voters they helped to register in how to vote. It was, as the American Civil Liberties Union of Florida contends, a “tyranny of small decisions” by guardians of the election process that led to the controversial outcome. Yet stories examining these many “small decisions” were scant.

Later, a media consortium took a very long time to investigate the charges of election tampering and ended with convoluted conclusions, although Ford Fessenden, the journalist who organized *The New York Times* probe, later told me that in their count they found more votes cast for Gore than Bush. Yet that key finding was not reported clearly. Why? There

were many reasons commented upon at the time—a failure on the part of all the news organizations to agree or to report the story in the same way, the murkiness of the voting process in Florida, the time lag in the reporting, and the fact that this follow-up story came and went quickly when a plane crash seized the headlines on the day it was published. Soon the election story faded as President Bush consolidated his power. Years later, Al Gore would claim he had been elected at the polls but lost in the courts.

The other “hidden” story is one I wrote about in *Nieman Reports* last year.² In that story, “Investigating the Nation’s Exploding Credit Squeeze,” I focused on the news media’s failure to shine a light on a credit and debt squeeze that was then already leading to high rates of foreclosures and economic misery. I told this story also in a film, “In Debt We Trust,”³ and soon after some reviewers dismissed my documentary as “alarmist,” the subprime mortgage meltdown emerged as a global issue—and a front page story—as trillions of dollars in losses were tallied, hundreds of thousands of people were being displaced, and millions of families are facing foreclosure. One former presidential candidate, Senator Chris Dodd, called it a “50 state Katrina.”

That disaster’s coverage occurred like most disaster reporting, after the damage had been done. But unlike natural disasters, in this case many in the know had been sent warnings about the high probability that such a crisis would occur. Warnings were greeted by silence by most in the press. Even now, the scams behind the subprime Ponzi scheme are only being touched upon—not deeply examined.

Dictatorship has not arrived, but to say it can never happen here is to forget that many of history’s worst disasters were engineered “legally” after laws were changed, often in times of national crisis. Today fascism is visible

² Schechter’s article from the Spring 2006 issue of *Nieman Reports* can be read at www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/06-1NRspring/p19-0601-schechter.html.

³ www.indebttwetrust.org/

in softer flavors and disguises, with flags waving as patriotically correct slogans creep into the language we use.

Whether or not investigative author Greg Palast's blurb that this book "cuts right through the turgid bullshit of corporate media ca-ca" gives you rea-

son to pick it up, perhaps the book's greatest value is in reminding us that it is time to sound the alarm about these internal threats we are facing while we still can. Introspection and self-criticism are always helpful first steps. Responding to what is hopefully

a premature obit for democracy ought to get those juices flowing. ■

"News Dissector" Danny Schechter, a 1978 Nieman Fellow, edits Mediachannel.org and is a blogger, filmmaker, author and media critic.

Intimidation and Convictions of Journalists

Journalist Robert Shelton told a 1950's Senate subcommittee it was 'engendering the fear that soon it will be looking into newsrooms all over the country.'

BY MORTON MINTZ

Dark Days in the Newsroom: McCarthyism Aimed at the Press

Edward Alwood

Temple University Press.

201 Pages.

Writing a blurb for this book would be a snap: "Every serious journalist should read this fascinating, superbly researched, thoroughly documented, and invaluable historical account of a frightening, sustained and vicious assault on robust journalism—an assault that has great resonance today," is what I'd say. On the other hand, summarizing it in a *review*, as I was asked to do, was surprisingly difficult. That's because "Dark Days in the Newsroom" tells the stories of dozens of people, each of whom is arguably worth a lengthy article, if not a book, of his or her own.

This book's pages are densely populated by a real-life cast of cowards, hate-mongers, ideologues, sell-outs, perjurers, scoundrels, hypocrites and opportunists. But there are heroes, too, and others who are weak-kneed, along with the well intentioned gone astray and the belatedly conscience-stricken. Then there are innocent victims, among them reporters who suddenly found themselves out on the street. Janet Scott learned from



the front page of the Knickerbocker News that she'd been fired after 27 years at the paper.

Edward Alwood, the author, is a journalism professor at Quinnipiac University and a former CNN correspondent. He dug deeply into dozens of books and archives, conducted wide-ranging interviews, and used the Freedom of Information Act to unearth illuminating nuggets to bring to life the concerted effort by the government in the 1950's—a.k.a. the (Senator Joseph) McCarthy era—"to compel journalists to name friends and colleagues who

were thought to have been members of the Communist Party, although membership was not a crime."

Those of us who witnessed McCarthy's ruthless rampage will never forget it. Nor will we fail to remember how long it took for his tactics of fear and intimidation—aimed at members of the press as much as it was at other influential segments of society—to be enfeebled. For those not old enough to have lived through this time in our nation's history, having the chance this book gives to absorb its valuable lessons is a gift worth sampling.

Intimidating Force

The government's primary weapon of intimidation was the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, initially under Wisconsin Republican Joseph McCarthy. Less well remembered, but even more destructive to the press, was his successor, Mississippi Democrat James Eastland. "The Eastland committee," as it was popularly known, called before it specific reporters and editors to inquire about any involvement they might have had with the Communist Party. Their questioning went much further. As Alwood writes, "The committee asked about their political interests and their personal thoughts and beliefs. Members questioned newspaper editorial policies and hiring practices, areas that were

thought to be sacrosanct under the First Amendment.”

Like the predecessor House Committee on Un-American Activities, the McCarthy/Eastland Senate subcommittee had for much of the time the enthusiastic but concealed cooperation of the FBI. Despite the vast resources, surveillance and power to intimidate commanded by the committees and the FBI, they were not able to produce, in Alwood’s devastating summation, “any serious evidence that Red journalists were inserting propaganda in the news or editorial content of mainstream newspapers.” Indeed, Eastland and William Jenner, the subcommittee’s ranking Republican senator, “acknowledged, in 1956, that [it] had been unable to cite a single instance where Communists had influenced editorial content,” writes Alwood.

Then, and now, the gravest and most steadfast threat to the First Amendment came overwhelmingly from the right, not from the left, not from liberals and progressives. Alwood implies, though does not explicitly state, that this threat continues to come from the same direction. During the past seven years, such threats have arrived from the Constitution-gutting Bush administration, the prosecutorial intimidation of journalists, and a well-documented pattern of intentional inattentiveness to the Freedom of Information Act. For even more years, a different kind of threat has been escalating among the growing hordes of know-nothing, talk-show bullies who make despicable, ludicrous and false accusations, including charges of disloyalty and even treason.

“Dark Days” is filled with prescient observations and startling facts. Quotes, unless otherwise attributed, are by the author:

- An “important legacy of the McCarthy era is caution in the newsroom in the face of government intimidation. It is not known how many quietly resigned from newspapers rather than face public humiliation in the 1950’s. Moreover, it is difficult to know the degree to which news stories were molded to conform politically. It is impossible to know how many issues were ignored for fear of triggering backlash from readers and how many stories were shelved to avoid controversy.”
- “That there was a significant Communist presence in the [Newspaper] Guild is unquestioned,” Guild Reporter Editor Andy Zipser wrote in his review of “Dark Days.”
- J. Edgar Hoover’s FBI “fueled the hunt for Reds in the newsrooms” and “played a prominent role in determining who was called to testify.”
- In 1944, an internal FBI report told of a proposed but unexecuted plan “to bug the Milwaukee convention hall where the [Newspaper] Guild was holding its annual convention.”
- After World War II, in 1945, Hoover “fought to continue ... surveillance of the Newspaper Guild. FBI agents continued to collect names of people who might be detained during a national emergency, including journalists, although the agency had no statutory authority to do so, especially in peacetime.”
- “Historians have shown that McCarthyism was a collaborative effort that was waged on many fronts ... but particularly against organized labor, and this included the labor movement within the newspaper industry.”
- McCarthy’s “favorite tactic was to compare critical newspapers to the Daily Worker.”
- The New York Times opposed segregation. In retaliation, hard-line segregationist Senator Eastland punished Times journalists. Yet “evidence suggests that the committee’s main target was not the Times but the Newspaper Guild for its efforts to unionize newsrooms.”
- “As it did a half-century later, the Supreme Court refused to recognize any First Amendment protection for ... journalists. Moreover, in both 1955 and 2005, the newspaper industry stood divided on whether constitutional protection extends beyond the publishers’ offices to include the journalists who gather the news and serve as a check on the government.”

Investigating Journalists

Harvey Matusow was a major Hoover informant. In all, he smeared 244 individuals. He was not a journalist but claimed to have “attended Communist Party meetings, caucuses, in the Newspaper Guild in New York.” When the Sunday section of the Times had a staff of 87, including two copyboys, Matusow said that the section “alone has 126 dues-paying Communists.” Later, he could name only a woman in the ad department and a copyboy.

In 1954, Matusow confided to Methodist Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam that “many of his accusations had been lies, including accusations against party leaders who had been convicted in 1952 under the Smith Act.” Matusow then “filed an affidavit with the federal district court in New York describing his testimony against party leaders as a lie.” In 1955, he announced that he would “right some of the wrongs” in a book he’d written. Its title was apt: “False Witness.” In 1956, Matusow was sentenced to five years for perjury.

Two Times copyeditors, Robert Shelton and Alden Whitman, were among the many journalists in “Dark Days” who, in Alwood’s words, “stood on moral principle and refused to answer questions before investigative committees.” Shelton declared that “because I am a loyal American, I must, as a matter of principle, challenge questions into my political beliefs and associations as a violation of my rights under the [F]irst [A]mendment to the Constitution.”

When he’d finished speaking, subcommittee counsel Julien Sourwine asked, “Do you, sir, consider membership in the Communist Party a matter of political belief?”

Shelton’s response was eloquent:

This subcommittee is nudging the end of my copy pencil, it is peeking over my shoulder as I work. This subcommittee is engendering the fear that soon it will be looking into newsrooms all over the country. If, as a result of my being called here, I am put under mental pressure to change one word or sentence in material that I edit,

an abridgment of freedom of the press will have taken place Your question acts as a form of 'prior restraint' on publishing, telling newspaper executives who would or should not work on their staffs It is my understanding that the [F]irst [A]mendment is the door to America's freedom of conscience It can be opened at any time from within; it cannot be forced open with the wedges of a subpoena, with threats of contempt citation, or in any other form.

Whitman acknowledged having worked for the Communist Party in the 1930's, but he testified that he'd left it in 1948, three years before joining the Times. He, too, stood firm, refusing to name party colleagues. "My private affairs, my beliefs, my associations, are not, I believe, proper subjects for investigation by this subcommittee," he said. He made an additional, powerful and correct legal argument: The hearings, he observed, lacked a legislative purpose.

Shelton, Whitman and two other journalists were cited by the committee for contempt, and the Senate approved the citations—unanimously—and sent them to a grand jury for indictment. Twice convicted, they sued to challenge the citations. At a second trial, Senator Eastland took the stand. "In response to dozens of questions," Alwood writes, "he answered, 'I don't remember,' or 'I can't recall.'" It isn't clear whether Eastland's memory lapses outnumbered those of former Attorney General Alberto Gonzales.

Shelton never gave up, repeatedly appealing his convictions. In September 1963 he won a two-to-one decision in a court of appeals. Sourwine, the opinion held, "had violated Shelton's rights by breaking the committee's own rules governing subpoenas." Shelton's victory, Alwood writes, "cleared the way for an appeal by Whitman." Surprisingly, in late 1964 government lawyers filed motions to dismiss the case against Whitman. In the end, the Supreme Court reversed the convictions with a five-to-two decision.

In the meantime, the Times made sure the two men "would have no

influence over news content," Alwood writes. Shelton was reassigned to copyedit entertainment features and reviews. During the 1960's and 1970's, after his court cases ended, he left the Times and helped to launch the careers of musicians and singers, including Janis Ian, Bob Dylan, Janis Joplin, Judy Collins, the Mothers of Invention, and Peter, Paul and Mary. Whitman was reassigned to the obit desk. His daughter "found herself ostracized by her friends when a local newspaper reported the news of her father's testimony on its front page," Alwood notes. When Whitman's marriage ended, he blamed the breakup "on the social strains that resulted from his appearance before the Eastland committee."

Whitman spent nearly 10 of his 14 years at the Times "trying to vindicate himself and remove the stigma attached to his social activism during the 1930's." This did not deter the FBI from tracking Whitman, among other journalists, for many years afterward. Just before the 1972 election, Alwood discloses that:

... the FBI alerted the Secret Service to Whitman's Communist background, although it is difficult to understand how an obituary writer posed a threat to the President or national security. Whitman's relegation to the obit desk revolutionized newspaper obituary writing as he became the celebrated practitioner of the form, turning the worst job on most newspapers into an art.

"Dark Days" documents, too, the indifference of many newspaper and broadcasting executives, editors and Newspaper Guild leaders to the erosion of First Amendment freedoms. It reveals big-name journalist informers, including CBS correspondent Winston Burdett. Inspiringly, it tells of stand-up guys, including I.F. Stone, who put up bail for indicted Times staffer Seymour Peck; Joseph Rauh, Jr., a founder of the liberal and fiercely anticommunist Americans for Democratic Action, who represented Robert Shelton, and former Antitrust Division chief Thurman

Arnold who, while a corporate lawyer, represented Alden Whitman. Simply to list, and describe in few words, each courageous journalist and innocent victim in "Dark Days"—never mind the others—would take far more space than any prudent editor would allow.

Unfortunately, "Dark Days" becomes quite intricate at times and is marred by a few instances of carelessness and writing that is not always felicitous. "In the late 1960's, Shelton had moved to Britain, where he died in December 1965 at age 69." Read the sentence literally, and Shelton moved after he died. The Guild is sometimes the "guild." There are "communists," then "Communists." The index omits Louis Lyons, curator of the Nieman Foundation during the McCarthy era, whose is quoted in the book. (I was a Nieman Fellow in Lyons's final class and have great admiration and affection for him.)

Louis Lyons's Warning

What Lyons has to say in the book requires some background. McCarthy had hauled up New York Post editor James Wechsler. He, Whitman and Peck, according to Alwood, "had joined the Young Communist League as college students before embarking on careers in journalism."

Did being a newspaperman, McCarthy asked Wechsler, confer "some special immunity" from being called to testify?

"I ask no special immunity," the editor replied. "I say only that I believe I am here because I am a newspaperman and because of what I have done as a newspaperman."

McCarthy tried to keep a transcript of the hearing secret, but reporters covering the story joined Wechsler in a successful effort to make them public. The American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) then appointed a committee to study them. Despite a three-week effort, the 11 members, led by The Washington Post's J. Russell Wiggins, could not reach a consensus. But a minority—Wiggins plus three others—provided what Alwood calls Wechsler's "vindication," and it is

memorable: “A press put to the frequent necessity of explaining its news and editorial policies to a United States Senator armed with the full powers of the government of the United States, is not a free press—whether the Senator is a good or a bad Senator.”

Few newspapers defended Wechsler, reflecting the inability of the entire ASNE committee to do so. This disturbed Lyons and led him to offer, in an address he made to the Guild’s 1953 national convention, what Alwood calls “a stern warning”: “They are short-sighted, those editors who took the attitude: This isn’t serious. It didn’t touch us. Do not send [sic] for whom the bell tolls. It tolls for you.”

Alwood contends that “conservative newspapers defended the [Eastland] committee.” Certainly, Justice William O. Douglas would disagree that

it was “conservative” to defend this wrecking crew, as he suggested in his concurring opinion in the Supreme Court decision reversing Shelton and Whitman’s convictions. He argued that a strict reading of the Constitution wouldn’t lead to such a defense. Douglas wrote:

Under our system of government, I do not see how it is possible for Congress to pass a law saying whom a newspaper or news agency or magazine shall or shall not employ. I see no justification for the Government investigating the capacities, leanings, ideology, qualifications, prejudices or politics of those who collect or write the news. It was conceded on oral argument that Congress would have no power to establish standards of fitness [or] to prescribe loyalty tests for those who

work for the press. Since this [Internal Security Subcommittee] investigation can have no legislative basis as far as the press is concerned, what then is its constitutional foundation?

I’d argue that the true conservatives were Lyons, the ASNE minority, Shelton, Whitman, Wechsler and numerous other protectors of the First Amendment named in Alwood’s remarkable book. ■

Morton Mintz, a 1964 Nieman Fellow, was a Newspaper Guild member throughout his 42 years on the staffs of the St. Louis Star-Times and St. Louis Globe-Democrat, both long defunct, and then at The Washington Post. In the 1960’s he was a chair of the Guild unit at the Post.

Teaching Multimedia Journalism

Online resources—many of them free of charge—are used as the textbooks for training the next generation of journalists.

BY REBECCA MACKINNON

News organizations throughout the world require journalists to report for multiple platforms, including the Web. In my role as a journalism professor at the University of Hong Kong and the faculty member responsible for our core New Media Workshop, it is my job to fully prepare our students for this reality. This means no one graduates without basic Web literacy and exposure to the tools and methods of online storytelling.¹

With media technology changing rapidly from month-to-month, it is hard to find classroom texts to support our teaching. Slow-churning

wheels of textbook publishing can’t keep up. This means that traditional textbook publishing currently plays no role in my introductory new media class. Instead, I depend on nonprofit organizations and other academic institutions—and the foundations that support them—who are assembling valuable teaching resources quickly and publishing them online for free.

Before I began teaching online journalism at the University of Hong Kong in January 2007, I researched exhaustively to see what textbooks and references other online journalism courses have been using. All that I

could find were badly out of date—with the newest one widely used in journalism programs and recommended by UNESCO for international use being James Foust’s “Online Journalism: Principles and Practices of News for the Web,” published in 2005. His book is solid and covers some of the things I needed to do in my classes, but the feedback I got from students during the first semester when I used it was largely negative. They told me it didn’t cover enough of what I taught in my class. The material was not up-to-date enough to justify the cost of the textbook for them.

¹ The New Media Workshop is a required course for the masters’ degree in journalism, and soon an undergraduate equivalent will be required. MacKinnon wrote on the Web site for the New Media Workshop a piece entitled “Web-savvy young journalists in demand—and Chinese language doesn’t hurt either.” It can be found on the Web site at <http://jmsc.hku.hk/blogs/newmedia>.

Journalism 2.0

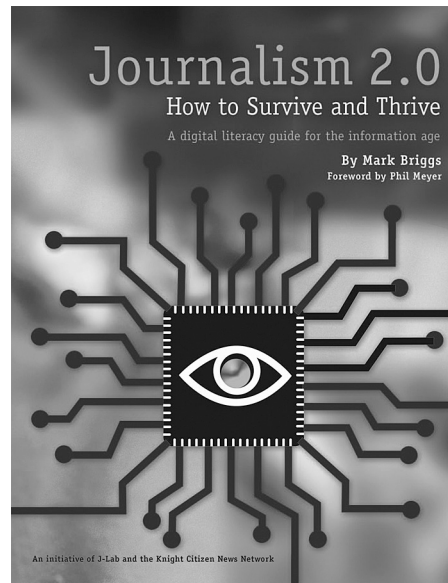
I was thrilled, therefore, when Mark Briggs's "Journalism 2.0: How to Survive and Thrive" appeared last summer—downloadable for free online, thanks to the Knight Foundation—whose goal is to educate as many journalists as possible. Subtitled "a digital literacy guide for the information age," the book is broken down into logical, practical chunks so that the reader can focus on what she finds to be new and quickly skim over what is already known.

"Journalism 2.0" seems targeted at an audience of working journalists in American news organizations who want to update their Web literacy and online reporting skills. From where I sit in Hong Kong, it does not appear to have been written with news organizations beyond the United States and perhaps Western Europe in mind, nor does it seem meant as a text for university journalism courses. But it turns out to be a heck of a lot better than nothing, which is what I had when I began teaching last winter. [See accompany box for description of other free online texts and resources.]

The first chapter introduces basic Web concepts, such as the difference between the Internet and the Web. It then describes how browsers work, how to use and read RSS feeds, instant messaging, e-mail groups, and FTP. In the next chapter, it takes us into social networking sites like MySpace and social bookmarking sites like del.icio.us and Technorati. Subsequent chapters deal with gadgets that all journalists should be familiar with and new reporting methods using spreadsheets, databases and a process known as "crowdsourcing." Later on, specific "how-to's" occur: how to blog; how to report news for the Web; how to do digital audio and podcasting; how to shoot and manage digital photos; how to shoot video for news and features; how to do basic video editing and, finally, how to write scripts and do voice-overs.

In structuring my courses, I don't follow the book's chapter sequence: I assign different chunks from various

sections as needed. I find that the best way to get students started on the Web is to have each of them set up a blog right away. This means I devote my first class to teaching some Web fundamentals, such as introducing browsers and getting their blogs set up. Next we cover RSS so they can discover the feeds that their blogs, as well as all news sites, are generating.



The guidance Briggs provides in his chapter on shooting and editing video offers a good start for people who would like to get a taste for the basics and are good at teaching themselves. But more training and practice are needed for the graduating student to claim that he or she can shoot and edit video to usable standards. Thus, every journalism student is required to take a separate, semester-long video class. In our New Media Workshop, we focus on students learning how to create basic audio-visual slide shows using programs such as Soundslides. Briggs barely mentions the existence of audio-visual slide shows. Given the extent to which news Web sites use such slide shows as a powerful storytelling medium—and that competent audio-visual slide shows are much less difficult to produce than video—it might have been a good idea for him to include a slide show how-to chapter.

Two of Briggs's chapters—Digital

Audio and Podcasting, Shooting and Managing Digital Photos—are excellent basic primers with good tips for recording audio and shooting digital pictures, although I do not find them thorough enough to use on their own as teaching materials. I was also surprised that Briggs made no mention of wikis—other than a brief mention of Wikipedia. All of the nonprofit media startups I've been involved with have used wikis as an essential internal collaboration tool, and many news organizations use public wikis as a way to invite public participation in gathering information on stories through crowdsourcing.

Despite these issues, even my more Web-savvy students told me that they enjoy Briggs's book, find it readable and relevant. Nobody has claimed they already knew everything covered in "Journalism 2.0." I find that even most of the younger graduate students and undergraduates—"digital natives" who are familiar with blogging, Facebook and instant messaging—have given scant thought to their journalistic implications. They might know how to play around and socialize on the Web, but when it comes to applying these skills to serious journalism they still have a lot to learn.

The View From Hong Kong

Because I teach in Hong Kong, half of my graduate students are from mainland China, most of my undergraduates grew up in Hong Kong, and the rest are an international melting pot. Many felt that Briggs's book fails to recognize that there is a world of journalism beyond the United States.

Several students expressed disappointment that this book does not acknowledge how journalists and citizens can use their new Web skills to fight political censorship as well as indirect commercial pressures that threaten free speech. "Briggs has neglected to mention at any point in his book that the optimism and exchange of ideas rely very much on an information-free and open society," wrote Elmy Lung, a graduate student and Hong Kong native. "The book addresses none of

the problems of how the media might benefit (or even face further suppression) from the Internet in other parts of the world outside the U.S.”²

When it comes to preparing the next generation of journalists for the future of news instead of its past,

or helping midcareer professionals upgrade their skills, the commercial book publishing industry is unlikely to be the place where teachers or practitioners will turn. Books like Briggs’s “Journalism 2.0” are a valuable, free and instantly accessible addition to a

teacher’s toolbox. ■

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² Lung’s blog post can be found at <http://elmylung.uniblogs.org/2008/01/20/first-assignment-re-readings-digital-edge-award-winners/>.

Valued Classroom Resources

I haven’t found a comparable guide to Briggs’s book written with non-American journalists in mind. The “Introduction to Global Citizen Media,” published by Rising Voices, another Knight Foundation grantee, makes a step toward filling the gap at least for non-professionals. (Disclosure: I am cofounder of Global Voices, Rising Voices’ parent organization.) The “Handbook for Bloggers and Cyber-Dissidents,” published by Reporters Without Borders in 2005, fills another small part of the picture, though some of it is already out of date. Global Voices Advocacy (my earlier disclosure applies) is working to write guides for online anonymity, privacy and circumventing censorship that will be useful for professional or citizen journalists.

Mindy McAdams, Knight Chair for Journalism Technologies and the Democratic Process at the University of Florida, has made available two excellent, freely downloadable guides to audio editing with Audacity. There are also very good, user-friendly online texts to be found at the University of California at Berkeley’s Multimedia and Technology Training Web site and at the J-Lab’s J-Learning Web site. (All of these resources are funded by the Knight Foundation, including McAdams’s chaired professorship. Given this, it would make sense for Briggs’s book to refer readers to these resources for further study and practice.) Web links for these digital journalism resources are listed below. ■—R.M.

Mark Briggs’s “Journalism 2.0: How to Survive and Thrive” is available as a downloadable pdf in English, Spanish and Portuguese editions:
<http://knightcenter.utexas.edu/journalism20.php>

U.C. Berkeley’s Multimedia and Technology Training Web site:
<http://multimedia.journalism.berkeley.edu/>

J-Lab’s J-Learning Web site:
www.j-learning.org/

Mindy McAdams’s audio editing guides:
<http://mindymcadams.com/tojou/2007/part-2-of-the-quick-and-easy-guide-to-audio-editing/>

Handbook for Bloggers and Cyber-Dissidents:
www.rsf.org/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=542

Introduction to Global Citizen Media:
<http://rising.globalvoicesonline.org/guides/>

Global Voices Advocacy tools and guides:
<http://advocacy.globalvoicesonline.org/tools/>

Journalism 2.0—And Then What?

A book introduces journalists to multimedia storytelling tools, and someone who has used it offers a guide to navigating its lessons.

BY CHRISTINE GORMAN

In their own time journalists have weathered a lot of tempests, but navigating the Scylla and Charybdis of the digital straits requires an entirely new level of sang-froid and fortitude. While giant media corporations scramble to protect their profits in the face of declining advertising revenues, their employees and contractors engage in a high-stakes game of musical chairs. Correspondents moonlight as bloggers on the Web sites of their own programs and publications. Writers pack video cameras when they go out to report a story. Photographers tote digital recorders, and reporters who have mastered nut grafs and a few lines of computer code are the new must-hires at many Web ventures.

To negotiate the ever-changing landscape, journalists should check out “Journalism 2.0: How to Survive and Thrive,” by Mark Briggs, assistant managing editor for interactive news at The News Tribune in Tacoma, Washington. Billed as a “digital literacy guide for the information age” and available as an online pdf in Spanish, Portuguese and English, “Journalism 2.0” is a handy compendium of concepts, emerging software standards, and equipment advice for the 21st century journalist, whether a dedicated amateur or a pro. Briggs’s writing has a very friendly tone, reassuring “traditionalists” that if they know how to write an e-mail or send an attachment, they, too, can prosper in an increasingly interactive news world. But in case the carrot doesn’t work, the not so subtle subtext is clear: “adapt or die.”

My guess is that “Journalism 2.0” works best as a survey course on multimedia for folks who still don’t have a lot of experience in the field.

Practicing journalists are going to get the most out of this guide by picking one or two areas on which to focus and then delving deeper than an introductory text, such as this one, will take them. Without this kind of pick-and-choose approach, journalists are likely to feel panicked by all there is to absorb—editing audio, shooting video, and designing Web sites, to mention a few. Instead, the wise approach is to build on acquired skills and experiences and look for ways to increase their value.

For a print journalist, this might mean devoting six months to getting really good at recording and editing audio. What are the ambient sounds that allow your listeners to place the locale or mood of a story right away? What audio levels give the best results for a podcast or voice-over? By still relying on all of the same foundational skills of a print reporter—finding the right person to interview, ferreting out the unexpected detail—the one new element is to add sound to give the story being told a new dimension.

For a photographer, a goal might be to master the interactive slide show by learning how to mesh audio and stills with a low-cost program such as Soundslides.¹ Which stories are best told in a single iconic shot and which demand expansion through a timeline? When does a series of still images deliver a greater impact than a video? While still dealing with light and mood and f-stops, voice and timbre are strengthened.

After a few months devoted to feeling more secure about the basics of podcasting or interactive slide shows, it is time to see what new media technology or other applications can be used

to showcase your various journalistic skills. Every few months, as new programs and devices surface, be ruthless, this guidebook advises, about which ones will serve your purposes best. Another piece of good advice: Write up your top five “lessons learned” for your own blog or your employer’s Web site and watch comments—many of them helpful—pour in.

A trend I’m paying more attention to is convergence among computer programmers and journalists. Database reporting and Computer Assisted Reporting have been used for decades to cover election results, economic statistics, and social trends. (CBS News used UNIVAC I to call the 1952 presidential election for Dwight Eisenhower hours before the national results were in.) What is changing now is the ease with which databases can be generated and even compared to one another in so-called “mash-ups.” One of the best known examples comes from Adrian Holovoty, who figured out how to display crime statistics from the Chicago Police Department on Google Maps and now lots of news Web sites are using this technique to display such statistics.

Going forward, journalists will have to evaluate ever more databases, figuring out the right questions to ask and finding effective ways to gain access to available databases throughout the world. Or journalists can lead the way by developing and sharing their databases, as a team from Folha de São Paulo recently did in Brazil. Led by Fernando Rodrigues, Folha journalists collected government-mandated financial statements of every political candidate throughout the country. [See Rodrigues’s article on page 71.]

¹ www.soundslides.com

The newspaper transformed these raw numbers into a giant database that they used to compare statements across several years. By doing this, the Folha team discovered that being elected to office often increased a politician's declared wealth by 90 percent or more. Work on this project cost the paper several hundred thousand dollars. With this kind of information in hand, Folha reported on the top national political races and then, in a brilliant marketing move

(by which democracy also prospered), the newspaper opened the database for public consumption. Voters could check on their representatives, and regional newspapers filed stories on local candidates using the information Folha aggregated.²

For those journalists who don't excel at generating databases—or who don't work for a news organization like Folha with the willingness to devote resources to such a project—partnering with a friendly programmer might be the best

way to explore what's possible. If the Web 2.0 environment for news has taught us anything, it is that we are better off not going it alone. ■

Christine Gorman, a 2008 Global Health Nieman Fellow, was a longtime senior health writer for Time magazine. She now blogs about global health issues and journalism at www.global-healthreport.com and maintains her own Web page at www.cgormanhealth.com.

² For more information, in Portuguese, visit www.politicosdobrasil.com.br.

Nieman Notes

Journalists Portray a Complex, Self-Destructive Texas Politician

Two reporters encounter roadblocks in telling the flamboyant story of Bob Bullock.

BY DAVE MCNEELY AND JIM HENDERSON

Writing a biography of the late Bob Bullock, it seemed, would be a quick lap. Over three decades, we had amassed boxes of material on him and a catalogue of rich personal experiences. We had hundreds of living, willing witnesses, the detailed work of a generation of our fellow journalists, and a trove of his papers in an archive at Baylor University.

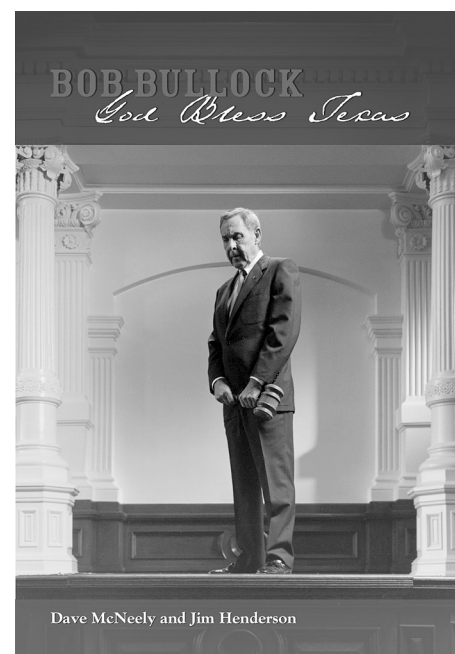
One unforeseen hitch: We underestimated Bob Bullock.

Because he never achieved rock star status, you reasonably might ask: Who was Bob Bullock? Why was he worthy of a biography? How do you underestimate a dead guy?

The answers to the first two questions are the same. Bullock was an

ethically challenged, self-destructive, chain-smoking, pistol-packing, fistfighting, bipolar alcoholic with a volatile temper and a tongue that, George W. Bush once allowed, "should be registered as a lethal weapon."

He also was, by most accounts, the most powerful and feared politician to hold office in Texas in the 20th century. In his 41 years of public service—state legislature, secretary of state, state comptroller, and lieutenant governor—Bullock wrote the book on how not to succeed in politics. But he never lost an election and, more amazingly, was never indicted. In fact, he parlayed 16 years as the state's tax collector, who controlled thousands of jobs and set the lid on what the Texas Legislature could spend, into





Governor Ann Richards and Lt. Governor Bob Bullock.
Photo courtesy of Texas Senate Media.

eight years as lieutenant governor—the operator of the engine room of state government.

“He was the largest Texan of our time,” then-Governor Bush said at Bullock’s funeral in 1999. “He was the most atrocious human being who ever lived,” former State Senator A.R. “Babe” Schwartz said of him in a private conversation with us a few years later.

“Complex” doesn’t begin to define Bullock. He was a liberal reformer in a conservative environment, yet he changed, usually for the better, nearly every facet of state government—from election and campaign laws to the recruiting of women and minorities into state jobs to modernizing the tax collection system, to name a few. He did it with a management style that Texas had not seen since its frontier days. He was a bully, a 5-foot, 9-inch, 145-pound verbal terrorist.

He once won an argument with the state’s attorney general by chest-bumping the startled A.R., slapping his cheek, and summing up his case thusly: “You skinny little sonofabitch,

you’re squealing like a pig stuck under a gate.” Using his powers of persuasion to get a state senator from Houston to compromise on a racially sensitive bill, Bullock barked, “Show some leadership, you black motherfucker.”

Then there was Governor Bush, the conservative Republican who Democrat Bullock befriended, nurtured and tutored in the ways and means of governance. But their coziness had its limits. One afternoon, Governor Bush wandered onto the Senate floor uninvited—a protocol no-no, but often violated. Lt. Gov. Bullock, angry since Bush appointed the wife of his last election opponent

to a state board, put down his gavel, stepped down from the podium, got close to the governor, gazed up into his eyes and said, “You’re a cocky little motherfucker, aren’t you?”

Bullock was powerful because he was feared, and feared because he was powerful. The constitution required the lieutenant governor to preside over the senate, but the senators, for sake of order and efficiency, made his authority almost dictatorial. He appointed committee members and chairmen and controlled the flow of legislation—who would be recognized to present bills, to which committees bills would go, which senators got to help him write the rough draft of the state budget.

Weapons of Persuasion

If that were not enough, Bullock had other weapons of intimidation. Guns. The tales of his earlier drinking days trailed him when he became a sober lieutenant governor.

At one of his favorite watering holes one bourbon-soaked evening,

a waiter displeased him, and Bullock expressed his displeasure while holding a pistol to the man’s head. At another bar at another time, Bullock invited a reporter he disliked out to the patio. He sat down across from the reporter, laid a pistol on the table and said, “Sometimes I get so mad at you I want to shoot you. I wanted you to know that.”

Even sober, Bullock was likely to be packing. Suspecting that his son was hanging out in a drug house, Bullock went to extract him and was spotted by a neighbor approaching the house with a large sidearm. As he walked into a San Antonio museum to address a gathering of businessmen, a pistol fell out of Bullock’s pocket and skittered loudly across the marble floor. An aide calmly pocketed it, and the event proceeded.

His personal life also was anathema to political longevity. An inveterate womanizer, he was married five times, suffered chronic health problems from the abuse of alcohol and cigarettes, and built a rap sheet of DUI arrests. He drove recklessly—cars and motorcycles—and depression drove him one lonely night to playing Russian roulette.

Bullock and George W. Bush

Despite it all, Bullock prospered, achieving a level of influence in Texas that the governors who served with him could only envy. Depending on the point of view, he is often blamed for, or credited with, the political rise of George W. Bush by playing a backstage role in Bush’s defeat of Democrat Ann Richards in 1994 and by his endorsements of Bush for reelection as governor in 1998 and for president in 2000.

Bullock and Richards had been drinking buddies in the 1970’s until Richards checked in for alcoholism treatment in 1980—“drunk school,” Bullock called it. Bullock followed suit in 1981. In 1990, he was elected lieutenant governor, and she was elected governor.

The late columnist Molly Ivins, close friends with both, thought it

bothered Bullock that Richards had gotten the governor's job he lusted for. "She could get elected governor, and he couldn't," Ivins said.

After Bush upset Richards, Bullock coached him in the ways of bipartisanship and helped him enact his legislative agenda. Had Bullock chosen to do so, he could have made Bush's term a shambles, thereby derailing his presidential ambitions. Instead, courted by Bush, he became the

bipartisanship merit badge that Bush showed to the nation. Bullock didn't live long enough to see his protégé reach the White House.

Controlling Even After Death

He died much as he had lived. In his last days, he instructed an aide to write his obituary. Reading the piece, Bullock slashed phrases, sentences, even whole paragraphs. "This is going to be a paid obit," he snarled, "and I don't want the goddamn Austin American-Statesman to make any money off me." When a minister came to offer spiritual comfort, Bullock offered him a drink.

If ever a life cried out for biographical publication, it was Bullock's. We signed contracts with the University of Texas Press and were preparing to hit the cruise control when things got curious. Nearly everywhere, we found generous cooperation from that vast network of Bullock colleagues, cronies, associates, drinking buddies, and childhood friends.

But—we began coming across men and women who had known him well and, no doubt, had revealing stories to tell, but politely declined to speak with us. One even notified the Baylor University library that her oral history



Bullock and George W. Bush. Photo by Ralph Barrera/Courtesy of Austin American-Statesman.

interview was to be embargoed until further notice.

When we first approached the library to see the Bullock papers, we were given access to a few oral histories. There were stingy restrictions on the

At another bar at another time, Bullock invited a reporter he disliked out to the patio. He sat down across from the reporter, laid a pistol on the table and said, 'Sometimes I get so mad at you I want to shoot you. I wanted you to know that.'

number of pages we could copy, but otherwise we were accommodated.

On our second visit, we were shut out. "We want to make sure that this material is not used in a negative way," the curator explained. On subsequent visits, the answer was the same. Even

Bullock's extensive collection of newspaper and magazine articles was off limits. It was not a formidable obstacle, but one we might have anticipated had we been alert to the omens.

In the spring of 2001, almost two years after his death, state officials gathered to dedicate the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum. Many of his old friends and enemies spoke softly about him, sometimes agreeing to press interviews

only on the condition of anonymity. "He might be listening," one of them whispered.

Several years later, a journalist visited the Texas State Cemetery, where Bullock was buried and whose restoration he had overseen during his last term as lieutenant governor.

Repeatedly, when the reporter asked why something was the way it was at the cemetery, caretaker Harry Bradley, who had been the first volunteer in Bullock's first campaign for lieutenant governor, replied, "That's the way Mr. Bullock wanted it."

Finally, the reporter said, "But Bullock's dead."

Bradley arched an eyebrow and smiled. "Are you sure?" ■

Dave McNeely and Jim Henderson, authors of "Bob Bullock: God Bless Texas," first met as Nieman Fellows in the class of 1976. Their friendship continued in Texas. McNeely has been a Texas political columnist for decades. Henderson, the author of three previous books, reported for the Tulsa World, Dallas Times Herald, and the Houston Chronicle. Information about their book can be found at the University of Texas Press at <http://www.utexas.edu/utpress/books/mcnbob.html>.

1953

Melvin Mencher's book, "News Reporting and Writing," has had its 11th edition published by McGraw Hill Higher Education. The textbook, which contains the work of a number of Nieman Fellows, remains in print form, but other material is online. Mencher writes, "Everything was in print form in the early editions. Then, the ancillaries were placed on CDs. Now only the textbook is on paper. But given the preferences of students for the screen over the printed page, I suspect the 12th edition will be available online."

1957

Anthony Lewis's new book, "Freedom for the Thought That We Hate: A Biography of the First Amendment," published by Basic Books, tells the story of how the First Amendment was established. Lewis has written extensively on the law and First Amendment issues, both during his years as a columnist for The New York Times and in books such as "Make No Law: The Sullivan Case and the First Amendment," and "Gideon's Trumpet," his first book. Also, Lewis will no longer be teaching a class on the First Amendment and media law at Columbia University. "I'll be 81 years old and will have taught that class for 25 years," Lewis said in an article on Syracuse University's Web site. "I just thought it was time to stop."

Frederick Pillsbury, retired Boston Globe reporter and editorial writer, died on New Year's Day in Gardner, Massachusetts. He was 85.

Pillsbury, characterized by the Globe as "a tall, patrician presence in the newsroom who punctuated conversations with his deep chuckle," began writing newspaper editorials upon his college graduation from Harvard University, first at the Patriot Ledger, then The Boston Herald. After his Nieman year, he moved to Philadelphia to work for the Bulletin, returning to

Nieman Fellows Receive ASNE Awards

Two Nieman Fellows were winners of the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) awards for distinguished writing. **Kevin Cullen**, NF '03, a Boston Globe columnist, received the Batten Medal for a collection of columns he wrote "on local people facing adversity." Cullen spent 23 years as a Globe reporter before making the switch to columnist last July. **Anne Hull**, NF '95, received the Distinguished Writing Award for Local Accountability, with Dana Priest, for "Stories exposing the deep and widespread problems at Walter Reed Army Medical Center." Hull is a reporter for The Washington Post. Also receiving recognition

from ASNE are **Liz Chandler**, NF '03, who was part of The Charlotte (N.C.) Observer team that placed as a finalist in Local Accountability Reporting and **Louise Kiernan**, NF '05, who was a finalist in nondeadline writing. Kiernan is senior editor overseeing staff writing development at the Chicago Tribune and also reports on special projects.

The awards will be presented on April 14th in Washington, D.C.. The Poynter Institute will be publishing the winning entries and interviews with those who received the awards and those who are finalists in the book, "Best Newspaper Writing." ■

Boston and the Herald in 1964. When the Herald's management made the decision to print an editorial endorsement close to voting time without first notifying key editorial writers, Pillsbury left the paper and started working for The Boston Globe, where he was "an immediate success" reporting on transportation, colleges and politics and writing political columns, recalled Anne Wyman, a former colleague at the paper.

"Fred always struck me as being a thoughtful and open-minded person as an editorial writer I never heard him say a cruel word," said Bruce Davidson, who served on the Globe's editorial board. "Critical, yes, but cruel, no."

In addition to writing, Pillsbury's family cited his passion for photography, music, painting and sailing. At age 68 he sailed the Atlantic with a friend, an experience he then wrote about in 1991. During World War II, after graduating from high school, he drove ambulances for the British 8th Army in North Africa and later served as a driver for the Marines. Pillsbury also published some short fictional stories.

Services were held in Petersham, where Pillsbury lived, and the burial was in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The family has asked that memorial donations be sent to the Nieman Foundation. His experience here, his son Sam said, was very meaningful.

1969

Richard C. Longworth, former Chicago Tribune correspondent and now senior fellow at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, is the author of a new book, "Caught in the Middle: America's Heartland in the Age of Globalism," published by Bloomsbury USA. Longworth, who won an Overseas Press Club Award for writing on globalization, takes a look at how globalization has transformed the great Midwestern swatch between Ohio and Iowa and what the region can do to compete in this new globalized world.

1974

Ellen Goodman has received the Ernie Pyle Lifetime Achievement Award

First Two Women Nieman Fellows, Classmates From 1946, Die Within Days of Each Other

Mary Ellen Leary Sherry and **Charlotte FitzHenry Robling**, the first two women to be appointed Nieman Fellows and both from the Nieman class of 1946, died within just two days of each other in February. Sherry died on the 25th of pneumonia, at the age of 94, in an Orinda, California convalescent hospital. Robling died on the 27th of natural causes, at the age of 90, in Beulah, Michigan.

Sherry covered politics in California for over 50 years, after first writing about social welfare and public housing. She was able to get the political beat at the San Francisco News because, in 1943, many of her male colleagues were involved in World War II. In 1944, she went to Sacramento, where she became the first woman to cover the state legislature.

After her Nieman year, on her return to California, Sherry still wasn't allowed to join the San Francisco Press Club nor was she invited to the Capitol Press Association's annual dinner. As her obituary in the San Francisco Chronicle said, "Early on, she learned to be tough." Sherry wrote editorials for the News-Call Bulletin, and in 1964 became West Coast correspondent for Scripps-Howard. Over the years, she also wrote for *The Economist*, *The Nation*, and *Pacific News Service*. She wrote a book, "Phantom Politics."

In an article Sherry wrote in the Summer 1979 Nieman Reports Special Issue on Women and Journalism, edited by Tenney Lehman (see the End Note on page 108), Sherry wrote: "The only sex-related rebuff I experienced occurred when I tried to enter the Harvard Law School, just to sample one class. Professor Thomas Reed Powell was famous for a certain flamboyance in the classroom.... He often came to Nieman functions and was a personable, provocative figure. So I said I planned to show up one

day at his class. 'You may not,' he said firmly. 'No woman comes to class at the Harvard Law School.'

"For heaven's sake, why not?' I asked. He weighed his reply. 'Well, we don't have the proper toilet facilities in the building,' he said finally. 'How long is your lecture?' I inquired, and guessed that I could forego a ladies' room for a couple of hours.... He was adamant. So was I. One bitter cold morning I set out for an 8 a.m. lecture, booted and bundled against the weather, my head swathed in a wool scarf, mittened hands clutching my green bag. As I plodded through library stacks in the all-male throng en route to the appointed classroom, a door flung open, blocking the narrow passageway—a door labeled on the side thrust towards me, 'Men.' The emerging figure was Professor Powell, and he spotted me. Holding the door open as barricade, he planted himself in my path: 'Where do you think you are going?' I didn't have the phrase 'male chauvinist' on my tongue in those days, but I was so exasperated by the quaint effort to stem the tide that it made me laugh. I turned on my heel and left. I knew the barriers were falling. Within two years, as I understand it, women students were enrolling at Harvard Law School."

Sherry is survived by a daughter, a stepdaughter, and two sisters. More of her experiences can be read in an oral history at links.sfgate.com/ZCPK.

Charlotte Robling began her career as a reporter and photographer in 1940 with the Bloomington, Illinois Pantagraph. She moved to The Associated Press in 1943, based in Chicago. Her first assignment was to report the noon price fixings from the Chicago Board of Trade. Her AP obituary continues, "This provoked resistance from the all-male board of Trade because Robling, a lanky

blond, would become the first woman to walk on the Board's trading floor since a state visit by the future Queen Marie of Rumania decades earlier. The traders threw corn and wheat at her on her first appearance." Her editor, Carroll Arimond, "stood by his reporter."

After a while in that position, Robling was promoted and covered urban issues and city planning, which she studied during her Nieman year. However, she had trouble finding courses in that field at Harvard and, in a Nieman program first, she arranged to take classes off-campus, at MIT. After her Nieman year, Robling taught journalism at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa.

In the Special Issue on Woman and Journalism, Robling wrote about arriving in Cambridge: "Of course we were apprehensive. Thirty-four years later Mary Ellen Leary and I have confessed to each other that we were scared to death. But apprehension was allayed fast, especially by [the late] Louis Lyons and the late Arthur Schlesinger, Sr., and by our male counterparts and their wives.

"Our arrival had been too well-publicized—our pictures in *Time*, fan mail; we became uncomfortable interviewees, not interviewers. But once we were in Cambridge, everyone made an extra effort to settle us into the nonroutine of the Nieman year as quickly and comfortably as possible.

"Discrimination was minimal. Widener Library wanted to hide us with the Radcliffe women, but somehow, without a placard or a march, we soon were sitting in the main reading room with Harvard men. The press box at the football stadium was off-limits to women—I didn't contest."

Robling is survived by four children. ■

Nieman Foundation to Administer The Worth Bingham Prize for Investigative Reporting

The Nieman Foundation, in its continuing tradition of reinforcing the importance and relevance of watchdog journalism, has agreed to administer the Worth Bingham Prize for Investigative Reporting. The Bingham Memorial Fund was established in 1967 by Joan Bingham and her daughter Clara, to honor Joan's husband, Worth Bingham, who died in an automobile accident in 1966. The prize was first presented in 1967 to William Lambert, from Life magazine. The award is designed to "honor newspaper or magazine investigative reporting of stories

of national significance where the public interest is ill served."

The Bingham Prize has recently been presented at the National Press Foundation's annual dinner in Washington, D.C.. In 2009, the award presentation will move to Lippmann House, where the award recipient will present a talk on investigative reporting. The winner will be the first to receive \$20,000; the prize had been \$10,000.

For more information about the establishment of the Worth Bingham Prize, see **Bob Giles's** Curator's Corner on page 3. ■

from the National Society of Newspaper Columnists. Mike Argento, president of the society, said in an article in The Boston Globe, "It's an overdue honor. I see Ellen as one of the pioneering ... feminist columnists and a pioneer in the personal essay, where she melds personal experience with public policy arguments." The award is named after Pyle, a war correspondent who was killed in World War II.

Goodman became a reporter at the Globe in 1967 and was named a columnist four years later. Her columns went into national syndication with the Washington Post Writers Group in 1976. In 1980, she won the Pulitzer Prize for Distinguished Commentary for columns on topics that included, the Globe article said, "marriage and rape, adolescence, her reflections on John F. Kennedy, the trauma of turning 40, and the problems of public distrust as exemplified by the nuclear accident at Three Mile Island." In 1988 she received the Hubert H. Humphrey Civil Rights Award "for her dedication to the cause of racial equality."

Goodman has written a number of books and compilations of her columns, including "Turning Points," "Close to Home," "Keeping in Touch" and, with

Nieman classmate **Patricia O'Brien**, "I Know Just What You Mean: The Power of Friendship in Women's Lives."

1982

Ramindar Singh writes, "... I have moved from Mumbai, where I ran a TV channel for three years, back to Delhi and have resumed my relationship with the Times of India: I now teach the TV journalism course to graduate students at the Times School of Journalism. Let me admit that editing the Times of India was easier work! I frequently refer my students to the Nieman Web site and back issues of Nieman Reports. This is a valuable resource ... online for journalists and journalism students globally."

1984

D'Vera Cohn is now a senior writer for the Pew Research Center, working on reports about demographics and social trends. After taking a buyout from The Washington Post in 2006, she spent a year freelancing and doing consulting for think tanks.

1985

Philip Hilts has been named the third director of the MIT Knight Science Journalism Fellowships, effective this summer. Hilts will also replace Boyce Rensberger, the retiring fellowship director, as a professor of science writing at the graduate school.

"This is the best program of its kind anywhere and has for decades been the source of enthusiasm and high standards that science journalists look to," Hilts said in the MIT announcement. "Now it has got even more to do, helping journalists launch themselves into the electronic future, again with enthusiasm while maintaining high standards. What a great opportunity!"

Hilts covered health and science at The New York Times and was a national staff writer for The Washington Post. He is now a commentator on these issues for NPR and a Spring 2008 Goldsmith Fellow at Harvard's Shorenstein Center, where he is writing about press coverage of global health issues.

His sixth book, "Rx for Survival: Why We Must Rise to the Global Health Challenge," was published in 2005 and named a New York Times Notable Book of the Year.

1990

Thomas Morgan III died on December 24th from complications of AIDS while visiting his family in Southampton, Massachusetts. He was 56. Morgan was a former reporter and editor at The New York Times and was president of the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ) from 1989-1991.

A former Air Force lieutenant, Morgan began his journalism career as a reporter for The Miami Herald. After spending six years at The Washington Post, he moved to the Times, where he was a reporter, editor and business manager.

After being treasurer of the NABJ for six years, Morgan was elected

William Worthy Receives Lyons Award for a Lifetime of Achievement in Journalism

The Nieman Foundation presented the Lyons Award for Conscience and Integrity in Journalism to **William Worthy**, NF '57, on February 22, 2008 at a ceremony at Lippmann House. Worthy, surrounded by friends and colleagues, was honored by Nieman Curator Bob Giles for his “remarkable spirit of courage and independence in his determination to inform readers about places our government wanted to keep hidden from public view.”

During his long and distinguished career, Worthy traveled extensively to report on global events for news outlets that included the Baltimore Afro-American and CBS News. A man of strong convictions and a crusader for equal rights, he challenged U.S. government policies several times and won.

Worthy traveled to both China (1956-1957) and later to Cuba (1961) in violation of U.S. travel restrictions. The U.S. subsequently tried and sentenced him to jail. A federal appeals court overturned that conviction in 1964, ruling that the travel bans were unconstitutional. Worthy continued to report from overseas, visiting North Vietnam, Cambodia and Indonesia before receiving a new passport in 1968.

In 1981, when Worthy and two CBS colleagues returned to Boston from Iran, the FBI and CIA confiscated their baggage and Iranian paper-

back reprints of classified CIA documents. With support from the ACLU, Worthy and his coworkers sued the two government agencies and won \$16,000 in Fourth Amendment damages. Worthy later shared those documents with The Washington Post, which published a five-part series, “Iran Documents Give Rare Glimpse of a CIA Enterprise,” in 1982.

During his career, Worthy won a Ford Foundation grant and freedom of the press awards. And he was immortalized by folk singer Phil Ochs in “Ballad of William Worthy,” which is an account of Worthy’s trip to Cuba and its consequences.

The Nieman Class of 1964 established the Louis M. Lyons Award in honor of the Nieman Foundation Curator who retired that year after leading the institution for a quarter of a century. The award honors displays of conscience and integrity by individuals, groups or institutions in communications. The



William Worthy talks about his career after receiving a Louis M. Lyons Award at the Nieman Foundation. Curator Bob Giles looks on. Photo © 2008 Randy H. Goodman.

current class of Nieman Fellows will also select a recipient of the annual Lyons Award in May. ■

the group’s first openly gay president. With Morgan as president, the NABJ expanded its mentorship and training programs for students and established the Ethel Payne fellowship, which the Times describes as one in which members are given the means to travel to Africa to report stories. Wayne Dawkins, in his book “Rugged Waters: Black Journalists Swim the

Mainstream,” said that when Morgan “became treasurer [of NABJ] in 1983, the association had 334 members and less than \$50,000 in assets. When Mr. Morgan left the post in 1989, the association had 1,600 members and a \$1 million stock portfolio.”

Morgan retired from the Times in 1994 and spent much of his time working on issues involving AIDS. A friend,

Phil Wilson, wrote in his blog: “In the years following his [NABJ] presidency, Morgan was a tireless advocate on behalf of fellow gay and HIV-positive journalists of color, both within NABJ and in the news industry at large. And he always stepped forward to help all journalists learn to cover the HIV/AIDS epidemic smartly and compassionately. ‘I want members to know,’ he told the

NABJ Journal in 1995, ‘that AIDS is a disease no different than things like breast cancer or prostate cancer. It is simply a disease. We are all mortal, and we will all die of something.’” In 1995 he received a lifetime achievement award from the NABJ and was inducted into the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association Hall of Fame in 2005.

Morgan is survived by his partner of 23 years, **Tom Ciano**, and three brothers.

Dianne Solis has won the Frank del Olmo Print Journalist of the Year award from the National Association of Hispanic Journalists (NAHJ) for her work on immigration. Solis, senior writer for The Dallas Morning News, was honored for “telling stories in ways that convey both the logic and the emotion behind the people and

issues involved. Her keen understanding of the frequently emotional issues relating to immigration is apparent, as is her fairness.” The NAHJ announcement went on to say that, “In 2006, during a year when immigration was such a central and controversial topic in the national debate, Solis’s stories on immigration were rewarding reads no matter which side of the debate one takes.”

The award Solis received is named after **Frank del Olmo**, a 1988 Nieman Fellow who died of a heart attack in 2004. Del Olmo worked for more than 30 years at the Los Angeles Times. His job as assistant to the editor of the Times put his name on the masthead—the first Latino to be in that position.

The NAHJ awards were presented at the 22nd Annual Noche de Triunfos Journalism Awards Gala, which

took place in Washington, D.C., in October.

1991

Rui Araujo writes: “My mandate (two years) as ombudsman of the Portuguese daily newspaper *Publico* is over. I’ve just finished writing another nonfiction book, about espionage in Portugal during WWII. Guy Liddell’s diaries (MI5) on Portugal are the starting point. I spent more than one year investigating the issue at the National Archives (in Kew, near London) and at the Portuguese Archives (Foreign Affairs, Navy, Army, National Archives, etc.). I mention essentially foreign intelligence activities in Portuguese territories (Continental Portugal, Azores, Madeira, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Angola and Timor) and

Nieman Foundation Announces I.F. Stone Award Honoring Journalistic Independence

The Nieman Foundation is establishing an award that recognizes journalistic independence and honors the life of investigative journalist I.F. Stone. The I.F. Stone Medal will be presented annually to a journalist whose work captures the spirit of independence, integrity, courage and indefatigability that characterized I.F. Stone’s *Weekly*, published from 1953-1971. Each year, the winner of the award will deliver a speech about his or her own experience with journalistic independence, to be followed by a workshop on the same topic. Stone, who was born in 1907 and worked for several newspapers before establishing his weekly publication, believed fervently that dissenting voices are crucial in helping keep the United States true to its democratic ideals.

“It is this spirit of independent

thinking that challenges punditry and conventional wisdom that we wish to honor,” said Curator Bob Giles. “Today, Izzy Stone serves as a model of the resolute, provocative journalist who worked against injustice and inequity, and loathed pomposity and false posturing, often at personal cost.... We hope that the attention drawn to the award and ideas from the workshop discussion will encourage journalistic independence.” (See Bob Giles’s Curator’s Corner on page 3 for more on this award.)

The I.F. Stone Medal bears a likeness of an issue of *I.F. Stone’s Weekly* with a headline about the Tonkin Gulf affair, “All We Really Know Is That We Fired The First Shots.” Stone was one of only a few journalists who reported on the government’s false allegations that the North Vietnamese had attacked

a U.S. destroyer; it was the claim President Johnson used to persuade the Senate to approve the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, committing the country to the Vietnam War.

A committee of journalists will be formed to establish a process for nominations and selection of the medal winner. It will be chaired by Jeremy J. Stone, Stone’s son, who is the former president of the Federation of American Scientists and current president of Catalytic Diplomacy.

An endowment fund for the I.F. Stone Medal, with an anonymous matching gift of \$100,000, has been established at Harvard University. Donations toward a goal of \$200,000 can be made through the Nieman Foundation. For more information visit the “Make a Gift Page,” at www.nieman.harvard.edu. ■

stories of Portuguese spies—including six journalists—working for the German Secret Service. This is my seventh book. It will be published soon by Oficina do Livro, in Lisbon.

“In the meantime, *The Mariner’s Mirror*, the journal of the Society for Nautical Research (London), should publish soon a long article I wrote about seaman Joshua Slocum in the Azores (1895). He was ‘the first man to sail single-handedly around the world.’ It is an honor. *The Mariner’s Mirror* is ‘internationally recognized as the preeminent English-language journal on naval and maritime history, nautical archaeology, and all aspects of seafaring and lore of the sea.’ I owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Hugh Murphy, Honorary Editor of *The Mariner’s Mirror*, and to the British Council in Lisbon.

“My wife, **Julie**, is at the Portuguese Beaux Arts and keeps painting. Our son, Vincent, is a student and plays jazz and folk music.”

Katherine M. Skiba is a senior writer at U.S. News & World Report and the magazine’s congressional correspondent. Most recently she was Washington correspondent for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, where she worked for 25 years covering local, state, national and foreign news. From Skiba: “I’m thrilled to join this terrific magazine and to focus on Congress, especially during this riveting election year. Story suggestions and tips are most welcome. And if you find yourself in Washington, please do give me a call.” She can be reached at: kskiba@usnews.com or 202-955-2094.

1994

Jerry Kammer agreed to a buy-out arrangement with Copley News Service in 2007 and says he is “looking for an opportunity to write about immigration, an issue I have cared about ever since I covered it in 1986 as a correspondent in Mexico for the Arizona Republic. That was the year Congress passed the now-infamous amnesty legislation that—its sponsors

Tim Golden Delivers Morris Lecture

Tim Golden, NF ’96 and senior writer for *The New York Times*, presented the 2008 Joe Alex Morris, Jr. Memorial Lecture at Lippmann House on February 21st. The lecture honors Morris, the foreign correspondent of the *Los Angeles Times* who was killed in February 1979 while covering the Iranian Revolution in Tehran. The lectureship was created in 1981 by family members, Harvard classmates, and friends.

Golden has written extensively on the treatment of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba and at other U.S.-run prisons abroad, including those in Afghanistan. His reporting has been recognized for

its balanced portrayal of the U.S. military’s tactics in dealing with prisoners that have resulted from broader American policies. He was a member of the *Times* team that won the 1998 Pulitzer Prize for international reporting for articles about drug corruption in Mexico. He also shared a 1987 Pulitzer Prize for national reporting for stories on the Iran-contra affair while working at *The Miami Herald*. Golden’s stories on the drug trade received awards from the Overseas Press Club and the Nancy Dickerson Whitehead Prize.

Golden serves as a member of the Nieman Advisory Board. ■

declared deceptively—would solve the problem of illegal immigration by penalizing employers if they hired the undocumented.” Kammer and colleague Marcus Stern received the Pulitzer for “notable work” in the “disclosure of bribe-taking that sent former Representative Randy Cunningham to prison in disgrace.” The prize was shared with staff members of the Copley News Service and the San Diego Union-Tribune. (See Kammer’s article on page 16 about his investigative work on this story.)

Christina Lamb has a new book, “Small Wars Permitting: Dispatches From Foreign Lands,” published by Harper Press. The book, she says, is “part reportage and part memoir of my 20 years as a foreign correspondent.... There is even a chapter about being a Nieman.” Lamb has spent the past 20 years covering conflicts everywhere from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and Zimbabwe, but it’s not all war—she also writes about dancing samba in the Rio Carnival, searching for uncontacted Indians in the Amazon, and staying on fattening farms in Nigeria. She writes,

“To me the real story in war is not the bang-bang but the lives of those trying to survive behind the scenes.” Lamb’s reporting has appeared in *The Sunday Times*, *Sunday Telegraph*, and *Financial Times*. In Britain, she was named Foreign Correspondent of the Year five times and in 2007 received three major awards as foreign correspondent of the year. Her other books include “The Africa House,” “Waiting for Allah: Pakistan’s Struggle for Democracy,” “The Sewing Circles of Herat: My Afghan Years,” and “House of Stone: The True Story of a Family Divided in War-Torn Zimbabwe.”

1997

Suvendrini Kakuchi resides in Sri Lanka, as country representative of Panos South Asia (www.panosouthasia.org). Panos runs several programs for the regional media that include training, workshops and research projects to foster local journalism at a time when devastating conflicts and economic changes are gripping the region. Kakuchi, a native of Sri

ProPublica's Advisory Board Includes Nieman Fellows

Three Nieman Fellows have been appointed to ProPublica's 10-person Journalism Advisory Board, Paul E. Steiger announced in February. Steiger, ProPublica's editor in chief, said the board will give advice from time to time on areas ranging from ethics to the direction the newsroom's reporting should take. The fellows are **Robert A. Caro**, NF '66, historian and biographer of Robert Moses and Lyndon Johnson; **John S. Carroll**,

NF '72, former editor of the Los Angeles Times and The (Baltimore) Sun, and **Cynthia A. Tucker**, NF '89, editor of the editorial page of The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

ProPublica is described as a "nonprofit newsroom producing journalism in the public interest." (See the article by Steiger on page 30 about the vision and development of ProPublica.) ■

Lanka, spent more than two decades as a foreign correspondent in Tokyo reporting on Japan's relations with Asia. "It's that time in life when chasing deadlines become second choice to sharing experiences with the younger generation of journalists, especially my work in a foreign culture and the year of learning during the Nieman Foundation fellowship," she says.

1998

Philip Cunningham writes, "We're back in the states after 10 years in Asia, basically our first long visit since my Nieman year. I am at Cornell as a visiting fellow in the East Asia Program. After this I return to Doshisha University in Japan, where I teach journalism and film. This is a pleasant interlude for the whole family that serves to give **Xuhong** and the kids a chance to see what life in America, in 'centrally isolated' Ithaca, in any case, is all about. Jintana (9) and Ryan (5) both go to a local elementary school, Xuhong is studying advanced Japanese, and I am attending seminars and giving some lectures."

2000

Benjamín Fernández Bogado has been appointed a Visiting Scholar

2007-2008 at the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies at Harvard University. He is writing and doing research on how media portrayed violence in his home country, Paraguay. His most recent book, "A Sacudirse" [a "shaking up"], was a 2007 bestseller in Paraguay. In October, Benjamín will be living in Mexico as a Knight Fellow, where he plans to open a center for journalism legal studies.

2001

Sunday Dare stopped by Lippmann House on February 29th to talk with the current class of Nieman Fellows at a shop talk seminar about his book, "Guerrilla Journalism: Dispatches from the Underground." The book, which relates the difficult circumstances he faced in reporting in Nigeria, was published by Kraft Books Limited last year. Dare is chief of the Hausa service for the Voice of America based in Washington, D.C..

Ron Stodghill is now editorial director of six magazines published by The Charlotte Observer. In early December, he left The New York Times, where he wrote for the Sunday business section, to take up this new position. On the Talking Biz News Weblog, Stodghill said, "I am pretty jazzed about this new opportunity, but

saddened nonetheless to be leaving what I consider to be one of the top assignments in our industry. Even in this brief time, I have grown fond of many on the desk (especially within our close-knit boutique in Sunday Biz) and will be reaching out personally to many across BizDay over the next few days to bid farewell." Stodghill is also a former editor in chief of Savoy magazine.

2002

Matthew Schofield has returned to McClatchy's Kansas City Star as deputy national editor. Schofield, who began working for the Star in 1984, spent the past four years based in Berlin as European bureau chief first for Knight Ridder and then for McClatchy. During this time he reported from three-dozen countries, embedded in Iraq, and covered Ukraine's Orange Revolution, the Israel-Hezbollah conflict and the London bombings. His previous position at the Star was senior writer. He writes:

"I've become an editor, and while I resisted this path for a long time, convinced it would be a tortuous, soul-destroying one (okay, the soul is probably long gone), I'm finding it's actually really interesting, and kind of fun."

Schofield also wrote that the new home he, his wife, **Lorelei**, and their younger children share "includes extra bedrooms and, someday we hope, actual beds. Please consider this an open invitation to drop by."

2004

Indira Lakshmanan is senior political reporter for Bloomberg News, where she writes enterprise news and features on the presidential race. She had been a foreign correspondent for The Boston Globe for 12 years, covering a wide variety of issues and events in Latin America and Asia. She also covered wars and their aftermath in Afghanistan, Bosnia, East Timor, and Kashmir.

2007

Aboubakr Jamaï, the former publisher of *Le Journal Hebdomadaire*, the leading weekly newspaper in Morocco, has received the first Tully Center for Free Speech Award. He delivered an address at Syracuse University in January 2008. The center, established in the fall of 2006 at Syracuse's S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, brings in speakers and other resources to further the discussion of media law issues. The center is named after journalist Joan A. Tully, a 1969 alumna of the Newhouse School, whose bequest funded the center.

Jamaï has received a number of other honors, including receiving the International Press Freedom Award in 2003 from the Committee to Protect Journalists and being selected by the World Economic Forum as a Young Global Leader for 2005.

2008

Joshua Benton and fellow Dallas Morning News reporter Holly Hacker were the winners of the 2007 Philip Meyer Journalism Award for "Faking the Grade." The three-day series "uncovered strong evidence of cheating on standardized tests by more than 50,000 students in Texas public and charter schools," the award announcement states. Benton and Hacker "followed up on the paper's groundbreaking 2004 investigation of cheating at the district and school level by analyzing a huge public records database of the scores and answers of hundreds of thousands of individual students taking the tests over a two-year period. The series prompted the state to announce stricter controls over test-taking conditions in Texas schools and to adopt the cheat-detection statistical methods used by the paper."

The awards are named in honor of **Philip Meyer**, NF '67, who is the Knight Chair in Journalism at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He also is the author of "Precision Journalism," which encourages the use of

Nieman Reports on the Web

We have been striving to make what appears in Nieman Reports easily accessible—and readable—on the Nieman Foundation's Web site (www.nieman.harvard.edu). To that end, our editorial assistant, Sarah Hagedorn, creates html files of each story published in each magazine, along with links to relevant material on the Web. She, along with assistant editor, Lois Fiore, also puts together eMprint newsbooks—us-

ing a template generously given to us by Roger Fidler at the University of Missouri journalism school—to make our collections of stories more readable and searchable on a computer. We've also created Professor's Corner to feature articles of relevance to teaching journalism. Please let us know if there are other ways we can enhance your online reading experience with Nieman Reports. ■

social science methods in reporting and who, in his own reporting, developed and incorporated these methods.

The Meyer Award was presented on February 29th in Houston, Texas, at the 2008 Computer Assisted Reporting Conference sponsored by Investigative Reporters and Editors.

James E. Causey has been made a member of the editorial board of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. He had been the paper's night city editor. As a board member, he will write about urban affairs, public schools, and crime issues. Causey, who was born, raised and educated in Milwaukee, said that he will be able to bring an "institutional knowledge" to his work on the board. "I know the central city; I know the community in Milwaukee," he said in the newspaper's announcement of his appointment. "I've always lived in the central city."

Leu Siew Ying, a correspondent for the South China Morning Post based in Hong Kong, received the "grand prix" of the 2006 Natali Prize competition for her report, "From Village Protest to National Flashpoint." Leu's article "tells the story of villagers in Guangzhou/Southern China who try to recall their elected headman who for suspected corruption." In congratulating Leu, Louis Michel, European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian

Aid, said that "Principled and skilled journalists are vital to the defense of democracy and human rights. Without democracy, without freedom of press, development cannot be sustainable." The awards were presented in Brussels in May 2007. Natali Prizes were also given to 14 other journalists "for their commitment to Human Rights and Democracy." This year, the prize received a record number of nominees—1,529 from 165 countries. ■

Save the Date

The Nieman Foundation is planning its 70th anniversary celebration for the fall of 2008. The weekend convocation will be held both at Lippmann House and The Charles Hotel in Harvard Square, Cambridge, on November 7-9. The events will be open to all Nieman alumni/ae and guests. More information will soon be posted on the foundation's Web site, www.nieman.harvard.edu, and through e-mail messages. For now, please be sure to put the date on your calendars. ■

End Note

Tenney Lehman: Inspirational Editor and ‘Warm Heart’ of the Nieman Foundation



Nieman staff member
Kettee Boling (left) and
Tenney Lehman on the
patio of Lippmann House.

Tenney Lehman, executive director of the Nieman Foundation and an editor of Nieman Reports, died on January 7th of congestive heart failure at a nursing home in Brookline, Massachusetts. She was 90. Tenney began working at the foundation in 1967 on a temporary assignment and was formally invited to join the staff in 1968; she retired in 1985. On hearing of her death, some of the fellows who knew her well shared remembrances.

To some of us in the class of 1979, especially the youngest, Peggy Engel and me, both 26 then, Tenney Lehman was something of a surrogate mother. I had first met her while on my maiden trip to the United States in the summer of 1977 at the old Nieman house on Trowbridge Street, when Tenney, whose maiden name was Kelley, encouraged this young Northern Irishman to apply for a fellowship. Tenney was to meet me in Dublin in the spring of 1978, where she and her husband, Tom, were on holiday, to tell me in person that I had won my Nieman Fellowship. In celebration, I had the proud pleasure to show Tenney and Tom around the beautiful campus of my alma mater, Trinity College.

My next meeting with this very gentle and kind

lady was when she personally met me at Logan Airport late one steamy August evening. Two weeks later she set up meetings in her beloved Martha's Vineyard with the octogenarian Henry Beetle Hough, editor of the Vineyard Gazette. I will never forget her thoughtfulness. She was very generous to this young Ulsterman, who had some culture shock in those early days, later hosting me at her home on Boxing Day and helping with my tour of the South during Harvard's reading period in January, setting up meetings with Nieman en route.

When I taught a course at the Institute of Politics at the Kennedy School, Tenney came to hear my guest lecturer at the last class, my friend Seamus Heaney, who read some of his poetry and who Tenney much admired. After that Nieman year, I

went to the Carnegie Endowment in New York but found times to return to Cambridge—like many, I had “withdrawal symptoms” after my Harvard year—and would meet with Tenney. She came to my wedding in Toronto in 1984, and we tried to keep in touch regularly. Several of our class, Peggy Simpson, Peggy Engel, Kat Harting, and Nancy Day visited Tenney in her assisted living facility in Cambridge some years ago, during a Nieman reunion. She cared little about her own problems and was always interested in others. Curator Jim Thomson was the public and intellectual face of the Nieman Foundation; Tenney was its warm heart. —**Michael McDowell**, NF '79

In our 1979 class, there were four women. I think it was a record number back then, as Curator Jim Thomson was working hard to expand the number of women Niemans. The four of us—Peggy Simpson, Kat Harting, Nancy Day, and I—decided to devote an entire issue of Nieman Reports to women’s issues in journalism. Tenney, then its editor, was entirely supportive of this takeover and cheered us on as we made efforts to include every woman who had won the award previously. I think we dedicated the issue to Agnes Wahl Nieman, because so few people outside the circle knew that it was a woman who started and funded the fellowships.

Tenney was the warmest friend you could have in Cambridge. Her passion for words, birds, gardens—but most of all Nieman Fellows—was legendary. We believed she secretly liked our class best, a fiction undoubtedly believed by every class she touched. I will miss her Christmas letters and talking baseball with her. Next time I’m in Cooperstown, I’m going to look for the glove her namesake grandfather, a lefty pro player, developed.

Tenney was a big reason the Nieman Fellowships are so beloved by several generations of journalists. —**Margaret Engel**, NF '79

Tenney Lehman was such a grand lady. Remember that easy smile and twinkle in her eyes? It reminded you that she knew more than she let on but wasn’t giving away any secrets. Tenney was New England to the core, wise, kind, fun, smart. She was den mother and mentor and, over wine at a North End restaurant, drinking buddy as well. When I look back on my Nieman year, I will always see the face of Tenney Lehman. —**David Lamb**, NF '81

It was during my interview for a Nieman Fellowship when Tenney Lehman’s warmth and compassion first became apparent to me. That was also the first time I had ever met her. The selection committee that year included Robert Maynard, then publisher

of the Oakland Tribune, and Maynard was throwing out questions fast and furiously about my civil rights coverage. I realized my interview was lasting longer than most, and I wondered, “Is he trying to knock me out of competition?” Then I happened to glance over at Tenney and got the only smile from the group—and a warm, welcoming one it was. I felt calmer. Finally, when the interview ended, I am happy to say, Maynard leaped out of his chair and hugged me.

Tenney was a unique woman, and I thoroughly enjoyed her friendship. After my Nieman year, while I was working in Washington, she happened to be in town, and I invited her for dinner. We had fun that evening, comparing New England and Southern food, plants, cooking and other interesting differences. I will never forget Tenney. She was thoughtful, much loved, and very dear.

—**Kathryn Johnson**, NF '77

Tenney was the inspiration for the [Summer 1979] issue of Nieman Reports devoted to women in journalism. Those of us in our class were among those who worked on the issue and, at least in my case, wrote a retrospective article about my coverage of the women’s movement and my own observations about the barriers facing women who wanted to be hard news reporters. That article was among those chosen as the best in the half-century of writing for Nieman Reports, and I always hoped Tenney got the credit due her, for that and much more.

She might have looked the genteel New England lady but, in my mind, she was ahead of the curve in spotting news and in helping make good articles happen. She was a bastion of good sense, humor and a sort of serenity during our somewhat chaotic Nieman year. I also thought that she grew, with us, in confronting those bumps in the road. —**Peggy Simpson**, NF '79

As with Michael McDowell, it was Tenney Lehman who told me I had won the Nieman. The call reached me in the Senate Press Gallery in 1978, and I closed the door to one of the old telephone booths in the gallery as Tenney told me that Harvard was offering me a Nieman Fellowship and wanted to know if I would accept.

“Sweet Jesus, yes!” I replied (or words to that effect).

What I recall most is Tenney’s gentle admonition that I refrain from telling anyone until the official announcement. Sorry, Tenney, but within 24 hours I had told the known universe.

Rest in Peace.

—**Frank Van Riper**, NF '79 ■

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21ST CENTURY MUCKRAKERS

THE NIEMAN FOUNDATION AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY