

NIEMAN REPORTS

THE NIEMAN FOUNDATION AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Vol. 51 No. 4 Winter 1997

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Highways, Byways and Bylines Roads as News Stories



Getting It Wrong on Whitewater

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of journalism"*

—Agnes Wahl Nieman, the benefactor of the
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AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH ON COVER IS OF BOSTON'S BIG DIG, COURTESY OF CENTRAL ARTERY/TUNNEL PROJECT.

It's Up to Us

The period of national reflection and conversation called for by the Committee of Concerned Journalists began on November 7th. More than 300 journalists and journalism students met with members of the public in Chicago at the first of at least eight forums around the country to discuss the state of journalism today.

In a day-long series of panels the discussion centered not so much on definitions as on using the occasion to set forums on a path that might lead to a new awareness of the challenge and the opportunity facing journalism in an age of accelerating technological change. Questions touched on such basic details as: What responsibilities, values, principles make one person a journalist as opposed to a propagandist or a simple communicator? What is the common ground between The Chicago Tribune, local television stations, service journalism magazines, the Internet? What difference does it make that they share common standards and practices?

Journalists on the panels included Jack Fuller, President and CEO of The Chicago Tribune; Jean LemMon, Editor of Better Homes and Gardens; Carol Marin, reporter for WBBM-TV; Jeff Borden, Associate Editor of Crain's Chicago Business; Mary Mitchell, columnist for The Chicago Sun-Times; Patty Calhoun, Editor of Westword, a Denver alternative weekly; Dan Okrent, Editor of New Media, Time, Inc., and Rob Levine, Editor of Rolling Stone On-Line.

An executive summary of the day of reflection and discussion would include several observations that emerged to link the journalists across the spectrum of advocacy journalism to service journalism to on-line journalism. These links began with traditional definitions of journalism ("journalists make maps to help citizens navigate the civic world," "journalists write the first draft of history," "journalists provide a guide of what to think about") and moved quickly to what distinguished journalism from other forms of communication.

Abe Peck, Acting Dean, Medill School: "[Journalism is] a set of values—ethical concerns—that are tested every day."

Jack Fuller: "A journalist is someone who must tell the truth while providing the information necessary for self-governing people."

Jean LemMon: "The cardinal sin is cheating or mistreating the reader."

Carol Marin: "A journalist is someone who believes in a public trust and is not ashamed to say so."

Dan Okrent: "As journalists we read a lot of bad stuff and save the useful, the good."

Patricia Dean, Chair, Broadcasting Department, Medill School: "People are not journalists because they say they are, the nature of their work defines journalists."

The forum moved from characteristics of journalism to the broader questions that are troubling the world of journalism

and that will form the core of other discussions as the forums move around the country.

Drawing on his experiences, which ranged from clerk to editor and publisher to president of the Tribune Company, Jack Fuller described the challenge to journalists this way:

"Our concern should focus on differences between public tastes and our tastes. This is often expressed as a conflict between corporate values and journalistic values. Those conflicts do occur, but they are not the essence of this conflict. There is, for example, the public's declining taste for our political reporting. We can try several things to deal with this—we can try to lecture the people, we can try to use some kind of judo on their appetites or we can create a new rhetoric for journalism. Finding a way to reach people with this material is *our* responsibility."

The notion that the future course of journalism lies as much in the hands of journalists and their own ability to develop new forms and tools with which to tell the important stories in a new competitive environment was one of two major themes to emerge from the forum.

This theme was tied to the other important theme—the need to make the distinctions between journalism and communications or personal expression clear—by an observation of Leo Bogart, columnist and press consultant, when he said that journalists need to answer questions about how they differ from other communicators because of the confusion, both in the public mind and the journalist's mind, brought about by the proliferation of channels of communication.

There has been, Bogart says, a declining place for news in spite of the explosion of channels of information, because the daily news that journalists present includes a greater portion of service and entertainment.

The information revolution has opened a new world of communications that now forces both owners and journalists to consider where they choose to reside *inside* the First Amendment. Journalism and freedom of expression are not the same thing. Freedom of expression protects the right to express untested, even untrue, opinion in order to encourage discussion and debate. Journalism operates inside the envelope of free press protections in order to disseminate the information and opinion on which other citizens depend in order to become effective self-governors.

A full report is on the Concerned Journalists Web site at: <http://www.journalism.org>

The next forum will be held on December 4 at the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism in New York. ■



What They're Saying

Orlando Patterson Why Rely on Hearsay In Race-Relation Polls?



Photo by Matt Liu

If you ask a sample of Black Americans what [they] think of race relations in the country...roughly 75-80 percent are going to say, boy, it's bad. It's hell out there... So you publish that. But...when people are asked, "well, how about you? How are you getting on with Euro Americans in your life?" The whole thing flips around. It's like 70-80 percent of the people say things are great with me. I have no problems with white folks... Now you've been trained that hearsay information is always to be distrusted. And information which the primary source gives you is valid information. I assume that is an established principle of reporting. But, essentially, what...all the major newspapers did [on a Gallup poll] was to emphasize hearsay... [The public] is telling you what they hear on the news, they're telling you what they read in the newspapers every day, so you get a strange kind of reinforcement going on...Nobody reports...data from the source, which is "tell me about the subject in which you really are an expert—your own life."—Orlando Patterson, John Cowles Professor at Harvard University, at a Nieman Fellows seminar, October 15, 1997.

Donald Hall How Do You Know When to Stop?



Photo by Jay Bonowitz

I don't know when a poem is finished. There are big changes from draft one to draft ten. And I'm just making this up as I go along. Between draft 30 and draft 40 there are fewer changes, when I get up to draft 89 and 94 I'm taking out a semi-colon and putting in a dash and then I'm taking out the dash and putting the semi-colon back and I'm changing the line-break from the adjective noun line-break to adjective noun preposition line-break and I show it to other people. I mean, for months I won't show it to anybody else. I show it to others and they come back and I can't do what everybody tells me but I get advice from them. Finally, people I respect suggest fewer changes. I make fewer changes. I say what the hell. I'll publish it. Then it comes back in a magazine and I open the magazine and look at it and pick up my pen. Because it's in print. Because it's objectified by the print. I will see something I hadn't seen before.—Donald Hall, poet, essayist and book author, at a Nieman Fellows seminar, October 29, 1997.

Margot Adler Letting Sources Tell Their Stories



I'd make a terrible investigative reporter... I'm much more the kind of a person that can walk up into a situation, interview someone and make a silent pact with that person that I will act as them. I will listen to them as them. I will report their words the way they would probably think of them themselves. And so I will get into their head and I will start saying, what if I was going to take the 30 minutes that I've done of this interview and use only five minutes, what five minutes would really get the point the way they want to make it across the best. So I think I have an ability to get into all kinds of alternative world views—some of them I don't even agree with most of the time—and at least for a moment really feel that I'm there, feel there is something powerful about that perspective that makes sense even though on another level it may not be one that I can completely support. And I think that does serve me well and it allows me to be a journalist despite my biases. In other words I don't pretend objectivity. I mean I have real biases. But on the other hand I think I'm deeply fair.—Margot Adler, New York correspondent for National Public Radio, on the NPR show "On the Media," hosted by Alex Jones, August 3, 1997.

Highways



Lincoln Highway/U.S. 30, Interstate 80 near the Continental Divide, Wyoming.

© DRAKE HOKANSON 1985

From the Old Lincoln Highway to the Interstates

The interstate system speeds the commerce of the nation and allows a motorist a range of travel unimagined 50 years ago. Millions of travelers and tons of goods arrive sooner and cheaper than they ever could have via earlier highways.

But Americans driving from New York City to San Francisco today no longer see or interact with the same landscape that so captivated automobile travelers early this century. In the past, travelers on the Lincoln Highway traveled deep amid the cultural and natural landscape of the nation—down the shaded streets of Midwestern towns, close past farmsteads where one could see what kind of chickens the farm wife raised, through deep forest, close enough to the salt desert that the eyes burned—the grand montage of detail that adds up to the impression of a trip, and of a country. Today you can

cross the entire state of Wyoming and never smell sagebrush. The Great Salt Lake Desert that haunted travelers for 120 years is a remote abstraction when seen from the wider ribbons of Interstate 80 amid campers and throbbing trucks; Main Streets are nostalgic reminders of the “olden days” when towns pass by in the distance, a mile or two from the interstate. The places to eat and to stay and to buy gas along the main highways are no longer manifestations of a particular place—the rural South, the urban East—but emblems only of the highway, a great franchised monoculture that extends from sea to sea.—*Drake Hokanson, in “The Lincoln Highway: Main Street Across America,” which chronicles the development of America’s first transcontinental highway.*

Digging Out News at Boston's Big Dig

*Politics, Money, Technology, Boosters and Critics—
Project Demonstrates Varied Problems of Reporting*

By THOMAS C. PALMER JR.

Peter M. Zuk is the Project Director for what we refer to as the largest public works project under way in the United States, the Big Dig. Except for the steeply escalating cost, the project—officially the Central Artery/Third Harbor Tunnel project, in Boston, to install a new under-harbor tunnel and to bury an eight-lane interstate highway under downtown—has gone remarkably well.

As far as we know.

I've spent the last four and a half years trying to find out otherwise, and I say "as far as we know" because I have a running argument with Peter Zuk about how much we really do know. I tell him I figure we get about 5 percent of what (if we knew about it) might be considered newsworthy events into print. He contends that, over time, we get everything that is newsworthy. But then he's not a newsperson.

It is Peter Zuk's job to protect this project politically. He does manage the project, but his real skill is to keep any part of it from becoming such big news that it harms the project's forward progress. He's a natural politician. He's smart and he protects the project on behalf of one of the most demanding and most political creatures around, Massachusetts Turnpike Chairman James J. Kerassiotis. Penetrating a wall conceived by Kerassiotis and built by the state's private consultant, the joint team of Bechtel Corp. and Parsons Brinckerhoff, is a significant challenge. No one at any level of the project will speak to a reporter without getting permission from the highest levels in advance.

The highly political nature of the Big Dig is one of the aspects that makes covering it both interesting and chal-

lenging. It is a huge political target for those not associated with it, so a reporter has to sort out the grandstanding from the legitimate criticism. Also, with so much money involved—\$10.8 billion, by latest count—it tends to be vulnerable, thus the extensive efforts to protect it and keep the media at bay.

Other difficulties include:

- Continuing to cover the rest of the transportation goes-on—the Turnpike and Port authorities, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, the Massachusetts Highway Department, the daily commuting grind into Boston—while staying focused on the Big Dig.

- The technical jargon. Never have I worked on an assignment where documents were so voluminous and so useless. The engineering and construction aspects of the project are so arcane that each document has to come with a translator, or it is meaningless.

- Walking the line between boosters of the project and a world of critics who will do almost anything to croak it. As much as we like to say journalism is about objectivity, this is where the judgment comes in: What is the right balance between stories relating the extraordinary design and construction achievements on one hand, and the breathtaking failure to bring this monster in at anywhere near the original estimated cost of \$2.6 billion?

- The sheer size of it. How do you make an issue of cost overruns of, say, \$10 million, when that amounts to less than one-tenth of 1 percent of the price tag? And especially when project managers are arguing that spending \$10 million now will save \$50 million in the long run?

- Finally, persuading editors there is more to it than money. We in the media tend to be obsessed with cost, partly because people understand dollars and partly because that is one of the few objective measures of the project's management successes or failings. But the project involves 100-plus contracts, almost all going on simultaneously, and each with hundreds of workers and stories of their own to be told to make up the full picture.

Bernie Cornelia, a field engineer with management consultant Bechtel/Par-



Thomas C. Palmer Jr. covers transportation issues for The Boston Globe. He joined The Globe in 1976 and has been a copy editor, Assistant National Editor, Assistant Foreign Editor, investigative reporter with The Globe's Spotlight Team, general assignment reporter, roving national reporter and roving foreign reporter. He covered the fall of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989, the bloody 1987 Haitian election and civil war in the Sudan. He is 50 and holds a B.A. from Kansas State University and an M.A. from the University of Kansas. He previously worked as an editor at The Orange Coast Daily Pilot, in Costa Mesa, Calif., and as a copy editor at The Los Angeles Times.

sons, describes his piece of the puzzle, contract C15A2, as having a variety of kinds of roads: tunnel; "boat," or depressed, roofless road; surface lanes at the northern portal near Causeway Street. "All of these jobs have something that's different, that's interesting," he said.

In short, the Big Dig is in microcosm, or, from a Boston viewpoint, a macrocosm, of reporting on a huge public works project.

First, the politics.

Often it is an attempt to hide bad news that gets management in trouble. These are stories that, if they are told incrementally, may not carry huge headlines. But when they come out after months of having been denied, and the credibility of those running the project is called into question, they almost always make page one.

One of my jobs is to keep an eye on the situation regarding the cost of the Big Dig. In the early years, there were annual, official cost estimates. Because the cost was continuously rising—for reasons we have documented that are mostly understandable and seemingly unavoidable—the annual cost re-adjustment caused managers serious headaches. So Zuk and his team abandoned it, substituting, instead, an ongoing, month-by-month monitoring of the project cost. These monthly management reports, as they are called, were no doubt useful, but they were a typical reaction on the part of the project to bad news. The solution sequestered the future bad news.

I had asked for these reports on a number of occasions, been promised them and never received them. I had frequently asked Zuk how costs were going since the ironclad \$10.4 billion cost figure had been set forth a couple of years ago. He repeatedly assured me on a number of occasions that the numbers were tracking right to the \$10.4 billion figure at completion, or maybe even better.

Then the McCormack Institute at the University of Massachusetts at Boston, directed by the Legislature with studying ways to cut costs on the project, came out with its report in July 1997. It

had determined that the Big Dig's own internal documents, the monthly management reports, were showing that the cost at the end of the project, in 2005, would be \$10.8 billion—\$400 million more than managers had pledged from late 1993 on. Big surprise, big news.

"We have a viable project that's being well-managed," Kerasiotes told me recently, after the Government Accounting Office issued a critical report, "and we're not about to let anybody say that it isn't."

Says State Treasurer Joe Malone, "Any objective outsiders who have looked at the cost have said the administration is underestimating things."

Kerasiotes preached openness and to his credit set up weekly briefings on the project when he took over as transportation secretary after William Weld was elected governor. The briefings diminished after the first milestone—the opening of the Ted Williams Tunnel—was reached. And they virtually ended when, on one occasion, I compared a routine handout on contract deadlines with the actual facts and wrote a story showing the project was slipping behind.

But by far the biggest problem I wrestle with is covering the Big Dig and at the same time trying to keep up with all the other aspects of transportation going on. Theoretically, I have responsibility as The Globe's transportation reporter for anything with wheels, tracks or propellers. Fortunately, many aspects of transportation get covered by others on our staff. For example, Matt Brelis, who used to cover transportation, knows a lot more than I do about air travel and airports, and he almost always covers crashes or major problems at Logan airport. Because the Big Dig is at its peak of activity during my tenure in this job, I have to make it and the rest of ground transportation my first priority.

Peter Howe, another former transportation reporter, now covering science and technology for The Globe, is in a position to write about many of the new high-technology aspects of transportation. Environment reporter Scott

Allen will usually cover clean air issues. We negotiate these things, usually through E-mail, among reporters and editors each day, to make sure whatever needs to be covered gets covered. I look for so much support from the rest of the staff simply because transportation is such a broad assignment these days. I could keep a staff of five reporters busy, turning out stories all of which would be worthy of good play in The Globe.

Even at a newspaper as large as The Globe, with as many editors, it is the reporter on the beat who is the real assignment editor. No one who doesn't follow transportation and talk to scores of people daily about the subject could possibly keep abreast of what's coming up. I tell my editor about the significant developments on the horizon, and he and I decide which ones to deal with first.

As I try to explain to my editors (and my wife), I'm a juggler. I have, literally, about 50 potential stories going at any time. I view them each as a ball in the air. Each one comes down every now and then, and I consider it, maybe make a call or two, and if it's not a priority for the next day or at least the near future, I throw it back up in the air for another day. My desk is piled with paper and other material—story folders, tips, reports, newsletters, notes—that I dig out when any of these stories is ripe. Of course, I am making calls and talking to sources on several stories at once, and not infrequently someone I call will say, "You must have ESP," because I have called just as a story of some kind is about to break. But there's nothing metaphysical about it; it's just that if you knock on enough doors often enough, you score some of the time.

I can't think of a beat that is theoretically broader than transportation. But a mammoth project like this consumes our resources and dominates the public's attention concerning transportation during the decade or so that it is under way. We at The Globe get at least a dozen calls a week concerning some aspect of transportation that—if I didn't have higher priorities—I could work on. A public relations guy calls about a

What Readers Like and Respond To

BY THOMAS C. PALMER JR.

It was a tired old column that Boston Globe editors killed in 1991. "Starts & Stops" had run for a couple of years weekly in the Metro/Region section, starting out as a lively repository for transportation tidbits—the kind of news that didn't merit a longer story but needed to make its way to the reading and increasingly frustrated commuting public.

But the transportation beat changed hands a few times, and the column became a burying ground for press releases that weren't good enough to be fodder for the news columns.

I took over the beat in 1993, and for three years my editors and I talked about reviving Starts & Stops. I knew, as I became more familiar with the many-faceted transportation scene, that there were lots of worthy items—especially the increasing number of significant detours associated with the Big Dig—that needed a space of their own in the newspaper.

But we just talked about it.

One day in 1995 I even put together a prototype but it was set aside. Then, in April 1996, City Editor Teresa Hanafin, my boss, said, in effect, "Let's do it next week. It'll run on Monday." The column I cobbled together, and those that have run weekly since, have brought a response that is nothing short of stunning. For a few good reasons, some of which we did not foresee, it has been a huge hit with readers, providing a connection that newspapers used to have but years ago had lost and have been desperately trying to re-establish. The column has provided a service; it has involved readers in improving their daily commute; it has satisfied a need readers have to complete

a circle of communication that had become uncomfortably one-sided, and it allowed a humanization of a medium that by its nature and power has alienated many people.

It has drawn positive comments the likes of which reporters and editors rarely hear these days.

"Hi there, S&S. I've been a reader ever since you began, and I look forward to your weekly column!" writes one E-mailer.

"Thanks for your weekly insights and help," writes Greg from Somerville.

"Thanks for a very useful column," writes Barry from Maynard.

"Your column is one of my 'can't miss' assignments on Monday's," writes Jim.

"You probably have the best column in the whole paper," writes Gerry. (Don't tell Mike Barnicle, OK?)

That first column had four parts: a lead-in mini-column on a current user-oriented transportation topic; a place for a direct response to inquiries (which we hoped for, of course, but as yet had none of, and eventually named "We get letters..."); a short "dot-dot-dot" section of developments and factual one-liners ("Pit stops"), and, finally, a section on detours and other changes that commuters needed to know about ("You can't get there...").

We have been receiving about 100 E-mail inquiries a month directed to Starts & Stops. We also get dozens more letters or cards a month in the regular mail. I could write the entire column just based on the comments and questions that come from within The Globe building.

The Starts & Stops column concept has been so successful that we have tried to

clone it. We now have put the consumer reporters' material in a Starts-like format on Sundays, and the religion writer's Saturday offerings as well. They are attractive and readable, and both columns are drawing mail from readers.

Without soft-pedaling foreign news or anything else that has been a traditional part of the paper, we are giving people more of what it is they respond to. And respond they do to a user-oriented transportation column whose content is largely dictated by their own questions and comments.

We've helped get a clearer "Lanes Merge" sign on Route 128 at Route 9, and we've spurred the Massachusetts Highway Department into smoothing out the heaving pavement at the mouth of the Dewey Square Tunnel.

Two important features of the column are that it is personal—we use first names and hometowns—and the tone is light. State officials don't always like the fact that we poke fun at their inevitable excuses and endless promises, or that we skewer their habitual transpo-jargon. But readers up against the system in their grinding commutes—faced with "Seek Alternate Route" signs when there are no viable alternate routes—seem to love it. And there is too little place for humor in a medium devoted largely to bringing people accounts of what is wrong with the world they live in.

Starts & Stops is a success because people like to contribute and because we respond to what they have to say. It deals not with politics, which they often feel doesn't affect them, but with road signs, which do. ■

new program for ergonomics training that the company he represents is providing to baggage handlers at United Airlines. A bunch of kids get into a fight on the way home from school on the MBTA and threaten passengers. A group of Amtrak workers calls to contend that they are being discriminated against on the job. The MBTA is celebrating the 100th anniversary of its subway system. Then there are the wish-list projects

and their sponsors.

Even before the Big Dig is done and paid for, there are advocates for the North-South Rail Link, an underground tunnel linking Boston's two major train stations and the commuter-rail systems on both ends of the city. But many people think that is a boondoggle, that the next spare few billion dollars should be spent instead on the Urban Ring, a circumferential transit route at the pe-

rimeter of the city, linking underdeveloped neighborhoods to areas where there are jobs and opportunities. For most of these constituencies, The Globe or The Herald is the only outlet; local television stations are not going to find time for these stories in their precious few minutes for news.

But for this decade or so the Big Dig is a top priority—one that one editor I work for said he thought should be

made a full-time beat in itself, separate from the rest of transportation.

It is surprising, on a project that generates literally rooms full of documents, that paper is not more of a factor in reporting. Even lacking a law degree, I can usually figure out legal language when reporting. But engineering is another matter. Most of the documents I have seen associated with the Big Dig might as well have been written in some foreign language. I almost always needed someone to interpret them for me. So I haven't made much use of documents. When another reporter and I were preparing a three-part series on the project back in 1994, we pored through boxes of paper, identified some letters and memos that either looked suspicious or about which we had questions, and asked for copies. But in many cases we made little use of those, and some we didn't even pick up. The documents by and large just don't tell the stories by themselves, we found. In fact, on more than one occasion I have been sent—anonously—stacks of documents relating to one contract or another on the Big Dig. The senders (often no doubt seeking to damage a competitor) suppose that these documents will readily tell a story of waste or fraud or payroll-padding or something else newsworthy. In fact, the documents sit on my desk for months, generating no story at all, unless I can come up with someone to interpret them for me. In a way, the project is so complex that almost any part that a reporter seeks to learn about takes a tutor.

Sometimes even the words that fall from the lips of the official public spokespersons of the project are bewildering. "They're jacking a 72-inch sewer pipe through to Purchase Street," said the Big Dig's Terry Brown.

Thus, I say, I often feel like I cover this job by Braille. An acquaintance, or a friend of a friend, or a tipster—anonymous or otherwise—will call with something that sounds plausible. I will work the edges of the story, calling anyone I know who might know something about that area: police overtime, say, or the use of jet fans in tunnel ventilation buildings. My initial goal is to substantiate the tip just enough, to learn enough



PHOTO COURTESY OF BOSTON CENTRAL ARTERIAL/TUNNEL PROJECT
Traffic continues to flow as construction proceeds on Big Dig.

about it, that when I talk to those in charge I will sound sufficiently informed that they will choose to open up and tell me the whole story, rather than stonewall or try to discourage me.

If the tip I get is particularly sensitive, it will be kicked up to Zuk's level almost instantly. That in itself usually tells me there is something to it. Zuk's first reaction is usually a combination of a limited number of facts—and lots of spin. Faced recently with a stinging letter from the state's environmental secretary saying the Big Dig was behind in its commitment to provide harbor commuter-boat service, Zuk characteristically pronounced this good news, saying that after a brief delay the service would be superior to anything it would have been had it started on time. He is a lawyer, usually very careful and opaque with words when on the record. When I press, and especially when I am about to write a rather severe version of, say, a consultant's assessment of the performance of Big Dig management, I will usually get the vivid, gory details—off the record, of course. And my real job is to shoehorn as much of that true story into the paper as I can, however distasteful or embarrassing that may be to the players. All of the political types on

the project, right up to the chairman of the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, are highly offended if you accuse them of lying to you, and very seldom does what you are told as a reporter qualify as a lie. But sometimes the answers turn out to be so carefully stated that they might qualify as virtual lies. My antennae go up when Zuk turns on the lawyerspeak.

"We are confident that we will manage to the \$10.4 billion" cost goal, Zuk told me not long ago. Then he called back to alter the statement slightly: "I am confident there are steps we can take to move us back to the \$10.4 billion." Observed Joe Barresi, a senior fellow at the McCormack Institute, "They're very sensitive about the \$10.4 billion."

When I've got a solid story involving criticism of the Big Dig for the next day, I'm naturally torn between being safer—calling at the last minute for a comment, so that news doesn't leak out to my competition early enough for them to act on it—and being more generous, which means giving project managers more time to respond. One real impediment to calling early for a response, however, is the rush of calls that typically come in from state transportation managers trying—always off-the-record—to talk me out of writing the story. Or into delaying it. The bigger the story, the more ferocious the calls from those in the transportation offices who want to debate the value of the story—and, if that fails, usually impugn the general integrity of the media in their treatment of this controversial project. All this takes place between 5 and 7 p.m., when deadlines are fast approaching or past and when I need to be writing, not answering the phone and engaging in emotional, sometimes personal arguments.

A number of the reporters who are most critical of the Big Dig—who in fact seldom if ever write anything but negative stories about it—operate, I think, from the premise that it should not have been undertaken in the first place. Their journalistic goal appears to be to bring it to a halt. That seems to me to be very shortsighted, akin to the too-popular attitude in the years after Watergate

that one was not a successful reporter unless one had cost a few bureaucrats their jobs, or put some businessman in jail. And never is there a shortage of critics to quote.

Senator Robert Havern, Co-chairman of the legislature's Transportation Committee, commented on an important bill governing the construction and operation of the new Central Artery and Ted Williams Tunnel. "There'll be an anguished mob that will want more," he said. "Unfortunately, this is way too important for political mischief."

Balance is important, both for the sake of fairness and for upholding our credibility in the long term. When workers get hurt, when costs go up, when construction snarls traffic, when neighborhoods complain about dust and noise, those things are news and we've covered them. But the public's frequent criticism that we dwell only on bad news is valid if we fail to tell the positive stories: the Big Dig's remarkably safe workplace; the on-time opening of its first phase, the Ted Williams Tunnel; a traffic plan that, halfway through the project, has generated only marginally more grumbling about congestion in Boston than is routine in recent years.

At times *The Globe* has taken some criticism (primarily on talk radio) for allegedly going too easy on the huge project. But some of that has come from other reporters, whose work is characterized by an unrelenting assumption of bad faith, incompetence and dishonesty on the part of every Big Dig worker and manager. When reporter Charlie Sennott and I were digging up material for the three-part series on the project that we did in 1994, we initially assumed that the seemingly outrageous prices that the state had paid for a couple of buildings, the Analex and the Wang, would provide some sensational headlines. But, when we painstakingly reconstructed the negotiations and the thinking that went on before those structures were taken by the project, we found that the prices, while high, were apparently unavoidable under the circumstances. We even had project officials recall one attorney

who had gone off to another job, so we could interview him about what had happened years before, when the decision was made to take one of the buildings. In short, to get at the truth of this and other matters we tried to apply our skepticism in both directions. This only seems fair.

Especially in Boston, where enthusiasm for public transit and a certain unusually strong (by national standards) desire for government action combine with an anti-automobile bias, a transportation reporter is caught in the middle. Staying in the middle, of course, is the challenge, and not being captured or seduced into favoring either side, which in the transportation world means either with transit types or car-lovers. Hard enough is the bewildering job of just finding the middle—resolving the historical question of whether people chose cars (and suburbs) over trolleys (and cities) more or less voluntarily, or whether they were forced into their Chevys (and later Toyotas) by Detroit, the big bad oil companies, and a federal government stampeded by the highway lobby.

I take the view in covering transportation, as I do in all reporting, that the people in and out of journalism who say objectivity is impossible and perhaps undesirable and shouldn't be attempted—well, they're dead wrong. On any issue, however complex and tugged at by however many varying views, a reasonably intelligent reporter can come up with a satisfactorily objective article provided he or she wants to. Of course there is no perfect objectivity—but the difference between that perfection and the objectivity that is achievable with some dedication and effort is so small that it is insignificant. Most reporters who aren't fair or objective in what they produce don't want to be.

At an ambitious seminar on the future of transportation in the greater Boston area a few years ago, there were three days of testimony and speeches from experts, questions from other knowledgeable specialists, and finally comments from the audience. The cars.-transit debate was played out dur-

ing the three days in many ways. One of the last remarks from the audience, however, summed up the real long-term debate. The solution to the congestion problems and air-quality problems and parking problems and all the other ills associated with this car-dependent culture, he said, was to eliminate one-acre zoning. It was a euphemism, of course, for a program of planned communities and limits on sprawl and the ongoing development that has dispersed population and produced suburban communities extending from Boston Harbor out 30 miles to Route 495 and beyond. A reporter's expertise in transportation these days has to extend to development policy.

The essential lesson of the big price of the Big Dig is that public participation—with an end toward doing big things but also pleasing most everybody, rather than rolling over a neighborhood—costs money.

The cost of making big projects palatable today is the so-called mitigation, or, to use a term once suggested to me by a BBC Scotland radio interviewer, "appeasement." Whatever the stuff is called, accommodating the project to everyone's needs and tastes and keeping the city functioning while it is ongoing is costing an estimated \$3 billion of the \$10.8 billion that the Big Dig is currently pegged at. That we did explain, as an important part of our 1994 series on the project.

But what we haven't been able to fully explain, and what I continue to believe is the single most interesting facet of all these big transportation projects, is: Why can't we tell ahead of time what they will cost? Now, one non-answer is: It's a good thing we can't, because if we could we would never build them. Only after \$6 billion has been committed to a project, as it now has to the Big Dig, would we really consider spending what may turn out to be \$12 billion or more on a project that initially was estimated at \$2.6 billion. No one believes that, had that \$2.6 billion estimated in the mid-1980's been even as much as \$5 billion, Congress would have committed itself to paying the bulk of the cost.

I don't have the answer to this question, though I understand it better than I did when I began reporting the Big Dig four and a half years ago, and I hope to understand it even better—and to allow readers to understand it better—by the time I finish. The answer involves a lot of wishful thinking, steady optimism, the inability to foresee problems especially in complex underground construction, and a certain deliberate or careless lack of interest in the obstacles that might be involved. It is also possible that a vague fear of not being up to the financial or technical challenge leads engineers and even political leaders to blindly commit to building a visionary project, whatever the cost.

For me personally, the politics in transportation is a double-edged sword. It puts the people I cover on guard, but it keeps my editors interested. They love politics. I like public policy and reporting about tough choices—letting both sides make their best cases. I don't particularly like covering politics, where superficial factors—egos and campaign chests and advertising, for example—get an inordinate amount of attention. But politics tends to rule at many newspapers, none more so than at *The Globe*. It takes an enormous effort to get my editors interested in the mechanics of building even such a monumental undertaking as the Big Dig. New tunneling technique? Forget it, unless it involves a fight between a contractor and the state.

I have a safety valve at *The Globe* for the many readers who want to know more about how the project is built: the kids' page, called NewsLine. Every week, *The Globe* runs a page devoted to boys and girls. Staff members such as myself write 500-word pieces aimed at younger minds, perhaps explaining a little more than we do normally, and using more English, less of the jargon of news stories. The editor of the page is very grateful (she can't pay extra) and the great reward is that a lot of people read it—not just the kids. Many adults want to know more about the concrete and the "rebar" (steel) and the surveying

and the soil testing and the tunneling and chemistry and machinery and sweat that goes into building the Big Dig. And I try to give them a piece of that tucked away on the kids' page several times a year. But the appetite, as I see it, is for much more than we offer now, and I do not want 2005, the end of the project, to roll around only to discover that one of the grand construction feats of the late 20th Century has taken place in the middle of our streets and we didn't sufficiently tell people how it was done.

The politics of the project involves primarily two things: money and the environment. The money issue is being hashed out now in terms of the commitment that Congress made in the 1980's, in a climate changed in two major ways: The job costs a lot more than anybody thought, and there is much more concern for getting spending under control nationally. The environmental issues are more complex. They require the transportation reporter to be familiar with the powerful advocacy groups, like the Conservation Law Foundation, quirky laws like the federal so-called 4(f) provision, which protects parks, and myriad other seemingly non-transportation-related details. As with the law, you learn about these issues as you do more reporting on them, and your coverage becomes more informed and authoritative as you gain experience.

Now, a look at the future. It helps us reporters, just as it does government officials, if we have a crystal ball. But, regarding most transportation issues, we simply don't know. Will cities re-emerge and suburbs fade? Will Washington or the state capitals win control of transportation policy? We just can't say, and we have to be willing to admit that. Sometimes it seems impossible even to sort out the recent past: Is the privatization of highway maintenance working—or, as critics say, is the state's boasted success smoke and mirrors and manipulated books, with less tax money spent but taxpayers also getting less? One thing we do know is that transportation technology will continue to spin forward.

Today, it seems to me, the most

important area of progress—along with "smart" cars and "smart" highways—involves smart ways of paying. Toll roads would be rapidly on their way to becoming a thing of the past, largely phased out were it not for the rapidly growing automatic toll collection industry. Toronto has a new private highway that only "members" can use. That is, there are no baskets in which to throw coins. If your vehicle doesn't have a transponder on it, which identifies your car and automatically pays your toll by deducting it from an account or putting it on a credit card, you can't use the road. That makes a lot more sense than the time-consuming, backup-causing, dangerous toll plazas of today.

I keep in touch by E-mail with a fellow who works in Tokyo and can keep me abreast of the cutting-edge developments in "electronic money," or smart cards. This is a business story, a technology story, but it is one that I am convinced has a special importance in the transportation world. There is enough to keep up on without a topic this distantly related from traffic on the Expressway. But I follow it because I am convinced that the first widespread public use of money cards may well be in transit systems, and that use will spread to retail purchases. It is happening in Hong Kong and in Seoul, maybe soon in London. The use of credit-card sized plastic cards "loaded" with money, and reloadable, which with just a wave at the "turnstile" can pay transit fares, may be the tool that ushers in a largely cashless culture. I want to tell my readers if the local transportation agencies are lagging behind. The technology is there today, some in the industry say, but the impetus for banks and retailers to use the card instead of cash will only come when a community the size of the traveling community holds and uses such a card.

That, of course, includes just about everybody. That's transportation.

I only know about 5 percent of this story, but I'm working on it. ■

Perpetual Paving = More Congestion

BY KEITH SCHNEIDER

In all the years that Al Foster has lived in northern Michigan, every one who knows the 69-year-old dairy farmer describes him as tough, respected and rational. Foster, the supervisor of rural Bear Creek Township, also is no stranger to a good political tussle.

Now those very same attributes of personality and policy acumen have led Foster to the civic fight of his life. Along with other farmers, local government officials and public interest leaders, Foster is battling to kill a \$70 million highway bypass that the state Department of Transportation plans to build through his township, which lies near the coast of Lake Michigan just outside of Petoskey. Going further, Foster and his colleagues have urged replacing the new road with a less expensive and less environmentally damaging alternative that uses existing roads.

It wasn't very long ago that new highways were seen as a prime symbol of community progress, a harbinger of economic development, and a measure of political clout. No longer. In northern Michigan, local leaders like Foster have come to recognize that new highways are no blessing at all. They intensify traffic problems, waste a fortune in taxpayer dollars, and exact a heavy toll on neighborhoods and the environment.

The case against the Petoskey Bypass is an easy one for Foster and other critics to make. They say the new road would cut in half a thriving dairy farm and row crop economy that has existed in rural Bear Creek and Resort Townships for decades. It also would invite the assorted unidentified and ugly flying boxes—the fast-food restaurants, windowless superstores and 10-minute lube joints—that so often land alongside new highways.

But the best reason for opposing the bypass, Foster said, is that it is poorly

designed and simply not needed. "This new road doesn't make any sense," said Foster, whose grandparents arrived in the region in 1878. "If it was built it would be so far out of town that it would take people out of their way. We don't need it."

In essence, Foster and other critics have set out to shatter transportation planning dogma in Michigan. They are intent on showing, right here in the state that invented mass production of the automobile, that the result of 60 years of highway construction has been to fling homes, businesses, schools and communities ever farther into the countryside. New roads, say opponents, do not solve the traffic congestion that is so frequently used to justify their existence. Rather, more concrete appears now to be perpetuating it.

By no means is the debate in Petoskey unusual. Across northern Michigan, citizens in Traverse City, Alpena and Cadillac are challenging more than \$2 billion in new highway construction proposed by the state, by far the most aggressive and expensive highway expansion in Michigan since the 1960's.

State highway officials say the new roads are needed to improve local economies and reduce congestion. Critics counter that northern Michigan's economy, with under 5 percent unemployment, is stronger than it's ever been and that "congestion" is a relative term in a region where most counties can still count the number of traffic lights on one hand. In other states, and in Washington, similar debates are unfolding. Is it time to dramatically alter a transportation policy devoted to moving cars by building more roads? Is it saner and less expensive to repair existing highways while encouraging other forms of transportation, and even new patterns of development, that coax people out of their cars? Increasingly, communities are finding that as they

develop workable alternatives, the best interim strategy is to stop new roads.

In southwestern Indiana, farmers and small business owners are battling to halt construction of Interstate 69, between Indianapolis and Evansville. The road is justified by state transportation planners on the basis that it would encourage economic development. But the state's own studies conclude the \$1 billion road would bring rural counties just four jobs per year, most of them low-paying service positions at the gas stations, fast-food restaurants and motels that would be built at new highway interchanges.



Keith Schneider is an environmental writer, columnist, national radio commentator and Executive Director of the Michigan Land Use Institute, a nonprofit economic and environmental policy research group based in Benzonia. Schneider's work explores the mix of federal and state policy, cultural trends and political dynamics that have contributed to a costly pattern of development that has come to be known as suburban sprawl. His articles appear regularly in state and national publications, including The Detroit Free Press, Traverse Magazine, The New York Times and the Institute's quarterly magazine, the Great Lakes Bulletin. Schneider also is heard on National Public Radio's "Living on Earth."

Hundreds of citizens in Lake County, Ill., have turned out at public meetings to oppose a new highway planned by the Illinois Tollway Authority that would ruin 1,090 acres of wetlands, cut through 1,200 acres of parks and open fields, and cause 400 homes to be demolished. Tollway authorities, who initially justified the expensive new road on the basis that it would relieve congestion, have since acknowledged it would have no effect on existing traffic problems.

In the Cleveland metropolitan region, mayors from inner suburbs have joined with Cleveland officials to pressure the state to stop building new roads and start repairing old ones. They are doing so to end the not-so-hidden subsidy that new roads provide to lure businesses and families out of older communities and plunk them down in the newer suburbs on the fringe. They say the long-term vitality of the entire region is at stake.

Perhaps the most pivotal battle is now occurring outside Washington, where a plan to construct a new beltway beyond the famous one has caused an uproar. Its justification, say planners, lies in demographic trends. Federal figures show that 13 million of the 19 million new jobs born in the United States between 1980 and 1990 were in the suburbs, giving rise to a new concept of settlement that planners called "edge cities," and causing new commuting and traveling patterns. According to a study by the Eno Transportation Foundation, an independent consulting firm in Virginia, suburb-to-suburb commutes have quadrupled since 1960 and now account for 44 percent of the nation's commuting.

The fast-growing suburban counties of northern Virginia and Maryland were among the places where edge cities first appeared. People who live there now are sitting in ever longer traffic lines, spend more of their time behind the wheel some days than they do with their children, and more often than not refer to what they see as a "mess."



Joe Foster's dairy farm near Petoskey has been in his family for nearly 100 years. Foster and his father, Al, the supervisor of Bear Creek Township, are promoting less expensive and destructive alternatives to the proposed Petoskey Bypass.

Now transportation planners say they've come to the rescue with a lavish and disputed plan to build an outer beltway to reduce congestion. The battle has attracted the attention of the Clinton Administration and Congress at a time when lawmakers are debating the renewal of the Intermodal Surface Transportation and Efficiency Act (ISTEA), the nation's transportation policy law.

Rep. Bud Shuster, a Republican of Pennsylvania and chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, cites the heavy traffic in the Virginia suburbs and elsewhere as evidence that the nation needs to spend even more than it does on roads. "During the past decade, our population has increased 9 percent, but our vehicle miles traveled increased nearly 40 percent," Rep. Shuster said in a signed editorial in September in USA Today. Opponents, including Rep. Earl Blumenauer, a Democrat of Washington, insist that more new roads is counterproductive. "The sprawl and drive strategy is a no-win proposition," said Blumenauer in a letter to The Washington Post in September. "In 50 years of concerted road building, we haven't yet paved our way out of congestion."

The Cost Of New Roads

No question, the era of the Sunday drive is over. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, the number of cars and light trucks in-

creased from 72.7 million in 1960 to 193 million in 1995, a 265 percent increase. During the same period, the United States population grew by 44 percent.

Women working outside the home need cars. Working parents, weary of shuttling their kids, are declaring personal Independence Days and buying their teenagers cars. Families spend an average of \$5,000 per vehicle per year, yet one in five own three or more vehicles, according to the Census Bureau. The sheer numbers of cars and light trucks have produced what federal and state transportation officials call "in-

undation" of the highways. Viewed solely from this perspective, it is easy to see why traffic planners are calling for more roads. At the grass roots, though, the debate has taken on new dimensions. With bumper-to-bumper tie-ups spreading to the suburbs and rural areas, the economic, environmental and social costs of a car-dominated transportation system is causing a stir in American communities unlike anything seen previously.

Since 1985, the United States has spent nearly \$1 trillion on transportation improvement, most of it on roads, and drivers report that congestion almost everywhere is worse than ever. Meanwhile, cities are spreading out at a rate three to six times faster than population growth. The hollowing out of city centers has destroyed businesses, caused property values to plummet, marooned the inner city poor, weakened public school systems, drastically increased criminal violence, and contributed to the loss of community.

"For North America, the increasingly imbalanced relationship between the car and city is a crux issue—a problem that lurks unattended behind scores of others," said Alan Thein Durning, an author and Executive Director of the Northwest Environment Watch, an environmental research group in Seattle. "Painful as it is, we must face squarely the fact that unless North Americans can rearrange the furniture of their

Resolving Traffic Problems Without More Roads

Beaufort, South Carolina

In the late 1980's, state transportation officials proposed spending \$10 million to turn rural Highway 21 on Lady's Island and St. Helena Island into a five-lane thruway.

Citizens by the hundreds opposed the plan. They compiled persuasive evidence that neither population growth nor traffic congestion justified the project. They also asserted that the road would encourage the construction of strip malls and ruin a sensitive landscape of tidal creeks, farm fields and African-American historic sites.

Last December, as a direct result of citizen efforts, the project was redrawn to eliminate widening on St. Helena and in the rural regions of Lady's Island.

The six-year struggle over the road also yielded other benefits. It helped to prompt changes in local views about transportation and land use. Beaufort County now is considering a new land use plan designed to preserve rural areas by confining investments in new roads, sewers and water projects to regions that already have been developed.

Contact: Dana Beach, South Carolina Coastal Conservation League, PO Box 1765, Charleston, SC 29402-9940; Tel. 803-723-8035.

Cathedral City, California

When old state Highway 111 was widened in the 1970's outside the city, it attracted rampant strip development, and most of the downtown shops closed. The city formed a 30-member task force, which hired Michael Freedman, a San Francisco-based planning specialist, to make the commercial area along the highway more appealing to pedestrians, and thereby improve business downtown.

Freedman's plan, approved in June 1995, is turning the highway into a handsome tree-lined boulevard with through traffic in the center, parking along the sidewalks, and shops with benches out front lining the street. The "adaptable boulevard" plan also is designed to accommodate other transit, like bus and rail.

Contact: Michael Freedman, 47 Kearney St., Suite 500, San Francisco, CA 94108; Tel. 415-291-9455.

Middleburg, Virginia

Middleburg lies along Route 50, which connects the suburbs of northern Virginia with Washington. In 1995, when commuter traffic through Middleburg and two other towns had become a major problem, the state transportation department proposed building a \$34 million, four-lane highway bypass.

A coalition of citizens opposed the bypass and hired a consultant who specialized in reducing congestion through "traffic calming." The coalition then sponsored a series of public workshops to design a community plan, which calls for constructing landscaped medians, raising intersections to slow traffic, and erecting gateways to clearly mark town borders.

With strong support from the mayor of Middleburg, the Virginia Department of Transportation agreed to put the bypass on hold until the alternative plan had been fully considered. In June of this year, the Loudoun County Commission voted unanimously to support the plan.

Contact: Route 50 Corridor Coalition, PO Box 1555, Middleburg, VA 22117; Tel. 540-687-4055.

Chicago

The Illinois Department of Transportation and the state Toll Highway Authority have proposed several extensions of the existing tollway system into the northwestern and southwestern suburbs of Chicago. The new roads would form a second, more distant beltway to downtown. A coalition of business, environmental and civic groups is developing an alternative transportation study. It includes proposals for more rail capacity, the widening of existing roads, and building traditional transit-oriented neighborhoods near rail stops.

Contact: Environmental Law and Policy Center, 203 North LaSalle St., Suite 1390, Chicago, IL 60601; Tel. 312-759-3400.

Prince Georges County, Md.

U.S. 301, east of Washington, is a heavily congested route. In the mid-1980's, the Maryland Department of Transportation proposed building an Outer Beltway, a second ring beyond the existing Capital Beltway.

Public opposition to the project was immediate. The transportation department responded with a study of alternatives. Completed last summer, the study called for expanding U.S. 301 by two lanes and reserving options for future rail transit. Other recommendations included focusing new development in compact planned communities, increasing parking fees and establishing tolls to discourage traffic. The Outer Beltway now is on hold.

Contact: Chesapeake Bay Foundation, 111 Annapolis St., Annapolis, MD 21401; Tel. 410-268-8833. ■

cities, neither cars nor cities nor North American societies in general will function terribly well."

Road building also exacts other heavy costs:

In 1996, 41,906 Americans were killed in traffic accidents—more than by guns and drugs combined. Traffic accidents are now the leading cause of death among teenagers. And the decision to raise speed limits several years

ago is leading to more injuries and deaths in some states. In December 1995, for instance, Texas increased speed limits to 70 miles an hour on most state-maintained roads. In 1996, 3,741 people died on Texas highways, an 18 percent jump over the year before, and the highest increase in the nation. In Montana, fatalities jumped 30 percent in the first eight months of 1997.

Americans make an average of 10 car trips daily from their home and drive a combined 2.2 trillion miles, more than twice the miles driven in 1970. Though engines are more efficient, there are so many more of them that fuel consumption has increased to 115 billion gallons annually, 40 billion gallons a year more than in 1970. During the first eight months of 1997, Americans con-

sumed a record 336 million gallons a day, according to the federal Energy Information Administration.

The progress the nation has made to clear the water and air is now at risk of being reversed. Half of the air pollution in the United States is produced by cars and light trucks; in Los Angeles, it's 70 percent. Polluted runoff from roads and pavement now accounts for half of all water contamination in the United States. Releases from vehicles to the atmosphere of carbon dioxide—which cause global warming—have increased to 280 million metric tons annually, 30 percent more than in 1980.

Transportation and Land Use

Clearly, a different approach is warranted. In April, Maryland's Democratic governor, Parris Glendening, signed legislation that directs the state's investment in roads solely to areas that have already been developed and away from farms and forests.

St. Louis, Sacramento, Portland and Atlanta have all invested in subway and light rail lines. A survey in 1990 by the Department of Transportation found that households in cities with good public transportation systems take 18 percent fewer car trips and travel 36 percent fewer miles. The Clinton Administration has taken note. It formed an interagency group to study transportation and land use, with a particular emphasis on how to reduce federal incentives that encourage sprawl. Last summer, the President and Vice President held a two-day conference in Lake Tahoe on sprawl and the environment that included discussions about the role new roads play in supporting ever more diverse and far-flung patterns of development.

Not since the early 1970's, when the Nixon Administration produced a landmark report, "The Costs of Sprawl," has a White House taken such an interest in transportation policy and its effect on patterns of development. "In the 1970's, the interest in sprawl and transportation did not lead to a sustained effort to tackle the issues because there were more immediate environmental problems to be addressed," said Harriet Tregoning, the Director of Urban and

Economic Development at the Environmental Protection Agency and one of the Administration's leading experts on the causes of sprawl. "In the 1990's, a lot of those problems—point-source air and water pollution in particular—have been addressed.

"What looms ahead of us now are environmental problems associated with the aggregate effects of individual decisions. How we commute to work. Where we live. What patterns of development predominate. All of those decisions contribute to water pollution, air pollution and how much energy we use. They also contribute to urban disinvestment and more sprawl."

No region of the country has accomplished more in transportation planning than Portland, Oregon. Until the late 1980's, planning new freeways in Oregon was an internal agency affair. State engineers identified the highway corridor. Their bosses lobbied for money. Rights of way were purchased. "By the time ordinary people were actually allowed to make comments, it pretty much was a done deal," said Keith Bartholomew, staff attorney at 1000 Friends of Oregon, a respected land use advocacy group.

In 1988, though, everything began to change. That year, Oregon Transportation Department planners proposed to build a six-lane highway bypass through the wheat and berry fields of Washington County, west of Portland. Citizens flocked to public hearings to champion a fundamentally different transportation plan for the region.

The activists, who included farmers, business people and homeowners, argued that one of the primary causes for the increasing traffic congestion in Washington County was how land was being used. As suburban sprawl continued to press outward, residents had no choice but to use their cars for even the simplest errands. The way to solve gridlock, the citizens reasoned, was to give people more options for how to live and how to get around.

Among the most prominent proponents of the alternative approach was 1000 Friends of Oregon, which was founded by former Governor Tom McCall, a Republican. Thousand Friends, as it's known, realized that

fast-growing Washington County could provide the model for the nation's first 21st Century transportation and land use plan.

Experts from around the country were invited to help with the plan—among them were Peter Calthorpe, a neo-traditional architect and planner from San Francisco, and ECONorthwest, a consulting firm in Eugene, Oregon.

The visionary program, directed by Bartholomew, proposes a future for Washington County that looks very much like the past. Financed by foundations, the Federal Highway Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency, it is popularly known as LUTRAQ, which stands for "Land Use, Transportation and Air Quality." The idea behind LUTRAQ was to establish well-designed, compact neighborhoods, with homes, stores, offices, schools and recreation centers within walking distance of bus and rail transit stops.

A distinctive reason for the program's success was the creation of computer models that identified flaws in the conventional reasoning for building new roads. The LUTRAQ researchers—including traffic engineers, architects and planners—were able to prove that traffic congestion is lessened by lowering demand, not by increasing road capacity. The LUTRAQ studies further showed that:

- Building new neighborhoods around transit stops, reachable by a short walk, lowered traffic congestion by more than 10 percent.

- Transit-oriented (as opposed to car-oriented) communities sharply reduced household expenses by enabling families to function well with one car, instead of requiring fleets of personal vehicles.

- The project helped convince state and local officials to substitute a \$1 billion taxpayer-financed highway—that also would have needed millions of dollars a year in maintenance—for hundreds of millions of dollars in privately financed compact home and business development that is a net contributor of tax funds to municipal coffers.

- Transit-oriented development allows twice as many children to safely



Photo by Kim Sorenson

Cal-de-sacs like this one on Old Mission Peninsula north of Traverse City, Michigan, are worsening traffic congestion by directing traffic onto main thoroughfares rather than constructing traditional grids that move traffic more readily.

walk or ride their bicycles to school.

The LUTRAQ planners also successfully made the case that just as railroad suburbs in New York, Philadelphia and Boston were popular at the turn of the century, a strong market exists today for modern transit developments. The team projected that during the next 20 years, about 75 percent of Washington County's new jobs and 65 percent of the houses could be supported in such communities.

The computer models were so convincing that the Oregon Department of Transportation last year dropped its plan to build the freeway and has publicly supported the alternative put forward by 1000 Friends. The LUTRAQ team also made progress on helping the Portland region implement a new land use transportation concept to begin reversing trends in travel behavior. The Portland area's regional government, known as Metro, has adopted a land use plan that calls for:

1. Enlarging a highly successful light rail network.
2. Enacting new zoning provisions that encourage homes to be built on smaller lots in new pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods that are within walking distance of rail and bus stations.
3. Investing in new parks, public facilities and streets that have turned downtown Portland into a magnet for entertainment, new businesses and jobs.

Early indications from city leaders and public-interest groups are that the LUTRAQ approach is working. Buyers are snapping up new homes and shops close to transit stops at prices that are lower than in any other metropolitan region in the West.

LUTRAQ, said Bartholomew, has proved to be "a rallying point for people not satisfied that a high quality of life necessarily includes acres of parking lots and miles of congested roads."

The Petoskey Experience

There isn't any mystery about the cause of Al Foster's discomfort. It's right there, just below the broad ridge his family has farmed for nearly 100 years. Every evening, like corn popping on a giant skillet, the lights switch on in the subdivisions creeping away from Petoskey. First one. Then another and another; a sudden wash of white light from new homes and cars and street lamps. Each month, it seems, they move farther out, an unyielding advance that hides the stars and threatens to obscure a way of life on the northern coast of Lake Michigan.

For some in the region's farm community, Petoskey's sprawl has meant fast-rising land prices and enormous riches when the time came to sell out. Foster never counted himself among those who saw speculative opportunity in growth. The land was a birthright, and each conversion of a neighbor's field for new homes left him feeling diminished. But he kept such thoughts

mostly to himself. Then several years ago Foster learned that the state Department of Transportation wanted to build a 9.5 mile, \$70 million bypass through farmland. The proposed route would have carved a 300-foot swath through the township's hay and corn fields. It also would have split up nearly a dozen other farms that make up the core of Bear Creek Township's thriving dairy, vegetable and row crop industry. "We don't need that road. If they had asked us, that's what we would have told them," said Foster. "But they never asked. They just said this is the way it's going to be."

Foster and other farmers heavily influence the governing boards of Bear Creek and Resort townships. With the backing of the majority of residents, the townships opened their treasuries to hire lawyers, technical experts and consultants. They brought forward evidence questioning whether Petoskey had a "traffic problem" in the first place. And they built a formidable coalition with the Petoskey City Council, environmental groups, the Michigan Farm Bureau Federation, and hundreds of residents to oppose the new road as a menace to the farm economy and the small town way of life.

"We've come a long way from the days when transportation was designed to get farmers out of the mud and allow goods to go to market," said Hank Dittmar, Executive Director of the Surface Transportation Policy Project, a national coalition based in Washington that is working to reform transportation policy. "Now road investment in rural areas is largely about land conversion, from farmland and recreational space to Wal-Marts and McDonalds. That is a process of disinvestment in small towns, and a process that creates a situation where farming is less and less viable. Farmers understand this. And at least part of the fight in Congress is directed at reversing this process."

The surprise in Petoskey, if there is one, is that the debate over transportation and land use didn't happen sooner. This city of 6,000 is well-known for its tree-lined streets, Victorian architecture and breathtaking views of the enamel

blue waters of Lake Michigan. Just beyond the city boundary, green forested hills as round as a cat's back overlook miles of prime farmland in Bear Creek and Resort Townships. Industrial and professional families of Chicago and Detroit have sought out the region as a summer playground for 100 years.

The problems began when their heirs began to view Petoskey as a place worthy of full-time residence. The population of Emmet County has now increased to some 28,000 people, 54 percent more than in 1980. During the summer, the population swells to more than 45,000 people. The vehicle population is growing even faster. Most of the growth has been in the two townships on the city's outskirts. And more is coming. Houses are popping up on the ridges to take advantage of views of the big lake. Wal-Mart has arrived. A \$600 million development is being built along Lake Michigan that could soon add 6,000 more people. In 1996, the National Trust For Historic Preservation named Petoskey one of the most endangered places in the United States.

It is for these reasons, and several more, that Herb Carlson, a retired car dealer and Petoskey's former mayor, steadfastly supported the construction of a bypass. It would relieve the congestion, which, he contends, could harm the area's quality of life and is getting worse, particularly in summer. "We have one main highway, U.S. 31, that goes through town and it's carrying more traffic every year," Carlson said in an interview. "We've got a problem now with congestion. And we're going to have a worse problem 30 years from now if we don't do something. And that's why we proposed the bypass."

When Carlson and a committee he chaired introduced the idea in the fall of 1987, it caused an immediate ruckus. The local chamber of commerce, the Emmet County Board of Commissioners and many wealthy summer people in Petoskey supported the road because they believed it would reduce congestion near their cottages. But hundreds of residents, turning up en masse at public hearings, denounced

the new road, saying it was unnecessary, a waste of money, and would accelerate sprawl.

"People understood right away what it meant, and opposition has been strong from the very beginning," said Debbie Rohe, a former Emmet County Commissioner.

Rohe and other critics said the bypass plan lacked imagination and foresight. One of the reasons traffic is getting worse, opponents say, is that Petoskey is repeating the mistakes of other regions. A Balkanized development pattern has taken hold with pods for shopping, offices, housing, schools, recreation areas and industry springing up across the forested landscape. The only thing that connects one pod to the others are increasingly crowded roads. Moreover, the new housing pods feature cul-de-sacs for streets instead of the traditional square block grid that helps to move traffic. Each cul-de-sac empties its traffic onto a feeder route.

Viewed from the air, northern Michigan's new subdivisions look biological, like frozen sperm cells surrounding a central urban egg. Ending such free-floating patterns of development and drawing homes and businesses closer to Petoskey's downtown is the solution to the traffic "problems" that the state highway department and some residents perceive.

That is a discussion that has begun in earnest. In Petoskey, the proposed bypass has advanced the civic debate over farmland preservation and the rural quality of life by focusing on the links between road building and sprawl. The persistent response in the region slowed the transportation department's planning work. By addressing the consequences to the landscape and communities instead of how to move cars, farm leaders found a way to rally their neighbors and safeguard a way of life. It is a lesson that other American communities would do well to learn, and to which lawmakers in Washington, and every state capital, ought to pay close attention. ■

Road Rage in the West

By HOWARD BERKES

Roads triggered rage long before obscenities and gun-fire encroached on the daily urban commute, especially in the vast and empty landscapes of the American West. Good roads are still rare there, and little angers some Westerners more than roads. Even the loneliest roads in the most remote places trigger lawsuits, threats of violence and rebellion.

This may be hard to fathom while stranded in freeway gridlock or dodging the potholes of crumbling city streets, but the distant and disparate communities of the rural West desperately depend on the few roads that link them, even when the roads are gravel or dirt or dusty tracks in the desert. In fact, the rougher the road, the more important it may be in the battle for control of millions of acres of publicly owned and federally managed land in the West.

That's what Cal Black understood when he fired up a bulldozer almost 20 years ago, lowered the blade, and carved a path straight and wide in a Utah canyon. He didn't go far but County Commissioner Black made his point. Local people had been using the canyon bottom as a thoroughfare for cattle. The path they made, he reasoned, constituted a road. And since it was a road, the canyon could not be designated wilderness under federal law. The federal government proposed wilderness designation for the canyon and Black and other local people feared their access to the canyon would become restricted. So to be safe, he used the county road grader to make the canyon bottom more demonstrably a road.

That act of civil disobedience was part of the Sagebrush Rebellion in which many rural Westerners sought to gain control of federal land in the American West. The rebellion faded with the 1980 election of Ronald Reagan as President and the appointment of James Watt as Secretary of the Interior.

But the rebellion and road wars are back. In recent years, bulldozers in Nevada and Utah have been sent scraping into protected places and those proposed for protection. One of the roads has been the subject of lawsuits, court hearings, federal negotiations and even the intervention of President Clinton. The Burr Trail in southern Utah has long been more of a road than its name implies. Fifteen years ago, it was rough and dusty in dry weather, a river of muck when wet. It snaked around white sandstone mesas and into narrow canyons with walls as red as sunburned skin. When it came to a creek, it didn't rise to a bridge. It simply plunged in and climbed out. Driving the Burr Trail's 66 miles was an eye-popping, spine-cracking adventure.

The few people who lived near the Burr Trail considered its potential unfulfilled. Pave it, smooth its sharp switchbacks

and bridge the creeks and dry washes, and the Burr Trail could bring prosperity to one of the poorest regions of Utah. Tourists might flock to it, unafraid of flash floods and car-swallowing mud. Prospectors for minerals and oil and gas would find it reliable. And local folks could use it as a shortcut, saving hours when driving to town.

Canyon hikers and environmentalists wanted to leave the road rough. They didn't want pavement and Winnebagos diminishing their adventure. They feared mines and drilling rigs in a place so wild and remote it was the last region mapped in the lower 48 states.

So for 15 years the Burr Trail has been a battleground, for bulldozers, legal briefs and dueling editorials. People even argue about it in coffee shops. President Clinton entered the fray last year, declaring the region the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. An act of rebellion on the Burr Trail led, in part, to the President's action. County Commissioners in southern Utah had been winning the Burr Trail battles. Most of the road is now paved and bridges and culverts cross its streams. But that didn't satisfy Commissioners in Garfield County. Two years ago, they sent their road grader to the last unpaved section of the road. The bulldozer crossed into Capitol Reef National Park and, without permission, it not only widened the road, it obliterated a hillside inside the National Park. The National Park Service and environmentalists went ballistic.

This act of defiance was proof to some Clinton administration officials that the area needed to be protected from the people living around it. That and Congress's failure to declare the region a wilderness gave the President a moral imperative to act (there was also the political imperative of a grand environmental gesture before the 1996 election to solidify support among environmentalists). The President used his executive powers to name the area a National Monument.

The monument designation doesn't change the status of the Burr Trail. If anything, it's attracting more sightseers and feeding the fervor to pave the final 16 miles. But the federal government is standing firm. It's suing Garfield County for the damage it caused to the road and the hillside in Capitol Reef National Park. And it wants a federal court to establish a precedent and rule that roads like the Burr Trail cannot be used to assert local control over federal land. The lawsuit is set for trial next spring. ■

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Paved with Gold

The Unappreciated World of Highway Finance

BY DAVID LUBEROFF

Money—who gets it and where it comes from—is at the heart of transportation politics. And when it comes to highways and transit, there is plenty of money in question. The problem, as reporters well know, is that there never seems to be enough money to go around, and even after major projects are begun they always wind up costing much more than they were supposed to.

The questions for reporters, therefore, are how much money, where does it come from, and where does it go?

The first thing to appreciate in answering these questions is the sheer magnitude of transportation spending in the United States. In 1993, for example, all levels of government in the United States spent \$68.7 billion on highways—more than they spent on police or fire protection, natural resources, sewage treatment, housing and community development, or parks and recreation. Put another way, the only things we spend more on than highways are entitlement programs, education, interest, public welfare, hospitals and government administration.

Transportation also is particularly important to state policymakers because after Medicaid, the federal highway-aid program is the largest direct grant that the federal government makes to state governments. Small wonder then that states that believe they “lose” in existing funding formulas are fighting bitterly to change those formulas while those that “win” are fighting just as hard to protect them.

The second thing to appreciate about highway spending is that contrary to popular perceptions that spending on roads is falling (which in turn is causing

roads and bridges to crumble), total spending on both highways and transit is at an all-time high. A 1993 Congressional Budget Office report, for example, found that in constant (that is inflation-adjusted) dollars, total spending by all levels of government on transportation rose from \$57 billion in Fiscal Year 1960, to \$76 billion in 1970, to \$81 billion in 1980. After declining in the early 1980's, spending began rising again and by FY 1990 (the last year CBO had data available) it had risen to \$99 billion.

These increases held across all important modes of transportation. In constant dollars, highway spending went up by 50 percent, from \$44 billion in 1960 to \$62 billion in 1990; spending on transit increased fivefold (from \$3.8 billion to \$18.3 billion); and aviation spending tripled (going from \$4.2 to \$12.6 billion). Subsequent reports by the U.S. Department of Transportation indicate that these trends have continued through the mid-1990's though there appears to have been a slight decline in spending in 1993, the last year for which statistics are available.

The overall increases in spending mask another important trend: a shift in responsibility for funding highways. Thus, in percentage terms, while the federal share of spending rose just after passage of the Interstate Highway and Defense Act of 1956, it has been declining since the early 1960's. Meanwhile both the state and local shares of spending have increased. This trend is in keeping with the literature on economic development, which suggests that roads and other transportation facilities contribute significantly to regional eco-

omic competitiveness. For this reason, scholars—such as former Director of the Office of Management and Budget, Alice Rivlin—generally believe that states and localities, not the national government, should pay for such projects. The economic reality, however, must compete with the political reality that projects are much more feasible when funding comes from higher levels of government and beneficiaries don't believe they have to foot the bill for them. Consequently, state and local officials, along with businesses whose fortunes are tied to specific places (such as developers, newspapers and utility companies) often lobby Washington intensely for money.



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Where Does the Money Come From?

The funds that pay for highways come from several sources, most significantly taxes on gasoline. At the federal level, it is critical to remember that unlike all other industrialized countries the U.S. federal government historically did not use gasoline tax revenues for anything other than highway improvements. In the 1970's and 1980's, however, some gas taxes were devoted to transit and in 1990 and 1993 the federal government used increases in gasoline taxes for deficit reduction.

Since 1993, there have been several quiet but extremely significant shifts in how the federal government accounts for this money. Initially, the money raised from gas taxes for deficit reduction was credited to the federal government's general fund while the rest of the money was credited to the Highway Trust Fund. In recent years, however, highway interests and senior members of Congressional transportation committees have succeeded in having all gas tax receipts credited to the Highway Trust Fund.

At one level this is merely an accounting exercise because when the federal deficit is calculated, all funds are included, regardless of which "accounts" they were credited to. At another level, however, the shift sets the stage for potent arguments that federal policymakers are inappropriately using gas taxes that should be used to build roads to mask the federal deficit. Indeed, such arguments are currently being bandied about in the intense debates over how much to spend in the next federal-aid surface transportation act. The American Road & Transportation Builders Association, for example, contended in a recent press release that because a Senate bill reauthorizing surface transportation fails to spend all money deposited in the Highway Trust Fund it "would return only 75 percent of the highway user fees collected by the states back to them for highway and bridge safety improvements."

Like the federal government, more than two thirds of the states have raised their gas taxes since 1990, although almost all that money has gone into transportation improvements. Despite

the increases, however, there still is wide variation among state gas tax rates, which range from less than 10 cents a gallon in Georgia to more than 30 cents a gallon in Connecticut.

Bonds also are an increasingly important source of funds for highway improvements, rising, according to The Road Information Project, from about 5 percent of all highway funds raised by states in 1982 to almost 14 percent of such funds in 1992. As with motor fuel taxes, states vary widely in their use of bonds. At the end of 1995, for example, 11 states had more than \$1 billion in highway bonds outstanding while 13 had less than \$100 million in outstanding bonds and nine undertook no borrowing for highways at all.

What is particularly striking about state gas tax and borrowing proposals is that contrary to popular perceptions they generally are popular with voters. The Urban Institute's George Peterson, for example, has found that approval rates for referendums for repairs and rebuilding (as opposed to new construction) have been even higher, generally running over 70 percent. In fact, even in the landmark 1994 elections, more than 96 percent of all bonds for highways were approved by voters.

Tolls—which were a common source of funds in the early 1950's but, due to a ban on using tolls on new Interstate highways were largely ignored until the mid-1980's—also have reemerged as a major new source of funding. According to a recent report by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials 14 states have opened or are constructing \$7.5 billion in new toll roads and other revenue-producing transportation facilities such as toll bridges. Another \$16 billion in projects is under consideration or on the drawing boards. The new roads generally have required tolls of more than 10 cents per mile while the older roads generally have tolls of less than five cents per mile. It is unclear if motorists will accept such tolls: Both the recently opened Dulles Greenway, a private toll road outside of Washington, and the new San Joaquin toll road in Orange County, California have generated significantly less traffic than anticipated,

which has forced both roads to change their toll schedules and to restructure their bonds.

In addition to these traditional sources of funds, state and local policymakers also are looking at new taxes to fund roads. For example, 23 states have increased their reliance on other revenue sources, such as taxes on rental cars, general sales taxes, increased taxes on alternative fuels, and, in the case of trucks, taxes based on vehicle weight and total miles traveled. In addition, 22 states reported that they entered into some form of a public/private partnership or joint venture to help fund transportation improvements. Such partnerships usually involve private-sector donations of land for new facilities or private funding of new ramps and interchanges needed to serve new developments.

What Are We Buying?

The rise in total spending and the fact that highway spending seems to be popular with voters seem paradoxical in light of continued reports about deteriorating roads and bridges and ever-greater congestion. How can these two things happen at the same time?

To begin with, some statements are rhetorical overkill. In a recent Washington Post article, for example, Representative Bud Shuster (R-PA), who chairs the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and is an advocate of significant increases in transportation spending, contended that "America is growing and prospering but our transportation infrastructure is crumbling." In fact, roadway conditions are improving. The U.S. Department of Transportation, for example, reports that the percentage of urban interstate highways in poor condition dropped from 16.8 percent in 1983 to 7.7 percent in 1991. (In 1993 U.S. DOT changed its road rating systems, so more up-to-date figures are not comparable with older figures.)

Various indexes, however, do suggest that highway congestion is worsening, particularly in the suburbs where an increasingly large proportion of Americans live and work. Thus it is entirely possible to be spending more

money but for congestion to be gradually worsening. This, in turn leads to U.S. DOT estimates that while current spending is sufficient to maintain the physical condition of existing roads and bridges, preventing congestion from getting any worse would require spending at least another \$20.2 billion a year on highways for the next 20 years.

Aggregate spending figures, moreover, may not capture important changes in spending patterns, which suggests that we may be spending more and more to get less and less. UCLA's Brian Taylor, for example, has calculated that from the 1950's until the 1980's per-mile construction costs in California regularly outpaced inflation.

Three factors were particularly important in pushing up costs, Taylor found. The cost of land rose dramatically, as did the unit costs of highway construction (that is the amount it cost to grade and pave one mile of one lane rose faster than inflation). Basic highway designs also have become more complex over time as engineers moved to accommodate higher speeds and new safety considerations. Third, and least understood, environmental and other constraints placed on highways have added substantial costs not only by delaying projects but also by forcing expensive designs that minimize harm and extensive and often expensive efforts to mitigate real and perceived damages from projects that are built.

The Century Freeway, a 17-mile highway in and near Los Angeles, that was the last major interstate highway project in California, for example, could not proceed until CalTrans agreed to fund the construction of at least 3,000 units of housing to replace units taken for the road and to pay for job training and job placement programs for minorities and women from the neighborhoods near the road. The delays and the added commitments meant that the project's cost rose from an estimate of \$502 million in 1977 (before the commitments were made) to \$2.5 billion when it was finished in 1993. Even after accounting for inflation, this represents a 131 percent increase in costs.

Another example of how changing norms can drive up costs is Boston's

\$11 billion seven-mile long Central Artery/Tunnel project. Rather than creating a new right-of-way in downtown Boston, which would have required substantial takings, the project will tunnel under an existing downtown highway using expensive technologies that allow the existing highway to function while the tunneling occurs. Even with this seemingly sensitive design, the project faced a difficult permitting process in which state officials had to make hundreds of mitigation commitments and redesign a major river crossing at a cost of more than \$1 billion. The result is that state officials now estimate that about a third of the project's cost is estimated to be for mitigation.

How Much Is That Project In the Window?

The histories of the Century Freeway and the Central Artery/Tunnel projects illustrate a critical issue that merits reporters' attention. Major transportation projects regularly are announced and approved with cost estimates that turn out to have badly underestimated their final costs. When proponents of the artery/tunnel project sought federal authorization for the project in the mid-1980's, for example, they estimated that it would cost only \$2.4 billion, less than a quarter of its current cost. Similarly, Denver's new airport was pilloried because it cost almost \$5 billion, more than three times what the city had estimated when it sought voter permission to build the project in the late 1980's. And the Blue Line train from Long Beach to Los Angeles cost \$890 million, more than four times the \$194 million officials had estimated when that project began.

Such overruns, it turns out, can be predicted with remarkable precision, according to a study of about 50 major projects from around the world done by Edward Merrow for the Rand Corporation in the late 1980's.

To begin with, initial estimates rarely include either allowances for inflation or interest repayments when funding is coming from bonds. Massachusetts officials, for example, estimate that more than half the increase in the artery/

tunnel project's cost is due to inflation and the fact that, unlike previous estimates, the current estimate includes a factor for inflation.

Second, project scope usually changes. As design proceeds, for example, engineers sometimes find that initial assumptions about the depth of bedrock or soil conditions were wrong and require more expensive designs. Or planners can find that additional interchanges or ramps are needed, as they did on the artery/tunnel project and beneficiaries can lobby for additional entries and exits, as downtown businesses did in Boston when the artery's design was being finalized.

Third, the use of new and untested technologies can drive costs up dramatically because planners don't fully anticipate problems that might occur. The most notorious example comes from the new Denver airport, where the decision to build an automated baggage system ran up costs—about \$50 million to build a duplicate conventional system plus several hundred million dollars in interest payments to cover the cost of delaying the airport's opening.

Fourth, projects that have many discrete elements that must be coordinated with each other—such as the artery/tunnel project—also seem to experience greater cost increases than smaller, more discrete projects, probably because it is easier to estimate the costs of the latter.

Fifth, regulators concerned with areas such as the environment, labor relations, procurement procedures, worker health and safety can drive up costs dramatically. This does not necessarily mean that regulations are unnecessary but it does suggest that officials and/or the press might question the validity of particularly expensive and egregious demands.

Finally, while such problems can confront both privately and publicly owned projects, cost overruns generally are greater on publicly owned projects. There are two reasons why.

Proponents of publicly funded projects sometimes lowball initial costs, believing that once a project is authorized it is unlikely that it will be can-

celed if costs rise, particularly if a project is already under construction. Public-sector owners also have less incentive to hold the line on costs, especially when funding comes in the form of grants from higher levels of government (as it did for Century Freeway and initially did for the artery/tunnel project) while local constituencies and regulators are demanding a share of project benefits. Merrow, for one, found that this factor, not systemic lowballing of cost estimates, explained most of the difference in cost growth between private and public projects.

Thus cost increases on major projects not only are likely, they are even predictable in their magnitude. Merrow, for example, calculated that for each area subject to stringent regulation, costs rose 75 percent above estimates. He also found that publicly owned projects were 50 percent more expensive than estimates while projects that used significantly new materials or construction methods were about 60 percent more expensive than estimates.

The question is: if the true costs of other projects were known, would worthy but expensive projects not get built? Consider, for example, that the Panama Canal cost twice its original estimate while the Suez Canal cost 20 times its original estimate. Studying the history of these and other projects several decades ago, John Sawyer concluded that the history of public works seems to suggest that such underestimation "appears to have been a condition of a successful enterprise."

Reporters covering transportation, therefore, not only must understand broad trends in funding and spending, they also must grapple with a fundamental question about the nature of democratic governance. Is our political system so flawed that those who build transportation facilities cannot and should not tell the truth about costs and those who write about those officials shouldn't press them on whether they are using realistic cost estimates? Doing so may allow the construction of facilities that ultimately prove to be valuable. But the price, not only in dollars but also in increased cynicism about whether public officials tell the truth and whether newspapers seek it out, may be too much to stomach. ■

Let the Construction Begin

By JUDY FAHYS

In the months before Utah began rebuilding its major north-south interstate, a public relations firm chose "Satch" to guide motorists through the coming years of highway turmoil. Named after the "Wasatch Front," the towering mountains forming the Great Salt Lake Basin's eastern wall, "Satch" embodied the "spirit of Utah's roads," according to the public relations team that dreamed him up. But Utahns never connected with the grizzled, smiling hobo who seemingly materialized from nowhere, sometimes squeezing a concertina, sometimes waving at motorists from the roadside.

They snubbed "Satch" almost instantly. "This is crazy," said one critic of the \$400,000 ad campaign. "What an irresponsible waste of our tax dollars," another complained in a letter to *The Salt Lake Tribune*. "Please...don't insult our intelligence, make us more angry and waste more of our tax money having stupid people doing childish TV commercials," another implored. "Satch" got sacked soon after.

Their handling of the "Satch" fiasco has been typical of how the Utah media has covered many of the transportation issues that have sprung into public view in recent months. The media has largely taken a conservative role, not driving coverage but rather serving as a vehicle for basic public information. In the case of the highway project mascot, "sack Satch" editorials followed letters to the editor. Meanwhile, routine coverage focuses on how to navigate the construction and why construction is being done a certain way. Many reports refer to the Olympics—the federal dollars it may bring for new infrastructure, the added traffic it will generate and that sort of thing.

The reality is that Utahns recognized long ago that the state needed to improve its transportation infrastructure. Interstate 15 was crumbling long be-

fore the International Olympic Committee announced in June, 1995, that Salt Lake City would play host to the 2002 Winter Games. Potholes and congestion provided daily reminders that I-15 already had exceeded its life expectancy by more than a decade. Chunks of fallen concrete punctuated warnings that no fewer than 17 bridges needed immediate replacement. Local media had little to say about the problems, though, until transportation officials began their public education campaign for I-15 last fall.

Now the Games and transportation improvements have become inexorably interlaced. Utahns are eager to project the image of a world-class city when some 300,000 athletes and spectators arrive for the two-week winter sportsfest. The Olympics has given them a golden reason to pave highways, lay tracks and update the airport. It has given them a cause to rally, a hometown team to cheer, a reason to shrug off the expense and the hassle.

In fact, the state's premier transpor-



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tation project truly is an Olympian undertaking. The current demolition and rebuilding of I-15 is the state's largest-ever public works project. And, with its \$1.6 billion price tag, it is one of the largest single contracts ever let on the interstate highway system. I-15 forms a north-south arc that drapes across Utah like a beauty pageant sash. For a few miles, it also doubles as the intersection of a major east-west route, Interstate-80. The 17 miles slated for reconstruction lie in the Salt Lake Valley, the heart of a four-county area that holds more than four of every five Utahns. When the work is done, I-15 will have eight lanes instead of six and a high-tech traffic-management system guaranteed to minimize congestion.

Project officials knew from the beginning the media would play an important role, and they have been careful to build solid relationships with local news organizations. Each week, the I-15 team distributes detailed reports on upcoming ramp and road closures, as well as warnings about the spots where delays are most likely to occur. The reconstruction team generally has liked the coverage. Its in-house polling has shown that newspapers, radio and television continue to be the main source of information for people who want to know what is happening on the reconstruction. Says I-15 spokeswoman Lindsey Ferrari: "The biggest surprise is how much attention it's gotten."

Utah Department of Transportation Director Tom Warne, a veteran of a similar project in Arizona, is the reconstruction's coach and captain. Looking more like a schoolboy in a suit than the philosophical muscle behind an earth-moving fleet, he pushed to use an unconventional approach for I-15. Instead of bidding the project's design and construction jobs separately, with the state taking an oversight role, his agency bid the whole I-15 contract as a single job to be planned and executed by a team of engineers, contractors and UDOT employees.

"Design/build," as this approach is called, offers the state high risks and rewards. The chancy part is drawing designs just a step ahead of rebuilding

the roads. It seems a formula for mistakes and delays.

At the same time, project planners have built in enormous rewards, both in dollars and goodwill. The state expects to save an estimated \$500 million by using design/build. In addition, this contracting approach will cut construction time from about eight years to a projected four and a half—offering a completion date that gets the project done a few months before the Games. The shorter construction time means fewer traffic jams, motorist complaints and other construction-related headaches. Warne's agency is not just guessing how the public will respond; its pre-reconstruction polling shows a majority of Utahns favor more intense inconvenience for a shorter time.

To pacify skeptics, the I-15 team notes the contract includes incentives that give the private contractors bonuses of up to \$50 million for completing the work on budget and on time. If things take longer, the companies have agreed to monetary penalties. Wasatch Constructors, the engineering and construction consortium that won the bid in March and broke ground in April, asserts it is months ahead of schedule.

The media seems to be watching for missteps, but just months into construction, none has been reported. That doesn't mean the watch has been abandoned, though. Reporters know that, even if things go as smoothly as planned, the \$1.6 billion reconstruction guarantees years of daily hassles and tax penny-pinching that will provide good material for stories.

It may portend slippery political terrain ahead, but it would be hard to guess that from watching Utah's Republican governor. Telegenic and moderate, Michael O. Leavitt was wildly popular before I-15 came into full view, and he has had to expend little political capital over the transportation program. He won reelection in 1996 by capturing three of every four votes cast in the race.

Like other political candidates that year, he declined to talk about the transportation-related tax increases that would be needed to get the project underway, and The Salt Lake Tribune

pointed out this omission prior to the election. It evidently did not matter to voters, though, when Leavitt stepped forward a month after the election with a plan to raise the gas-tax to help rebuild the highways.

The governor's \$2.6 billion highway plan included a two-step gasoline-tax increase to 24.5 cents from 19.5 cents a gallon. That, plus a near doubling of annual vehicle-registration fees to \$21, would go a long way toward paying for a decade-long program. Not only did Leavitt emphasize the heaviest road users would pay more because they would be buying the most gas, but he also proposed that half the \$2.6 billion funding package would go to projects in rural areas—a key move aimed at shoring support among the rural lawmakers who dominate the Legislature and whose constituents would not have much use for the reconstructed I-15. Leavitt had about four months to sell his plan before the I-15 bid was to be opened and about a month before lawmakers were slated to begin their annual legislative session.

His toughest fights did not come from the public, or the opposing Democrats. They came instead from leaders in his own party, steered chiefly by no-government-growth forces in the House of Representatives. The lawmakers, angling for an edge on the popular governor, decried the tax increase. Immediately they began looking for \$50 million a year in current-program cuts, along with ways to tap existing revenue sources. They hit a roadblock, however, as they tried to make the case the cuts would not squeeze funding for public schools, universities and family-service programs. Utah's per-pupil spending already ranks 50th in the nation, and tuition increases were slated for most of the state's nine universities. Critics accused the budget hawks of sacrificing people to pay for roads.

The GOP legislators did not agree to a compromise until the final week of their 45-day session. They demanded about \$20 million in cuts from government spending each year, along with a 1/8th-cent shaving from the general sales tax. In exchange, the lawmakers allowed

a 5 cents per gallon gas-tax hike.

Through this debate, the media had a tough job ferreting out stories that addressed the impact transportation will have on future budgets. It would have been impossible for last year's stories to ignore the huge impact of highway funding on other programs since the sums involved are simply enormous for a state with a \$5.5 billion budget. At the same time, Utah's economy has been growing for more than six years and has generated surpluses larger than \$200 million in a single year. That makes it difficult to show any harm being done.

Again, one needs only to look at the polls for evidence that the public believes all those involved are handling the reconstruction fairly well even after the rough-and-tumble in the Capitol. Leavitt has largely avoided blame for the gas-tax hike and traffic jams (both began last summer.) About 88 percent of Utahns surveyed last fall still rated his job performance "excellent" or "good." And neither he nor the Legislature is being held accountable for the headaches the roads caused Utahns last summer.

Utah's beleaguered Democrats are getting lots of mileage out of the ruling party's handling of the transportation issue. For years, the Democrats' initiatives have languished on the sidelines because the party holds so few elected positions in Utah. There are no Democrats in the state's five-person congressional delegation, and just one Democrat—the attorney general—occupying a statewide elected office. In the 75-member House, there are 20 Democrats, and in the 29-member Senate, they hold just nine seats.

However, the Democratic party has seized the GOP's transportation planning and construction as a forum for engaging in some full-contact politics. Throughout the general session, Democratic legislators attacked Republicans for their approach to transportation, calling it too little, too late and too harmful to typical Utahns.

They said middle- and lower-income residents would be pinched most painfully by the tax hike. They charged the cuts would "pave over people" most in



I-15 construction, Salt Lake City.

PHOTO BY THE SALT LAKE CITY TRIBUNE

need of government. When the Democrats developed their own budget plan that cut sales-tax exemptions awarded to the businesses, the governor and the legislative leadership still turned them away. The Democrats elbowed their way into the public debate anyhow, through the media.

Another slap at the majority took the form of two election-season billboards on congestion-plagued sections of I-15. The signs read "This traffic jam brought to you by 20 years of Republican leadership." The slogan, which has been reproduced in bumper stickers the party now sells for \$5 apiece, did little to persuade voters to throw more support behind their beleaguered party, but the Democrats have not abandoned hope their constant offensive will pay off—well—down the road. Party Chair Meghan Holbrook expects the point will make itself when the first heavy snows fall this winter and commuters struggle even harder to get to work.

Utah's congressional delegation also has attracted some extra press scrutiny because of the transportation projects.

Freshman Merrill Cook landed on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee back in Washington, where he has the lead role in pitching for some \$4.3 billion in federal dollars the state says it needs for all manner of airport, rail and highway programs that are being pegged to the

Olympic Games. Curiously, about \$662 million of the money he is seeking would go to the light rail system he fought for years to stop. "I have learned to accept defeat and move on," he told legislators last year. A Republican who briefly went independent for a few unsuccessful election seasons, Cook's history as a turncoat apparently is haunting him in Congress. His two fellow Utahns in the U.S. House of Representatives voted against him on a key transportation measure last spring that would have brought more transportation funding to the state.

Another brow-raising situation involves veteran Rep. Jim Hansen. Chairman of the House Ethics Committee, he has agreed to investigate charges of wrongdoing against Rep. Bud Shuster, a Pennsylvania Republican who has been accused of an unethical relationship with a transportation lobbyist who also served as his top campaign fundraiser. Shuster, chairman of the Transportation Committee, also is under scrutiny over a fundraising visit he made to Utah on behalf of Republican candidates.

For the local media, I-15 is the biggest story in town, and news purveyors have competed hotly to find provocative, yet service-minded approaches to indulge the public's interest in the project.

All the outlets publicize basic infor-

Estimated Travel for Year 2000

Vehicle Class/ Registered Weight	Vehicle Miles of Travel (millions)		Number of Vehicles	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Passenger Vehicles				
Autos	1,181,461	67.5%	167,697,897	70.0%
Pickups/Vans	669,198	24.8%	63,259,330	26.4%
Buses	7,397	0.2%	754,509	0.3%
Total	2,495,056	92.6%	231,711,736	96.7%
Single Unit Trucks				
<25,000 pounds	56,451	2.1%	4,126,241	1.7%
25,001-50,000 pounds	18,631	0.7%	1,352,441	0.6%
>50,000 pounds	8,018	0.3%	491,745	0.2%
Total	83,100	3.1%	5,970,431	2.5%
Combination Trucks				
<50,000 pounds	6,744	0.3%	253,022	0.1%
50,001-70,000 pounds	16,685	0.4%	225,347	0.1%
70,001-75,000 pounds	5,926	0.2%	94,509	0.0%
75,001-80,000 pounds	86,176	3.2%	1,295,973	0.5%
80,001-100,000 pounds	3,879	0.1%	64,365	0.0%
>100,001 pounds	2,279	0.1%	37,778	0.0%
Total	115,689	4.3%	1,971,004	0.8%
Total Trucks	198,789	7.4%	7,941,435	3.3%
Total All Vehicles	2,693,845	100.0%	239,653,170	100.0%

Passenger vehicles account for about 93 percent of total vehicle miles of travel and single unit trucks and combination trucks account for 3 and 4 percent of total travel, respectively. More than two-thirds of single unit truck travel is by vehicles registered below 25,000 pounds, while among combination vehicles, 75 percent of travel is by vehicles registered between 75,000 and 80,000 pounds.

Source: 1997 Federal Highway Cost Allocation Study

mation about ride-sharing, buses, the I-15 Web page and telephone hotline. Many are helping guide commuters through the maze of ramp and road closures and alternative routes with maps, video and real-time traffic reports. One AM radio station reportedly credits this summer's traffic for boosting its listener audience growth by about 25 percent. The station provides a traffic report every ten minutes during drive time.

Both daily newspapers publish weekly maps and carry quarterly UDOT inserts about I-15 progress. One of the newspapers has organized a team of "road warriors" who periodically share their strategies for shaving time off their daily commutes. There have been missteps. Sometimes when a ramp has just closed, the television stations have set up cameras at the closure site to get a shot of traffic jams that never seem to materialize.

This transportation tale would not

be complete without mentioning the people of Utah. The aggressive transportation program has meant casualties—a number of them deaths caused by detoured motorists traveling too fast on local streets.

Others who have suffered include opponents of the new light-rail system, TRAX, a necessary side project of I-15 reconstruction. Ground was broken last spring on the long-embattled transit train, which will run roughly alongside a few miles of the interstate. Opponents shouted from the sidelines with their angry posters, "You Can Pry My Steering Wheel From My Cold Dead Fingers" and "No TRAXation Without Representation." Meanwhile, plans have hatched for a new west-to-east extension that would link the airport to Salt Lake City's university district, the proposed location for the Olympic Village.

Also, it would be misleading to suggest there has not been lots of griping, because there's plenty of it. Commut-

ers have lost a lane of I-15 in each direction and many key ramps. Alternative routes not only have been jammed, but many were being patched and resurfaced all summer. (This ubiquitous construction confirms how ambitious the project is; the I-15 reconstruction is happening a year earlier than long-range planners expected.)

Even with the hassles and even with the 5-cent tax jump at the gas pumps this summer, many Utahns seem to be regarding the reconstruction as the kind of hardship you would expect for a team with its eyes on a prize, a big prize. Many look for ways to adapt. Having to face that, they've been having a love affair with their cars all these years, some have tried such alternatives as telecommuting, car-pooling and hopping on the bus. At work, it's not uncommon to hear impromptu confessions from otherwise decent folks for the first time feeling symptoms of road rage in their own hearts.

Then there are those who have decided the best tactic is to enjoy the ride. One advocate of this approach wrote a letter to the editor suggesting Utahns should cultivate an affection for orange traffic cones, which they can groove on with their favorite music during their commutes. Others talk about the virtues of staying home. "That's characteristic of people in Utah," says the governor's spokeswoman, Vicki Varela. "When things are tough, people tend to hang together and work things through."

When it's all done, Utahns anticipate shining success. Traffic jams will dissipate, thanks to the high-tech gadgetry being laid along the highways. Travel routes will be covered with acres of smooth, black asphalt and easy-to-navigate interchanges. They will have 130 new bridges on I-15. And they can look forward to their day in the sun, not as the star athletes in the 2002 Olympic Games, but as the host city.

And maybe it would not be so far-fetched to see 'Satch make a comeback in Utah. If he trades that hobo garb for a star-spangled ice hockey uniform, or possibly a logo-spattered ski leotard, Utahns just might warm up to his spirit after all. ■

Private Toll Roads

Is the Glass One-Quarter Full or Three-Quarters Empty?

By JOSEPH M. GIGLIO

Journalists who cover government and public affairs have been hearing a great deal about how privately financed and operated toll roads may be the best solution to the nation's chronic under-investment in its highway system. Here are some background facts on "privatization" and questions that journalists should ask when they do stories about private toll-road proposals.

The Investment Problem

In recent decades, the United States has been investing too little in the roads and bridges of its highway network. Right now, we should be spending at least \$20 billion more per year simply to keep these essential transportation facilities from deteriorating any further. To fund the upgrading, modernization and expansion needed to support a growing economy would require a \$40 billion per year increase in what we're currently spending.

A key reason for this lack of adequate investment is the magical transformation of what were once called "dedicated transportation user charges" (such as motor vehicle fuel taxes) into sources of general tax revenue. The federal government has been reducing its budget deficit by holding down infrastructure outlays from the Highway Trust Fund so that the resulting surpluses of annual user charge revenues can be used to help cover non-transportation expenses. Many state governments are doing the same thing.

Meanwhile, the world's financial markets are awash with private capital looking for economically sound infrastructure projects to invest in. Several multi-billion dollar infrastructure funds

have already been assembled and more are being developed. This has led to the concept of having private firms build self-supporting toll roads that can tap these infrastructure funds for construction dollars.

This concept seems to be working effectively in France, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Indonesia, even China. But a quick scan of North America shows a landscape littered with the dry bones of failure and a rapidly aging cadre of privatization advocates. The smart money behind private infrastructure funds seems to be finding opportunities in every country except the United States.

Why Has the U.S. Fallen Behind?

Full-fledged privatization of transportation facilities has largely been a failure in the United States. The few successes have come only after years of complicated negotiations and a sad history of aborted projects.

California's Assembly Bill 680 was passed in 1986 to stimulate construction of private toll roads throughout the state. Since then, negotiations have been completed with private firms for four such projects. But it wasn't until late 1995 that the first one opened to traffic. This is the 10-mile, four lane, all-electronic toll road in the median of State Route 91 in Orange County. While its initial traffic volumes were less than originally projected, the growth has been encouraging and public acceptance of variable rate tolls and electronic toll collection has been good. However, no information has yet been released to show whether the road is a

financial success.

The other three California projects have made little progress, largely due to state insistence on 100 percent private funding.

The experience in other states has been even more disappointing.

In Washington, six projects were selected for development under the state government's public-private partnership initiative. But a dramatic change in the political composition of the state legislature following the 1994 election resulted in anti-toll sentiment that virtually halted privatization efforts. The only project now underway is a series of park-and-ride garages in Seattle. But this project is funded entirely with pub-



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lic capital and is therefore not an example of true privatization. However, the Tacoma Narrows toll bridge project could end up as a truly private project if it survives a regional referendum in late 1998.

Virginia's Dulles Greenway toll road was an ambitious privatization project that cost over \$300 million and received substantial private equity (reaching as high as 50 percent of total capitalization at one point). But the highway has experienced low traffic volume and isn't generating enough toll revenue to cover its debt service. Long-term economic growth in the region it serves could eventually solve this problem, but the road's ownership may change hands several times before then. Meanwhile, the I-895 Richmond Connector Toll Road project has struggled to get past the preliminary stages and now appears to be stalled because of disagreement between the state government and private developers over how much private capital the developers should invest.

Arizona has been through three rounds of privatization attempts. Two ended in failure due to community opposition, poor economics and a lack of political support.

South Carolina's experience with highway privatization has been mixed—one complete failure due to local opposition, one apparent success (the Greenville Toll Motorway), two more still in negotiation.

Only California's State Route 91 and Virginia's Dulles Greenway can be categorized as true private toll roads, because they embody the significant private equity investment and exposure to risk and reward that characterize all private sector undertakings. Both were conceived nearly a decade ago and neither is yet a financial success.

The other non-traditional toll roads are basically public-private partnerships, with government providing all or most of the investment capital while private firms do the building and operating. Most of the recent progress has involved projects that have little private investment and use phased construction to accelerate project completion. Their success seems to depend on:

- Having well-focused project goals, often determined in advance by government.

- Allowing the public and private partners to lead with their strengths. This usually means having government fund the project with tax-exempt debt, while the private firm takes on the phased-construction management responsibilities.

- Alternately structuring the project in ways that fall well short of true privatization and may simply involve some variation of the well-established "contracting out" concept (Virginia's Interstate Maintenance program is an example).

Elsewhere in North America

In Mexico, the good news is that several major private toll roads have been built. The bad news is that most have been financial failures, even if political triumphs. In general, these projects were undertaken as ways to support Mexico's construction industry. Tolls were set at high levels in the mistaken belief that this would permit rapid repayment of construction debt. But all this did was to discourage their use by motorists. While some smaller toll roads in urban areas appear to be self-supporting, most of these projects are in the process of being refinanced around lower and more realistic toll rates.

Canada has had at least one significant success with toll projects and few outright failures. This may be due to limited promotion of privatization for its own sake. The Northumberland Strait toll bridge between Prince Edward Island and the mainland opened during the summer of 1997. Its construction was privately financed, but it receives annual operating subsidies from the Canadian government from funds that formerly subsidized the ferries that the bridge replaced.

Route 407 outside Toronto has been a major success in terms of construction efficiency. But it was never promoted as anything more than a large-scale phased-construction project. Route 104 in Nova Scotia (a truck bypass around Halifax) may also end up

as a hybrid success, with a combination of provincial government debt capital and private equity funding.

The Diagnosis

The problems faced in developing more private toll roads in the United States fall into three broad categories:

1. The public sector's access to ostensibly low-cost tax-exempt debt discourages consideration of alternate financing mechanisms.
2. Poor communications between the public and private sectors. This includes a broad set of public sector approval processes that frustrate private developers and sometimes lead to outright failure.
3. The multiple (often conflicting) objectives of private firms that can get in the way of structuring a reasonable deal for the project.

A key factor influencing project financing decisions is the access state governments have to relatively low-cost tax-exempt debt. When toll roads have promising economic prospects, government is usually reluctant to turn the financing (much less the project itself) over to a private partner.

One effort to get around this is the increasing use of "63-20 corporations." These are not-for-profit corporations that the Internal Revenue Service allows to issue tax-exempt debt for private development. Even so, many private firms have been unwilling to make significant equity investments in toll road projects. They much prefer to serve as project developers in return for a flat fee. And the modest cost of establishing 63-20 corporations has discouraged some local governments from pursuing private sector participation.

With very few exceptions, private developers have been unable to convince public agencies that imagination and efficient management can offset the apparent financial benefits of tax-exempt debt. Ironically, financial advisors, the public finance arms of invest-

ment banking houses and other private players in the tax-exempt debt market are often the strongest advocates of maintaining the status quo.

Despite much apparent goodwill on all sides during the early stages of project development, private firms and public agencies often speak different languages, have different sets of values, and follow different practices. Typical problems include:

- A different pace of decision-making. Public agencies are accustomed to a slower pace of decision-making than is usual in private firms, in part because there are more players involved. For example, environmental agencies and community groups can impose delays in the decision-making process.

- Government's lack of a single decision-maker. Even when approval has been reached within one agency, another branch of government may change the rules (as happened in the state of Washington) or even halt the approval process (as Arizona's governor did during the first round of privatization projects in that state).

- Government's complex procurement process. The traditional practice of competitive bidding is often at odds with a private firm's need to protect its proprietary ideas. Some states have been able to develop creative ways about this, as Virginia has done with its very short deadlines for bids. But all too often, private sector mistrust in the ability of public officials to follow through on good intentions leads to a lack of serious bids (as has happened in Delaware).

- Unrealistic financial expectations on both sides. Many public officials see the private sector as a source of easy money. But they fail to appreciate the need for a fair rate of return on private equity investments because of a suspicion that "private profits rob the public." (Interestingly, this attitude seems to be less of a problem outside the United States.) At the same time, few private firms have shown much willingness to make serious equity investments in projects. They tend to be more interested in getting paid to build toll roads than in the revenues such roads can generate.

Costs of 5 Public-Private Toll Projects

Foothill/Eastern Toll Road

28.6 miles of express tollways in Orange County, Calif. \$1.5 billion.

San Joaquin Hills Toll Road

15-mile road in Orange County, Calif. \$1.4 billion.

Toronto Route 407

Expressway/bypass for Toronto. \$1 billion.

Fargo Toll Bridge

Two-lane toll bridge between Fargo, North Dakota, and Moorhead, Minn. \$1.6 million.

Tacoma Narrows Toll Bridge

Bridge supplementing existing span in Tacoma, Wash. \$800 million.

- Limited support in public agencies. In many state transportation agencies, few officials are truly interested in private sector involvement. Most prefer to continue doing business as usual, even if that means construction delays and higher project costs.

- Motorist opposition to tolls. This is widespread regardless of whether the toll collector is a public agency or a private firm. Despite funding shortfalls, there is often a stronger faith in the power of pork barrel politics than in the efficiency of the marketplace.

- Finally, private developers can fall just as blindly in love with their projects as public agency developers. A project's underlying merits need continuing re-examination to determine whether changes in its scope are in order. A scaled-back Dulles Greenway could have brought costs more in line with actual travel demand. Instead of simply assuming that motorists "must" want to use the road originally planned, more up-front market research could have revealed demand levels that dictated a less ambitious road.

The Future

The first round of private toll roads in the U.S. has fared poorly. This has led to renewed emphasis on developing conventional public-private partnerships for public agency toll roads, often utilizing phased construction. But real opportunities still remain for truly private toll roads if three factors are kept in mind:

- Innovative project financing is still alive and well. The assumption that conventional tax-exempt financing by government produces interest cost savings shouldn't obscure the larger financial benefits offered by other options. For example, federal law now permits state loans to private toll-road developers at below-market interest rates.

- The layered look is in. Private developers need to learn how to take full advantage of state infrastructure banks and other innovative public sector financial tools. Also, there's no need to rely solely on tolls to support a privately developed road. It's possible to take advantage of the increased property values and other economic benefits produced by a new highway to build a financing package around several revenue sources. Route E-470 outside Denver and the San Joaquin Toll Road in California's Orange County rely on as many as five different revenue sources.

- Just do it. Private and public sector players too often have multiple objectives. All of which would be better served by a single-minded focus on getting the project built.

Four Questions Journalists Should Ask

Evaluating the viability of a new private toll road proposal is no easy task. But here are four questions for which journalists should seek answers.

1. Is the project kosher?

This involves more than simply determining whether the process for selecting a private developer is sufficiently objective to prevent the project from being handed to some politician's favorite nephew. There have been too many instances of state governments'

selling an existing highway to a private firm for ready cash to plug a hole in the current year's budget, then leasing the road back for annual payments that burden future budgets. Privatization projects must produce meaningful benefits for all concerned—including the general public.

2. Does the project have wide-spread support?

The surest way for a toll-road project to fail is for the general public to oppose it—because of anti-toll sentiment, a perception that the road is in the wrong place or not truly needed, or concern that it will have negative environmental consequences. It's too easy for community activist groups to stir up political opposition or stall the project in the courts.

A second guarantee of failure is for the public agency sponsor to be anything less than fully behind the project. Officials who are unenthusiastic about a project have many ways to slow its progress until it lies dead in the water and the private developer decides to move on to better opportunities.

3. Is the project financially sound?

A private toll road must be self-supporting. This means generating enough revenue from tolls (and possibly other sources) to cover all its annual costs and provide a fair rate of return on the private equity capital invested to build it. If the road is owned by its private developer, standard accounting rules require that the annual cost of depreciation be charged against revenues. This is a way of recognizing the diminishing asset value of a capital facility as it gradually "wears out."

To avoid having to set toll rates high enough to cover depreciation, legal title to a private toll road may actually be held by a public agency. For no sensible reason, public agencies in the United States are allowed to ignore depreciation as an annual cost, which eliminates the need for enough revenue to cover it. But at the end of the road's useful life, new debt must be issued to reconstruct it. In effect, depreciation is simply capitalized rather than being paid

70 Years Ago, When It All Began

Boston to Have Intra-Mural Numbered Routes

Strangers who motor to Boston for the Massachusetts Bay Tercentenary observance next year and who fear they may become enmeshed in the city's narrow, crooked streets laid out by the traditional cow, are due to have a pleasant surprise. They will find the maze of downtown streets fully up to specifications, but they will also discover that Boston has provided the answer to the puzzle and that it will be an extremely simple matter to drive into, through and out of the city proper. Threading through the business section will be no more difficult than following a motor route in the country. All that will be necessary will be to observe and follow the signs.

—*The Boston Evening Transcript, Saturday, November 30, 1929.*



for by today's motorists.

4. Can the project produce significant benefits to society?

The underlying rationale for any transportation facility is that it supports and generates economic activity by making possible more trips in less time. A higher level of economic activity today means a more prosperous society tomorrow. But tolls can discourage tripmaking on a road that charges them, especially when toll-free roads are available as reasonable alternatives (one of the problems experienced by Virginia's Dulles Greenway toll road).

Does this mean that we're kidding ourselves by imagining that toll roads can provide a solution to our chronic pattern of under-investing in transportation capacity?

Not necessarily. California's State Route 91 toll road is demonstrating that many motorists will pay extra for a faster trip. The trick is to find a toll structure that produces enough rev-

enue without discouraging too many trips. Sometimes this can require artful ways of hiding or ignoring certain of the road's annual costs so that toll rates can be lower. Capitalizing depreciation is one device for doing this.

Some people may be outraged by such blatant examples of "fiscal imprudence." But the important thing is whether the overall result is, on balance, beneficial to society. If we can pay for increased transportation capacity in ways that don't discourage its use, the result will be more trips and therefore more economic activity. Which is certainly beneficial to society, both today and tomorrow. And the size of tomorrow's benefits determines whether capitalizing some of today's costs may not be the most prudent thing to do. ■

New Phoenician Roads

How a City Integrated Art Into Its Infrastructure

BY BARBARA GOLDSTEIN

Usually, when Americans think about the beauty of Arizona's highways, we think about the scenery the roads pass through. We think of the landmarks—the anthropomorphic forms of the saguaro cactus, the majestic mountains, or the dramatic colors of the desert landscape. We seldom think about the roads themselves, but it is exactly these highways, bridges, crosswalks and streets that Phoenix has developed as a means to help people better understand and navigate their city. The city has developed these assets by integrating art into the city's growing infrastructure.

In 1986, in the midst of rapid growth, Phoenix followed many other cities in creating a legally mandated public art program. This program set aside 1 percent of capital construction projects dollars to finance public art. To launch the program, Phoenix commissioned Citywest, a planning firm, to create a master plan to direct public art expenditures during a period of rapid city expansion. The planning team—architect William Morrish, landscape architect Catherine Brown and architect/artist Grover Mouton—faced a daunting challenge.

Phoenix is a city located within a spectacular landscaped setting, but it sprawls over more than 400 square miles in a messy, characterless way. In order to develop a public art plan that would have an impact on Phoenix, the team had to devise an effective visual framework.



Teapot Gazebo, Squaw Peak Parkway, designed by Mags Harries and Lejos Heder.

Citywest examined Phoenix and divided the city into 15 working zones, distinct geographic areas, proposing that the art should be located within various city "systems," water distribution, transportation, and other infrastructure. The plan suggested that the systems that defined the city—its canals, sidewalks, bike paths, parks, public buildings, bridges and even highways—should be prioritized as the framework for creating public art. Artists should be placed on design teams, working collaboratively with engineers, architects and landscape architects to enhance and celebrate the appearance of the city's infrastructure.

Ten years after its inception, the projects developed within this framework, particularly the art on streets, bridges and highways, have distinguished Phoenix as one of the most innovative cities for public art in the United States.

When lay people think about art the

image that is most frequently evoked is an object—a painting in a museum or a monumental sculpture on a plaza. Public art, however, has an entirely different dimension. While public art sometimes consists of a signature work, a public artist is, more usually, a member of a team creating a building, a park or another public amenity. In 1986, the amenities planned in Phoenix were of the largest conceivable scale—expansion of the airport, construction of an arena and expansion of the highway system. The challenges available to artists exceeded most public art programs in other cities



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PHOTO IS THIS ARTICLE APPEAR COURTESY OF THE PHOENIX ARTS COMMISSION.

to date. By 1989, Phoenix's 1 percent for art generated \$4.7 million dollars, and its projects included, in addition to the airport expansion and new highway infrastructure, street and other small-scale improvements throughout the city. Among the most dramatic were the roads and bridges.

Emerging from the master plan were a series of road-related projects that provide models for other cities. These are all different types of public art projects focusing on how roads traverse and bisect neighborhoods, crossing points and street amenities. Each reinforces a different aspect of city life.

One of the first and most challenging projects was the Squaw Peak Parkway pedestrian bridge at Thomas Road. Completed in 1990 for \$220,000, this project was the city's first to place an artist on a design team, working collaboratively with engineers. Arizona sculptor Marilyn Zwak worked with a team of engineers to design a six-lane, mile-long overpass consisting of three bridges with expansive underpasses and embankments. Excavation for the site uncovered a burial ground of the Hohokam people who lived in the area from 1500 to 300 A.D. Their history became the inspiration for the design of the bridge, an art project that became known as "Our Shared Environment."

Working closely with the engineers, Zwak studied the support system of the bridge and proposed changes to its shape and fabrication. What resulted from the collaboration is an unusual series of bridge supports, in the form of abstracted frogs, with infill panels of patterned adobe. Adobe was also used for the retaining walls of the bridge. The frog-like supports and adobe relief forms were based on images commonly used by the Hohokam people. The resulting bridge, rich in color, detail and form, creates the impression of driving through an archeological dig. During fabrication, the artist involved members of the community, creating inlays within the relief sculpture on the adobe retaining walls, encouraging them to create their own imagery and thus take ownership of the bridge. Close inspection of the retaining walls reveals



"Our Shared Environment," on the Thomas Road Overpass. For the columns holding up the bridge design team artist Marilyn Zwak made a composite of Hohokam Indian zoological forms, which typically have a triangular, diamond-shaped belly. "We would call it a frog, I suppose."



"Dreamy Draw Pedestrian Bridge," on the Squaw Peak Parkway at 29th Street, designed by Vicki Scuri.

not only the artist's design, but artifacts ranging from a walking cane to house keys embedded in the walls.

At "Dreamy Draw Bridge," Seattle artist Vicki Scuri worked with engineers to design a richly colored and textured "gateway" tying together a neighborhood and school divided by the Squaw Peak Highway.

Completed in 1994, the bridge spans 10 lanes of road and provides a colorful, sculptural entry to the community. Its red concrete structure is textured with tire-tread patterns reminiscent of both Indian basketry and the thousands of vehicles that pass underneath it daily. Its abutments and piers are stepped up like the mountains and southwest architecture of the region. Its layered, metal overhead screens create a continuously changing shadow pattern along the bridge span.

A third Squaw Peak Parkway project proved to be a tremendous source of controversy soon after its 1992 comple-



"Our Shared Environment," Thomas Road Overpass, design team artist, Marilyn Zwak. Adobe and concrete.



"Tree Guards," on Dunlap Avenue, designed by Garth Edwards. Painted steel.

tion. "Wall Cycle to Ocotillo," designed by Mags Harries and Lejos Heder of Cambridge, Mass., is a collection of 35 enormous "vessels" on 20 sites along a 10-mile concrete noise wall. The vessels are placed at street ends cut off by the road, atop the sound walls, and along the bike trails. Scaled in size from 2- to 15-foot tall, the colorful concrete vessels take the form of vases and teapots, gazebos and seating areas. They include planting and seating and were designed as unique neighborhood markers. Unfortunately, they also acted as a lightning rod for community resentment toward the brutality of the parkway slicing through neighborhoods, especially because the project was completed as the economy began to decline. The \$472,000 price tag, while not exorbitant for the amenities provided, became a symbol of government insensitivity and soon after the project was completed it became a source of public debate, nearly leading to the demise of the public art program. Five years later, much of the controversy has passed, and many have named the project their favorite public art installation.

Not all of the Phoenician street projects are large in scale, however. Many of them focus on the creation of neighborhood identity at an intimate pedestrian scale. On Dunlap Avenue, Seattle artist Garth Edwards created 50 painted steel tree guards, shaped like humans standing alongside newly planted trees. On Central Avenue, Doug Weigel, Howard Sice and Juan and Patricia Navarrette created a series of circular medallions, cut-out metal panels embellished with Southwest imagery and mounted on lighting standards. These projects, like the bridges and sound walls, have enhanced the city's thoroughfares.

The program in Phoenix continues to prosper, with new streetscapes, bridges and bike trails in various stages of development. The city may still sprawl, and it may still be growing, but it has developed an intelligently planned public art program that is lending esthetic and character to its growth and setting a standard for other cities in the United States. ■

\$175 Billion Mystery

*Why Do Newspapers Get So Close to Politicians
On the Federal Transportation Bill?*

BY JOHN M. BIERS

Newspapers by their very nature like to keep local members of Congress at arm's length. Whether the forum is straight news or an editorial, they don't want to appear to be too close to politicians or the positions they espouse. But they have tossed this practice aside on at least one piece of current legislation, the transportation bill.

The bill, which is known as the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), represents the federal government's prime commitment to highways and transit and, at \$175 billion over six years, is one of its largest programs overall. This year's debate has once again split Congress into regional camps sparring for highway dollars. But what's been instructive for media watchers has been the way newspapers have lined up with local congressmen, parroting their "we're right, they're wrong" battle cry in editorials around the nation.

Commenting on how Southern politicking for transportation dollars would "Balkanize the nation" and "deny" New Jersey its due, The Asbury Park Press praised its senators and likened their adversaries in the Sunbelt to "5-year-olds complaining that their slice of pizza isn't as big as their sister's." The Dallas Morning News declared that "the funding needs of Texas and other rapid-growth states can no longer be ignored" by those who "receive far more federal highway dollars than they put in." The "we want ours" chant sounded out West as well, where The Idaho Statesman insisted the Gem State should not be penalized just because fewer people live there than in New York or Pennsylvania. "Idaho deserves its fair share of federal highway money," the newspaper wrote.

These editorials seem awkward, almost unseemly. We're not used to see-

ing newspapers cheer the home team and boo the opposition in quite this fashion.

This hyper-parochialism extends to news coverage as well. As this reporter can attest from personal experience, we who report on ISTEA tell the tale in the narrowest of terms. Our stories assess whether ISTEA will enable local officials to widen the interstate or repair the bridge that gives commuters the chills. They almost never include any discussion beyond "How much?" and "What can we do with it?" (If the state's funding level is low, the main question is "Who screwed up?" Invariably, the story also gets better play than its good-news counterparts.)

To be sure, newspapers must keep an eye on how local lawmakers fare in delivering federal dollars for local projects vital to jobs and the economy. It could even be argued that members of Congress have no obligation more important than serving their districts and newspapers no greater responsibility than evaluating that service. And for all their shortcomings, at least these newspapers are watching ISTEA.

The same cannot be said of the major national dailies, which have almost entirely ignored ISTEA. As with previous transportation bills, the national press is avoiding ISTEA presumably because many transportation stories so clearly involve metro priorities, metro officials and metro decisions. What's more, the sheer vastness and diversity of America and its landscape dictate against one-size-fits-all coverage as much as against one-size-fits-all government policy. Still, ISTEA touches on numerous national matters, from the environment to the smattering of social problems associated with sprawl. And then there's the biggest national matter of all: the money—lots of it, especially when one considers that billions in

private and state funds are leveraged on federal dollars. Indeed, the most chilling implication of the lack of ISTEA coverage may be the following fact: Congress will spend \$175 billion largely ratifying the status quo with nary a question asked.

Instead, the coverage is dominated by the regional press, which reports the issue strictly from a local point of view. This intense focus on the impact back home distracts reporters from questioning basic assumptions and discourages more creative lawmakers from thinking big because they know the hometown paper only cares about the bottom line. Lawmakers spend countless hours poring over funding levels in arcane charts and haranguing each other to allot a few more dollars to their states when they could be using the time and energy to examine issues that affect all or many congressional districts, such as



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the pluses and minuses of high occupancy vehicles or the reasons Amtrak and other transit systems lose money. Even more importantly, they don't ask the big questions that should be obvious. Does our transportation policy address our infrastructure problems in the most sensible, efficient, environmentally sound way? Will ISTEA help or hurt local and national transportation? Could it be made better?

As the early coverage of ISTEA suggests, the media, like lawmakers, will avoid these questions at all costs. We will write dozens of stories about congressional earmarks, either to chronicle local projects, or to dismiss the whole rat race as the latest quest for old-fashioned pork. Forgotten will be the fact that these projects collectively amount to less than 5 percent of the total spending in the bill. Shouldn't we also cover the other \$165 billion? Another typical piece is the fake-transportation story. These usually pop up when lawmakers seek to amend ISTEA on the floor of the House or Senate with a proposal on a hot-button issue, like affirmative action and the drinking age.

Formula fight stories are also perennial favorites, but they do not get at the key issues either. As Clifford Winston, a transportation specialist at the Brookings Institution puts it, "The state which gets the money is not the important issue. Who cares whether Chicago or Los Angeles gets the money for the bridge? The important issue is not how they're divvying up the money, it's the underlying philosophy."

So far, our legislators have not articulated any underlying philosophy beyond the everybody-wins scenario of more money for everybody—a politically popular panacea that history suggests does not always result in better transportation policy. Part of the problem here is that the country is in a period of transition with regard to roads and transit systems and no one is quite sure where it will lead.

Some policy experts believe we have already begun to "devolve" power back to the states for transportation whether we fully realize it or not. Though widely praised, the first ISTEA did not revolutionize federal transportation policy for

Bicycle Helmet States

Fifteen states had adopted laws requiring bicycle helmets as of June 1997. They are:

Alabama	California
Connecticut	Delaware
Florida	Georgia
Maryland	Massachusetts
New Jersey	New York
Oregon	Pennsylvania
Tennessee	West Virginia
Rhode Island	

Similar legislation was pending in Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut (to raise the age limit), the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, New Jersey (to raise the age limit), North Carolina, Maine, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Ohio, Texas, Vermont, Washington and Wisconsin.

SOURCE: BICYCLE HELMET SAFETY BOARD.

the next generation. That 1991 bill maintained the federal government's role of providing funding for the 50 states, while enhancing somewhat the power of local communities to influence state departments of transportation. It didn't really fit comfortably into the devolution model and represents either an interim step toward some long-term policy or a detour. But what?

"In the 1920's, we needed to get America out of the mud and in the 1950's, we wanted the interstate," observes Frank Francois, Executive Director of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. "There is very little vision as to where America should go."

One visionary figure did speak up earlier this year, but his idea wasn't exactly what Francois and other transportation interests had in mind. Representative John Kasich, the iconoclastic Ohio Republican who chairs the House Budget Committee, proposed simply killing the federal highway program in favor of devolution à la welfare reform. His bill would have solved the formula

dilemma by allowing states to keep their gas receipts and by revoking most federal mandates. It died, not because national highway proponents articulated an airtight defense of the status quo, but because they ignored Kasich's initiative.

The media might have seized upon Kasich's proposal as a springboard for debate over what our transportation policy ought to be. This objective sounds abstract, but it need not be. Readers understand what it's like to slog through rush-hour traffic—a universal problem that will only get worse as more among the nation's booming immigration population take to the roads. They live with smog and other environmental problems stemming from road use and they're beginning to develop a better sense of the causes and effects of sprawl, thanks in part to some strong coverage of the subject in both local and national newspapers.

One probable reason Kasich's proposal didn't stimulate more discussion is that the media was caught off guard. The original ISTEA bill pumped \$155 billion into transportation over six years. Yet, there has been little if any follow-up on that legislation. How can we assess where we should go if we don't know where we are?

These stories don't need to be dry bureaucratic yarns. The 1991 bill allowed but did not require states to shift up to 70 percent of their highway money to mass transit.

Some states took advantage of this flexibility far more than others. One story might compare states and contrast how the communities view the next round of funding. Another story might assess how frequently states invest in old roads as opposed to constructing new ones; the latter is usually more popular for politicians but not necessarily better for transportation.

The media also needs to illuminate the link between what Congress does or fails to do and the effect back home. Sprawl is a good example. Some transportation experts credit the 1991 ISTEA bill with placing the issue on the public agenda in the first place.

Prior to ISTEA, the common assumption was that market forces drove the

State Pedalcyclist Fatalities per Million Population, 1996

Alabama	1.40	Iowa	3.86	New Jersey	2.25	Vermont	1.70
Alaska	6.59	Kansas	0.78	New Mexico	1.17	Virginia	1.50
Arizona	6.55	Kentucky	1.80	New York	2.47	Washington	2.53
Arkansas	1.99	Louisiana	3.68	North Carolina	5.05	West Virginia	2.19
California	3.86	Maine	0.80	North Dakota	0.00	Wisconsin	2.52
Colorado	2.35	Maryland	1.58	Ohio	1.52	Wyoming	6.24
Connecticut	1.22	Massachusetts	1.15	Oklahoma	1.52	U.S. TOTAL	2.87
Delaware	4.14	Michigan	3.44	Oregon	2.50		
Dist. of Columbia	1.84	Minnesota	1.29	Pennsylvania	2.07		
Florida	7.50	Mississippi	1.84	Rhode Island	2.02		
Georgia	2.04	Missouri	0.75	South Carolina	4.87		
Hawaii	4.25	Montana	2.28	South Dakota	2.73		
Idaho	2.52	Nebraska	2.42	Tennessee	0.94		
Illinois	2.36	Nevada	3.74	Texas	3.08		
Indiana	1.03	New Hampshire	2.58	Utah	4.50		

Source: FORTIN - FORTIN ASSOCIATES REPORTING
SERVICE, NHTSA, PEDESTRIAN - BUREAU OF THE CENSUS.

North Dakota was the only state with no bicycle fatalities. Florida, with 7.50 fatalities per million residents, had the highest rate.

unfettered expansion of roads that exploit the environment, deplete the cities of citizenry, increase traffic congestion and dissipate community resources overall. By empowering local community planning organizations, ISTEA has been credited with helping policymakers and the media understand how federal and state highway spending has also encouraged this growth. Some versions of the current ISTEA bill seek to strengthen efforts to counter sprawl. They include requirements for states and local governments to fully disclose their transportation spending by political jurisdiction and to reward states that practice "smart growth" with \$25 million in extra planning. The media should question if these proposals go far enough and track their progress.

Privatization is also gaining ascendancy as a long-term transportation strategy among some prominent analysts. Noting that public buses and rails have lost billions, Winston of Brookings favors privatization to heighten competition and end some of the least economical practices of the status quo. Rather than continuously offer service, a firm might run trains or buses at peak times, leaving competitors to serve the community at other times. These changes would harm numerous vested interests and haven't even made it on to Congress's radar screen, but a well-versed media might ask lawmakers why they haven't saved a few million dollars for some pilot projects.

Responsibility for many of these stories primarily falls on the national media. The big papers possess the platform to force lawmakers to take transportation seriously and are the best situated to track the issues both in Washington and around the country. Although the big papers sometimes write on sprawl and other issues, they fail to close the loop in avoiding ISTEA. They write about ISTEA only when it finally passes, or if it bubbles over into hot political stories. For instance, there were plenty of stories when Transportation Committee Chairman Bud Shuster challenged Speaker Newt Gingrich's tenuous hold of his speakership over his plan to increase transportation spending.

The big papers have not covered the substance of the bill nor have they sought to influence the national agenda with investigative reports. At the very least, it would seem the big dailies would want to shine the spotlight on innovative transportation programs and compare projects in different regions the way they have done with welfare or education. Certainly they should follow the money.

Some of the reasons for this oversight are not unique to transportation. Issue-based journalism is almost always given short shrift in favor of conflict. And within transportation reporting itself, highways and rail lag far behind aviation in terms of sexiness. Moreover, transportation does not lend it-

self to quick mastery.

Reporters who try to cover ISTEA will quickly discover that much of the debate is not conducted in English. "You have to have a Ph.D. to understand what they're talking about," observes American Automobile Association spokesman Bill Jackman. Indeed, when attending ISTEA hearings, reporters will continually need to backtrack mentally to try to remember the difference between "vehicle miles traveled" and "highway lane miles." As soon as they figure it out, they'll discover the discussion has shifted to the "minimum allocation."

As with other debates, we need to remember that the vocabulary of ISTEA—including the inscrutable name of the bill itself—has been designed for a reason. "Maybe it isn't in the best interests of the people on the Hill to make it understandable," Jackman suggests. "If they keep it in jargon, they can continue to run it the way they like. It's basically a system where the people in power are rewarded for their ability to get more money for their states. Making it easier to understand may be somewhat threatening."

The transportation committees remain popular on Capitol Hill because they have proven to be tickets to reelection. If they aren't given a whole lot of media scrutiny, the campaign becomes that much easier. Whether or not our transportation system is the better for it is quite another question. ■

Big Trucks and the Railroads

WASHINGTON—April 24, 1997. Steve Wellington of Mesa, Ariz., tells the Senate Commerce Committee how an 80,000-pound double trailer truck killed his eight-month pregnant wife, Cathy, and seriously injured four of his children. Wellington tells how he joined Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways "because it is a group of organized citizens who have experiences similar to mine, working to promote better truck safety." He urges the committee to pass legislation that would place new limits on the size of trucks operating on interstate highways.

CHICAGO—May 28, 1997. Doctors and police join members of the Illinois Citizens for Safe Roads at a press conference urging the area's congressional delegation to oppose efforts by the American Trucking Associations to overturn the federal freeze on triple trailer trucks.

RICHMOND, VA.—June 5, 1997. Members of the Virginia Coalition for Safe Roads stand in front of a triple trailer truck and urge the state's congressional delegation to oppose any federal legislation that would allow larger trucks on the state's highways.

tain all the elements of a compelling news story: crying victims fighting back against corporate greed, an easy villain and great visuals.

The sponsors of the press conferences, the Coalition Against Bigger Trucks (CABT) and Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways (CRASH) and their affiliates, are front groups for the railroad industry, which has poured cash and technical support into the groups since 1991 as part of a national effort against changes in federal transportation laws that could divert freight to bigger trucks. Railroads and manufacturers of railroad cars and other equipment have enlisted safety advocate and Public Citizen President Joan Claybrook, families of truck crash victims and a host of consultants to combat a trucking industry anxious to build its image as a safe form of transportation.

Television viewers may remember a 1991 commercial featuring a giant truck bearing down on a woman driver and two small children. That commercial, which bore the disclaimer that it was paid for by the Association of American Railroads (AAR), helped convince Congress to freeze federal truck size and weight limits. It also signaled the start of a guerrilla campaign by the railroad industry to defeat any future attempts by truckers and freight shippers to increase truck sizes.

Railroads shunned the limelight after that campaign, enlisting their suppliers as the primary source of revenue for CRASH's campaign of press conferences and lobbying by victims and their families. The effort heated up in 1995 as Congress began debating legislation creating the National Highway System and the Department of Transportation prepared to open four Southwestern states to Mexican trucks. The railroads strategy, as outlined in a confidential

memo, was to influence DOT's ongoing studies on truck size and weight policy, build public opposition to allowing Mexican trucks into the United States, and prevent Congress from enacting any wholesale increases in truck sizes and weights either as part of the NHS bill or the 1997 reauthorization of a larger highway law.

The AAR, the lobbying group for large railroads, doesn't like to talk about its behind-the-scenes support of CRASH and CABT, which it helped create. While the association acknowledges spending more than \$5 million on the campaign since 1995, it won't talk about where the money went. An August 25, 1996 CRASH press conference at San Francisco City Hall featured AAR engineering consultant Roger Mingo standing in front of a giant truck and telling reporters about his study concluding that senior citizens are 3.2 times more

By DAVID BARNES

Sound familiar? It should. Press conferences like these occur regularly around the nation. Hosted by "grassroots citizens groups," the media events feature families of truck accident victims who describe how they have channeled their grief into action by fighting the trucking industry's efforts to open the nation's roads to ever-bigger trucks. At other press conferences, emergency room doctors and state troopers describe the tragedy of crashes involving bigger trucks. The press conferences always feature catchy visuals, such as a 100-foot long triple trailer truck or poster-size photographs of family members killed in truck accidents. The neatly packaged events con-



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likely to die in a heavy truck crash than drivers under the age of 65.

Testifying before Congress on April 24, 1997 on behalf of CABT affiliate Texans for Safe Roads, Lufkin, Texas Mayor Louis Bronaugh cited a study by two University of Texas professors asserting that increased use of bigger trucks would cost \$12.6 billion in highway bridge reconstruction or replacement. The study was funded by AAR.

In southern California in October, Californians for Safe Highways, a CABT affiliate, began distributing an analysis of the safety record of triple trailer trucks authored by none other than AAR consultant Mingo.

The national lobbying and public relations effort has had the rail industry's desired effect. Attempts by Canada to allow longer trucks into the United States under the North American Free Trade Agreement have met with staunch resistance from DOT. A 1995 proposal to exempt delivery trucks from federal safety regulations was watered down by Congress to a pilot project following a CRASH press conference. The American Trucking Association has found little support in Congress for wholesale changes in truck sizes as part of legislation reauthorizing the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act.

The campaign was not without its financial and political costs. AAR has devoted half of its \$10.6 million lobbying budget to the issue over the past three years at a time when Congress was deregulating the railroad industry and investigating railroad safety. The anti-truck efforts have also angered the trucking industry, a potent political force both nationally and in state capitals.

The railroads' obsession with trucks is not new, nor is it unwarranted. Trucks are getting bigger and carrying increasing amounts of freight. Federal weight limits came into being in 1956 with the creation of the Interstate Highway System. That law set limits at 73,280 pounds. The maximum weight was increased to 80,000 pounds in 1975. The 1982 Surface Transportation Assistance Act required all states to allow 48-foot trailers and trucks hauling twin 28-foot trailers on interstates. With the excep-



Triple trailer truck parked in front of the U.S. Capitol during Coalition Against Bigger Trucks press conference in September.

tion of the twin 28-foot trucks, LCVs (longer combination vehicles) are limited to certain areas of the country. Turnpike doubles (twin 48-foot trailers) make up 2 percent of the nation's truck fleet and operate on only 1 percent of the nation's roads. Triple trailers make up less than one-tenth of 1 percent of the national fleet and operate in 16 states, mostly in the west.

The number of trucks used in for-hire transportation increased 24 percent between 1982 and 1992. The use of LCVs doubled over the same period. Fifty-five percent of the nation's freight travels by truck, while only 16.2 percent goes by railroad, according to DRI-McGraw Hill's annual freight transportation forecast.

Railroads say their fight against increased truck capacity is a matter of economic life or death. Every time trucks get larger, trucking companies drop their rates to fill the additional space, tempting railroad customers to switch modes. AAR paints a doomsday scenario called a "service quality spiral," which its economists say would happen if the trucking industry was allowed to operate LCVs nationwide. Lower rates, less freight and higher unit costs for truck-competitive freight would reduce the profitability of trains. Railroads would then reduce the number of train starts, slowing service and

decreasing reliability. This would increase the total costs of using rail service, requiring railroads to further lower rates and raising unit cost.

Both the General Accounting Office and the DOT say AAR's gloomy economic analysis does not take into account increased productivity from railroad mergers and technological advances. Between 1959 and 1992, according to DOT, railroad productivity increased an average of 5.9 percent annually.

The economic impact of larger trucks on railroads and highways is hard to quantify. Ordered by Congress to take a comprehensive look at the increasing use of larger trucks, DOT has struggled to put together an accurate picture. The agency is nearly a year late in releasing its assessment of what would happen to railroads if truck size and weight increased. DOT officials say they are having difficulty creating an accurate economic model to measure the amount of diversion of freight from railroads to bigger trucks. Privately, they acknowledge infighting among themselves and feeling pressure from truckers and railroads to skew the results one way or the other. In the meantime, truckers continue their relentless push for increased productivity.

Trucking companies and freight shippers employ the "salami tactic" to nibble

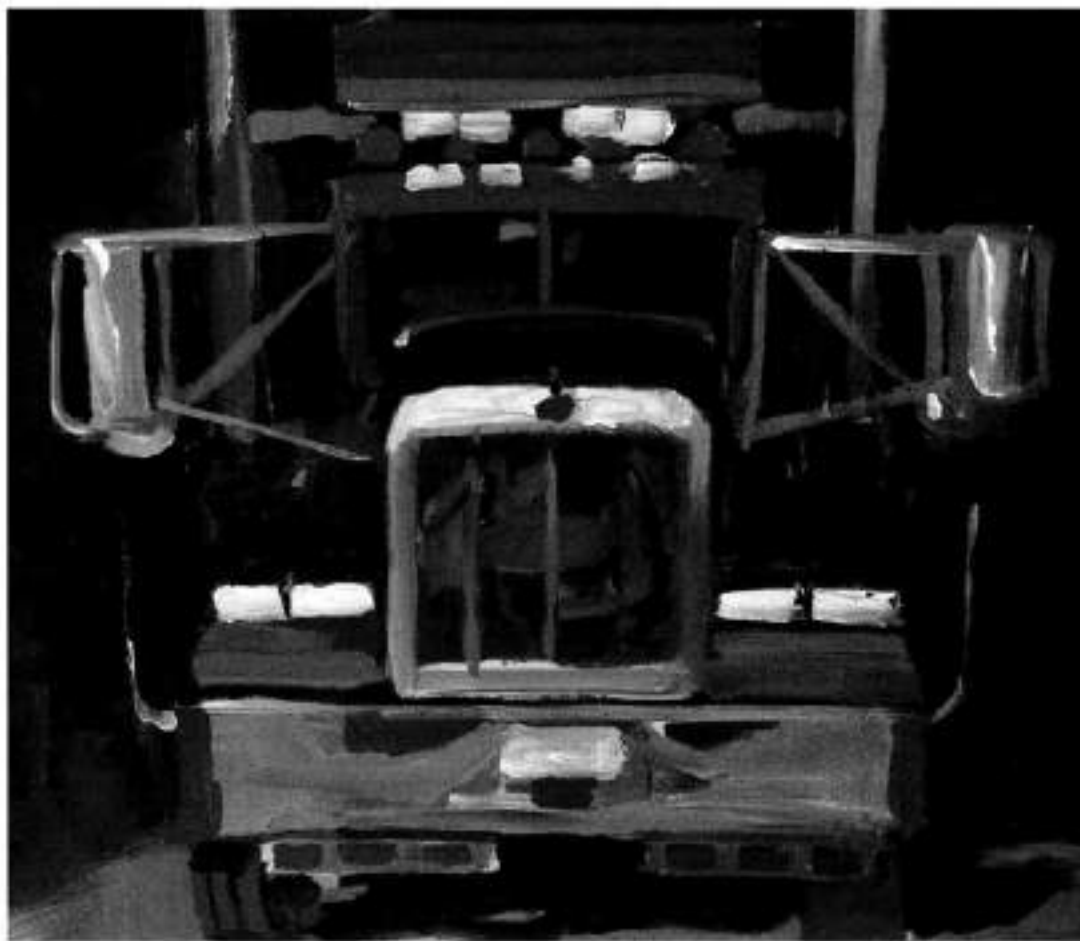
away at opposition to bigger trucks. They press at the state level to increase truck size and weights. Neighboring states follow suit to remain competitive, resulting in eventual pressure to set a new national standard. Congress is a frequent player in this, approving exemptions to federal weight laws for individual states or industries. The House Transportation Committee voted in September to exempt sugar cane haulers in Louisiana, logging trucks in Maine and New Hampshire and distributors of concrete panels in Colorado from federal truck weight laws.

The ATA tried earlier this year to win railroad support of a proposal to allow states to set their own truck size and weight policy and to allow triple trailers in four additional new states where the big trucks are currently allowed. Railroads didn't bite, and ATA has dropped the proposal for now.

Some trucking companies, however, continue to push their own interests before Congress. A group of shippers and some trucking companies, for example, are urging Congress to increase the maximum federal truck weight to 97,000 pounds, which would allow them to carry heavier cargo such as iron and steel.

Trucking companies like United Parcel Service, which consolidate freight at regional hubs prior to delivery to a final destination, like triples because the smaller trailers are more cost-effective than hauling half-empty trailers. With manufacturers and stores increasingly relying on the just-in-time delivery of raw materials and products, some trucking companies want to operate more triples.

Triples, which are longer than a 10-story building is tall, star in anti-truck ads because of the visceral reaction they provoke. Truck drivers don't like the big rigs either, saying their ten-



An artist captures one of the scariest images in the rear view mirror.

"Lions," a painting by Joe Matt

dency to sway at highway speeds makes them more difficult to handle than other trucks. The trucks are also difficult to brake, with many drivers using a technique known as power braking, in which they put one foot on the brake to slow the truck while applying gas to keep the truck straight. "It's like pulling a snake," says Joe Hyatt, a manager at Yellow Freight System's Salt Lake City, Utah, terminal.

Trucking companies insist the triples are safe, citing statistics showing the rate of accidents for triples is lower than other vehicles in the states where they are allowed to operate. The trucking-industry funded Traffic Safety Alliance distributes testimonials from state highway officials praising the safety record of triple trailer trucks.

CRASH and CABT groups cite railroad industry studies showing that on a per capita basis, the triples are actually more dangerous than other LCVs.

The federal government is split on the safety of bigger trucks. The General Accounting Office says poor state record-keeping, the small number of triples in operation and their restriction to certain routes make it difficult to assess how safe the big rigs are.

A DOT study concluding that LCVs are safer than non-LCVs was not released for more than a year after its completion because of complaints by senior DOT officials about the accuracy of the conclusions. The trucking industry is citing the study in its efforts to offset the damage done by the safety groups and to win support of new triple routes and larger trucks.

The current battleground between the two industries is southern California, where trucking companies have worked for more than two years to build support for a proposal to allow triple trailers on portions of Interstates

Weight Restrictions for Longer Combination Vehicles (LCVs)

STATE	DOUBLE	TRIPLE	STATE	DOUBLE	TRIPLE
Arizona	129,000	123,000	New York	143,000	
Colorado	110,000	110,000	North Dakota	105,500	105,500
Idaho	105,500	105,500	Ohio	127,400	115,000
Indiana	127,400	127,400	Oklahoma	90,000	90,000
Iowa	129,000	129,000	Oregon	105,500	105,500
Kansas	120,000	120,000	South Dakota	129,000	129,000
Massachusetts	127,400		Utah	129,000	129,000
Michigan	164,000		Washington	105,500	
Missouri	120,000	120,000	Wyoming	117,000	
Montana	137,800	131,060			
Nebraska	95,000	95,000			
Nevada	129,000	129,000			
New Mexico	86,400				

These weights are limited to certain turnpikes or interstates. Some LCVs are restricted as to time of day travel is allowed on certain roads.

SOURCE: 25 CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS (58, APPENDIX C (APRIL 1, 1997 EDITION).

15 and 40 in eastern San Bernadino County. Doing so, they claim, would make the economically depressed region a distribution hub, creating 1,570 new jobs and saving the trucking industry \$49 million annually.

The safety groups have fought hard and well in California, convincing the state Legislature to pass a non-binding resolution opposing the routes. Because triples have never been allowed in California, Congress must approve the exemption from current federal law. CRASH and Californians for Safe Highways, a CABT affiliate, are buttonholing voters at shopping malls to sign petitions urging the region's congressional delegation to oppose the triple routes.

To help make their case, trucking companies are employing the Traffic Safety Alliance, the nonprofit educational group that promotes the safety record of triples. The group draws its funding from the trucking industry and consists solely of public relations consultants who proffer packets of safety statistics, offer lawmakers and reporters rides in triples and offer pro-triple truck drivers as witnesses at public meetings on the proposal.

The California campaign has taken a new twist in recent months. The power-

ful California Trucking Association has begun lashing out at railroads for funding the safety groups. "The railroad industry has been spending all of its time and money on mega-mergers, front groups and anti-truck propaganda, while its own rail service and safety deteriorates. Clearly, the railroad industry needs to examine its own safety record and re-prioritize their objects," said Joel Anderson, executive vice president of the California Trucking Association.

CTA, which is separate from the ATA, has begun publicizing safety and service problems at the Union Pacific Railroad. The 135-year-old railroad is suffering a service and safety meltdown as a result of its 1996 acquisition of the Southern Pacific Railroad, which left the western United States with only two major railroads. At the same time, Norfolk Southern Railroad and CSX Transportation are seeking federal approval to split Conrail between them. This big East Coast merger, combined with the Union Pacific's problems, has brought the railroad industry under

scrutiny from federal regulators concerned about the impact of rail mergers on safety and service.

While ATA so far is distancing itself from the anti-rail activities in California, the association has threatened to seek economic reregulation of the railroad industry if the safety groups continue their attacks. In May, ATA raised concerns about rail safety to the Surface Transportation Board, which must approve the split-up of Conrail.

The board is to vote on the merger next spring. At the same time, Congress will be considering legislation reauthorizing both the board and federal railroad safety regulations. Companies that ship large amounts of freight want Congress to increase economic regulation of the railroads. Unions want Congress to impose tougher safety laws on the railroads. And the trucking industry, which will be pushing for bigger and heavier trucks in the highway bill that will be debated into next year, will have a prime target for revenge on the railroads. ■

Truck Shipments

Leading States in Value of Truck Shipments, 1993 (millions of dollars):

Illinois	794,550
Ohio	723,430
Pennsylvania	667,954
Indiana	667,565
California	590,514
Texas	588,436
Tennessee	540,336
New York	514,156
Georgia	486,150
New Jersey	399,922

SOURCE: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, BUREAU OF TRANSPORTATION STATISTICS, 1997.

The Case for Bus Rapid Transit

By JOHN E. KAIN

Much has been written about America's love affair with the automobile. That's why Nieman Reports is devoting the bulk of this edition to highways. What has been overlooked has been America's love affair with electric trains—what I have called the "Lionel Complex." If the object of this passion were just model trains that speed around Christmas trees we could understand the pleasure that adults, as well as children, enjoy in running them. Unfortunately, the passion extends to full-size trains that urban planners have foisted on city after city in an alleged effort to solve commuter problems. The result has been failure and the cost has been billions of dollars.

Los Angeles is the prime example of choosing the wrong technology for improving local transportation needs. Despite proof that fare reductions would increase bus ridership dramatically, officials pushed ahead with construction of a hugely expensive heavy rail line and an extensive light rail system. The choice of rail to serve Los Angeles's dispersed employment and resident pattern was clearly a mistake, and I know of no competent transport planner who thinks the choice made any sense.

To make matters worse, Los Angeles's error has been, and continues to be, repeated in city after city in the United States and in other parts of the world. More than \$200 billion of government subsidies has been spent in a largely unsuccessful effort to increase transit ridership. A large fraction of this money has been wasted. Portland, Ore., San Diego, Houston, Atlanta and several other cities duplicated Los Angeles's success in increasing transit ridership by spending taxpayer dollars to reduce

fares and to expand bus service. With the exception of Houston, all of these cities abandoned these successful policies in favor of the construction of costly and ineffectual rail systems. Small ridership increases or declines were the result.

Nothing can be done about these past mistakes, although a good case can be made for discontinuing rail service in a number of cities. The argument for not extending these systems or building new ones is even stronger. In Los Angeles and elsewhere, transit operators should stop throwing good money after bad in an effort to make ill-conceived and inappropriate rail systems "work." They should instead use available transit subsidies to expand and improve their bus systems, which remain the backbone of their transit systems.

Local and national media must accept a significant portion of the blame for the nation's costly love affair with electric trains. In city after city, metropolitan dailies and TV stations have been uncritical boosters of ill-conceived rail proposals and have grossly misled their readers and viewers about the benefits and costs of these investments. While there is nothing they can do about past sins, it is not too late to make amends. See, for example, editorials in *The Houston Chronicle* from February through August this year supporting Dallas's light rail system.

Here are facts for editors and reporters to keep in mind as their cities consider transit improvements:

Decline in Riders

In 1947 transit ridership in the United States reached an all-time high of 22.5 million annual boardings (unlinked

trips). Thereafter, it declined, first precipitously and then more gradually, until 1972 when it was less than a third of its 1947 level.

Between 1972 and 1980, aided by more than \$200 billion in government subsidies and by a temporary boost from higher gas prices and shortages, boardings increased by 26 percent. After 1980, ridership declined and then recovered until a slower growth in real subsidies and continued suburbanization led to small, but persistent, declines. For the entire period from 1972 to 1995 annual boardings grew by 15 percent. This period, however, was characterized by large increases in rail operations, which have higher transfer rates. When the boardings data are cor-



This picture of John F. Kain in Egypt was taken on an around-the-world trip this year. He is the Cecil and Ida Green Chair for the Study of Science and Society and Director of the Cecil and Ida Green Center for the Study of Science and Society at the University of Texas at Dallas. He received his A.B. from Bowling Green State University in 1957 and his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from The University of California at Berkeley in 1961. Before joining the UTD faculty in 1996, Kain was the Henry Lee Professor of Economics and Professor of Afro-American Studies at Harvard University, where he taught for more than 30 years.

rected for this spurious source of ridership growth, annual transit trips grew by less than 5 percent.

Long-term trends in land use patterns and urban tripmaking, which were interrupted first by the depression and then World War II, are largely responsible for postwar declines in transit ridership. For the most part, these trends were efficient responses to changes in technology and rising real per capita incomes. At the same time mistakes in public policy and errors by transit operators in their spending of subsidy dollars caused the declines in ridership and the associated increases of public subsidies for transit to be larger than they needed to be. In the case of the transit industry, the principal errors were the replacement of private by public ownership and the use of disproportionate amounts of available subsidy dollars for the construction and operation of costly and ineffective rail transit systems. Alternatives were available. Subsidy dollars could have been used to pay private transit operators to provide unprofitable, but desirable, services, and the huge sums spent to build and operate rail systems after World War II could have been used to buy more vehicle miles of bus service and lower fares.

The most serious error of public policy, however, was arguably the failure of governments, which are the principal providers of highways and public transport services, to charge urban tripmakers prices that reflect the long run social costs of providing urban transportation facilities and services.

Academic Research Findings

With one exception, scholarly studies broadly agree with the following conclusions about the costs and performance of alternative public transport technologies:

- Express buses operating on exclusive busways have significantly lower costs per passenger trip than light or heavy rail systems in all but a few situations.
- Heavy rail has lower per trip costs than express buses on exclusive rights-

of-way only when routes are very short, peak-hour volumes are very high, and net residential densities are very high.

- "Freeway Fliers," i.e. express buses operating on uncongested, but shared, express highways, have substantially lower costs than heavy rail or bus on exclusive right-of-way in most situations.

- Express bus systems, if provided with congestion-controlled right-of-ways, will usually have lower door-to-door travel times than fixed rail systems.

In "Urban Rail in America," Boris Pushkarev and Jeffrey Zupan of the New York Regional Plan Association concluded that new rail transit systems would have lower costs than bus transit in a wide range of circumstances in United States urban areas. Their analysis, however, has been discredited by Don Pickrell, Chief Economist, John A. Volpe National Transportation Systems Center, Cambridge, Mass., who found they had: (a) seriously underestimated both the capital and operating costs of new rail systems relative to bus systems, and (b) used optimistic ridership projections when they applied their cost estimates to particular metropolitan areas. When Pickrell's corrections are taken into account, the differences between the Pushkarev-Zupan results and those of other scholarly studies disappear. In addition, Pickrell failed to mention, or overlooked, the fact that the Pushkarev-Zupan analysis assumed commuter buses operate on congested streets and roads at an average speed of only 12 miles an hour. Their cost comparisons are much less favorable to rail transit when express buses speeds are used.

The Rail Experience

During the past quarter century new light and heavy rail systems have been built in nearly two dozen U.S. cities. An Urban Mass Transit Administration study of 10 federally funded rail systems found that in every case the planners of these systems seriously overestimated future ridership and seriously underestimated their operating and capital costs. Forecasts of total costs

per trip ranged between \$1.53 to \$3.04 per rail passenger, while actual total costs per rail passenger for the same eight systems varied between \$5.06 and \$16.77. Actual total cost per rider as a percentage of projected total cost per rider similarly ranged from a low of 288 percent for Washington to a high of 969 percent for Buffalo (all figures are in 1988 dollars).

The findings do not in themselves directly prove anything about the relative cost-effectiveness of exclusive busways and rail systems. They are relevant, however, for at least three reasons. First, they provide strong confirmation for the widely held view that rail system planners typically use optimistic assumptions when they develop rail system costs. Second, there is substantial evidence that rail system planners frequently "gold-plate" exclusive busways and employ a variety of other assumptions that reduce the effectiveness of bus alternatives. Finally, overprediction of future ridership biases system choices toward rail. Overly optimistic forecasts of future transit use favor rail alternatives because of their higher capital costs and because advocates of these systems often rely on a variety of ad hoc arguments to justify their construction. One of the most common of these arguments is to assert that central area streets would be unable to accommodate a huge projected numbers of buses. The large number of buses projected to use these streets in some future year is, of course, a result of overly optimistic projections of transit ridership and central area employment.

Proponents of rail rapid transit systems have used extravagant projections of future ridership to justify the large capital costs these systems entail. In fact, because new rail rapid transit systems are typically built in well-developed transit corridors, where the new rail lines replace the most heavily traveled bus line or lines, they attract relatively few new riders. There may be benefits from building new rail transit lines in such situations, but a large increase in the number of new transit passengers is not among them. Any growth in ridership that occurs would

**Facility, Length, Average Weekday Total and Transit Trips, Construction Costs,
And Construction Costs per Transit and Total Trips by Facility Type
(1989 dollar amounts)**

Facility	Miles	Average Weekday Person Trips ¹		Construction Costs (millions 1989 \$s)		Construction Cost/ Weekday Trips		% LRT
		Transit ²	Total ³	Total	Mile	Transit	Total	
TRANSITWAYS								
El Monte Busway	11.0	13,221	43,000	\$109.6	\$10.00	\$8,290	\$2,549	12.8%
Shirley Highway	12.0	28,140	63,486	\$127.2	\$10.60	\$4,520	\$2,004	10.1%
Houston Transitways	67.7	23,405	78,562	\$302.1	\$4.46	\$12,907	\$3,845	19.3%
I-66, N. Va.	9.6	3,430	31,270	\$180.0	\$18.70	\$52,478	\$5,756	28.9%
EXCLUSIVE BUSWAYS								
Ottawa	12.8	200,000	200,000	\$403.2	\$31.50	\$2,016	\$2,016	10.1%
Pittsburgh	10.8	47,000	47,000	\$178.9	\$16.60	\$3,806	\$3,806	19.1%
NEW RAIL SYSTEMS								
Avg Heavy Rail	29.0	168,500	168,500	\$3,459.7	\$119.40	\$20,532	\$20,532	103.2%
Avg Light Rail	12.6	23,475	23,475	\$467.1	\$37.10	\$19,898	\$19,898	100.0%

¹Total number of inbound and outbound trips on an average weekday.

²Average number of inbound and outbound trips by bus / rail.

³Average number of inbound and outbound trips by bus / rail and vanpools and carpools in the first 4 facilities.

For example, the length of the El Monte Busway is 11 miles; 13,221 transit trips and 43,000 trips were made on this facility. Construction costs were \$109.6 million, or \$10 million per mile. The construction cost per weekday transit trips were \$8,290 (\$109.6m ÷ 13,221) and construction costs per weekday total trip were \$2,549 (\$109.6m ÷ 43,000). Therefore, the cost per total trip on the El Monte Busway is 12.8% of the cost per trip on the average light rail line (\$2,549m ÷ 19,898 [see last row] x 100).

have to be due to reductions in door-to-door travel time, which in most instances are modest or nonexistent.

The El Monte Busway in Los Angeles, the Shirley Highway in the Washington area, and Houston's North Contra-flow lane had much larger impacts on transit ridership than new rail systems have had. There are four principal reasons why these busways induced far more growth in transit ridership than new rail systems. First, they provided large savings in travel time relative to the situation that existed before they were implemented. The impact of new rail systems on door-to-door travel times has been far more problematic. Second, each was implemented in a rapidly growing and heavily congested corridor. Third, in contrast to most new rail systems, which have been constructed in existing well-developed trans-

it corridors, the three busways referred to above and most bus-carpool facilities have been designed to serve new transit markets. Finally, the implementation of the busway was typically accompanied by a major expansion in transit service levels and by the provision of transit service to areas that were not served previously.

Bus Rapid Transit More Cost Effective

None of the recently constructed rail systems uses more than a fraction of its peak hour capacity to accommodate peak hour demand. In contrast to light and heavy rail lines, where expensive excess capacity must go unused, carpools, vanpools and other high occupancy vehicles can use the extra capacity of bus-carpool lanes. If transit

ridership increases, a larger fraction of the capacity of these facilities can be allocated to buses.

The advantage bus-carpool facilities have in sharing capital costs is even more evident in the case of I-66, the HOV Parkway between Northern Virginia and the District of Columbia. Both peak direction lanes of this four lane parkway are used as a bus and 3+ carpool facility during the morning and evening rush hours. The use of I-66 by buses, moreover, is quite limited. Only 19 buses per hour, carrying under 700 passengers, used I-66 during the morning peak hour in the year shown. If transit had to bear the entire cost, the capital cost per daily trip would be almost \$52,478. But when total daily trips are used in the denominator, construction costs per trip plummets to \$3,523.

Exclusive Busways

It is tempting to conclude that because buses using High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes are able to share excess capacity with carpools, it is always better to build shared bus-carpool facilities than exclusive busways. The Ottawa and Pittsburgh experiences, however, suggest such a conclusion would be premature. First, their costs per total trip are very similar to those of the El Monte, Shirley Highway and Houston bus-carpool facilities. In addition, they differ in important respects and serve rather different markets than bus-carpool facilities.

Both the Ottawa and Pittsburgh busways have on-line stations and carry significant amounts of walk-on traffic. In this respect, they closely resemble many light and heavy rail systems. Both busways, however, are also used by large numbers of express bus routes that collect their passengers at park-and-ride lots or in suburban residential areas and use the busway for a fast nonstop trip to the central area. While it is possible to have on-line stations on a shared bus-carpool facility (the El Monte Busway has one, for example), the provision of on-line stops (stations) on shared bus-carpool facilities creates numerous engineering, safety and operational problems. Overcoming these problems may significantly increase capital costs. Where transit demand is sufficient to use a large fraction of an exclusive busways capacity as in Ottawa, or in the case of the South Busway in Pittsburgh, it may simply not be worth it to allow carpools and vanpools to use them.

Successful exclusive busways are likely to be short and be located in built-up and fairly dense areas with relatively high levels of transit ridership. In such situations, they may provide a superior service for those boarding at busway stops and provide a reliable and high-speed right-of-way for express services from suburban residential areas. It should be understood, moreover, that the choice need not be all or nothing. A well-designed, high-performance bus system might include both exclusive busways and shared bus-carpool facilities. Where an extensive

network of regional expressways already exists, it almost certainly makes sense to include a number of miles of shared, bus-carpool facility in the system design. Within existing built-up areas, however, where densities are higher, and where there is a potential for walk-on ridership, exclusive busways may be the preferred solution. This is particularly true where there exist, as in Pittsburgh, portions of underutilized or abandoned rights-of-way that are too narrow for a major highway but have sufficient width for an exclusive busway.

When construction costs per trip for both light and heavy rail systems are compared to the same statistics for exclusive busways and shared, bus-carpool facilities, the situation is markedly different. Mean capital costs per transit trip for four light rail systems are five times as large as the capital cost per transit trip for the Pittsburgh exclusive busways and nearly 10 times as large as for the Ottawa exclusive busways. Finally, the mean capital cost per total trip of the same four light rail systems is nearly eight times as great as those of the El Monte Busway and Houston Transitways and almost ten times as great as those of the Shirley Highway HOV lanes.

Advocates of light and heavy rail systems frequently acknowledge the higher capital costs of these systems, but contend that these higher capital costs will be more than offset by lower operating costs, arguing that rail costs less to operate because fewer drivers are required. When the cost of maintenance labor and station personnel are added, this supposed operating cost of rail becomes much smaller and in many situations disappears. Rail advocates also frequently compare the per trip costs of a particular rail line with average bus system costs. Such comparisons, however, are highly misleading as new rail lines typically replace the most productive bus routes (that is why they are built there) and rail often requires low productivity feeder bus routes. When the costs of providing comparable service are compared and when the impact of rail on bus system costs

are properly accounted for, bus operating costs are frequently lower than rail.

The Cost of Building Rail

Several authors have questioned the large sums of public money that are used to build new rail systems or to extend existing ones and have suggested these subsidy dollars might have been better spent on improvements and expansion of existing bus services. Los Angeles and Atlanta are but two examples.

Thomas A. Rubin, Assistant General Manager of the Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District, and James E. Moore II, an Associate Professor at the University of Southern California, document one of the most grievous examples, where the decision to build rail transit came at the expense of largely low-income bus users and resulted in much smaller increases in transit ridership than if the same amount of money had been spent for lower fares or more bus service. They provide the following analysis of what they refer to as "the most successful transit ridership experiment in United States history." Specifically, they describe the impact on ridership of a three-year fare reduction from 85¢ to 50¢, a subsequent increase to its former level in 1986 and then to \$1.10 in 1990.

Over the three years of the 50¢ fare program, District transit ridership rose over 40 percent, and was still increasing in the last month of the experiment. Very little about the bus system was changed except the fare. Revenue service miles increased only 1.5 percent, including special service added for the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. Rubin and Moore tell what happened:

"Beginning in fiscal year 1986, the Proposition A funds that had been used to subsidize the 50¢ bus fare were reallocated to rail construction. Fares were increased to 85¢ in fiscal year 1986 and then to \$1.10 in fiscal year 1989. By fiscal year 1990, ridership had decreased by over 96 million passenger boardings per year, or 19.3 percent.

"The decline in bus ridership coincided exactly with the beginning of the Los Angeles County rail transit construction program. The funds trans-

ferred away from the fare subsidy program paid for about 35 to 40 percent of the reported construction costs of the Blue Line. In fiscal year 1995, Blue Line ridership hit 12 million passenger boardings, each at a public sector operating subsidy of more than three times higher than that of the average bus passenger. Thus the money that had been used to move people on buses was used to build rail projects that will never be able to move more than a small fraction of the number of passengers already lost from the bus systems."

Atlanta's experience was strikingly similar. The Metropolitan Atlanta Regional Transit Authority, which came into being with the public purchase of a private company in 1972, achieved a 38 percent increase in linked trips during its eight years of all-bus operations. During the subsequent 13 years, after it



David K. Willis Road Rage Laid to Stress

"I think a lot of it is stress; people in this country are being stressed out. People are worried about losing their jobs, companies are downsizing, people feel as though their workloads are unreasonable, workplace violence is up. It's more than just bad behavior on the road."—David K. Willis, President of the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, in reference to the increase in the number of incidents of aggressive driving. A recent AAA study found 10,037 recorded incidents of aggressive driving in the last six years. The study reported that of 12,610 people injured in those incidents, at least 218 people were killed.

began operating its heavy rail system, linked trips grew by three percent.

The large difference in ridership growth between MARTA's periods of all-bus and rail-bus operations is easily explained. There is overwhelming econometric evidence that decreases in real fares and increases in vehicle miles of service produce increases in transit ridership. In contrast, there is essentially no empirical support for the view that rail transit per se increases transit ridership. During its period of all-bus operations, MARTA reduced real fares by 61 percent and increased vehicle miles of service by 57 percent. During the subsequent period as a rail-bus system, it increased real fares by 61 percent and vehicle miles of service (rail plus bus) by 1.5 percent.

Using a transit ridership model, I projected what MARTA's cumulative ridership during 1980-93 would have been if it had spent its subsidy dollars on further bus system improvements rather than building its rail system. One of the more interesting of 10 alternative all-bus scenarios indicated that if MARTA had simply kept real fares at their 1978 level and operated an all-bus system with the same net operating deficit as its bus-rail system, total ridership (linked trips) would have been 9 percent greater. The cumulative total cost (operating cost plus annualized capital cost) for this all-bus alternative, moreover, would have been only 31 percent as large as MARTA's expenditures for the same period. A second all-bus scenario, which assumed 1978 real fares and cumulative total expenditures that were slightly less than MARTA's actual ones, yielded a total 1980-93 ridership that was more than twice MARTA's actual ridership. These and similar analyses provide compelling support for the view that if MARTA had continued to pursue the combination of low fares and service expansion it implemented during its first nine years of existence, instead of choosing rail, it could either have bought much larger increases in transit ridership with the same amount of money or the same ridership with less than one-third its actual expenditure.

Congestion and Air Quality

In spite of the steadily accumulating evidence that the planners and other proponents of proposed light and heavy rail systems systematically underestimate system costs and ridership, proponents of these systems continue to argue that building them will reduce congestion and improve air quality since electric powered rail systems do not emit pollutants. These claims ignore the pollutants produced by electric power plants and fail to consider significant reductions in bus emissions that can be obtained at modest cost from "clean" burning buses. The latter improvements are particularly important because new rail systems have very little impact on bus miles.

More importantly, reductions in emissions and in congestion from transit system improvements depend primarily on reductions in the number of cold starts and vehicle miles of travel by passenger cars. Moreover, as I have discussed, spending subsidy dollars on bus system improvements, particularly by reducing fares and increasing vehicle miles of service, provides substantially larger reductions in cold starts and vehicle miles of passenger car use. As a result, serious analyses of the reductions in congestion and air pollution that result from alternative transport system improvements strongly favor bus system improvements over spending for costly and ineffective rail systems.

Conclusions

The lesson for journalists in metropolitan areas considering changes in rapid transit is obvious: study the facts. Don't let transit operators throw good money after bad in an effort to make ill-conceived and inappropriate rail systems "work." It is clear that they should use subsidies to expand and improve their bus systems. We are not dealing with Lionel train sets. We are dealing with real economic facts of life. ■

Beyond Road Maps

BY ROBERT DELLAERT

Only in the last 10 years has map production evolved from the esoteric territory of cartographers and geographers to desktop computers. Today, even someone with limited geographic literacy and computer graphic skills can utilize data sets and graphic software to create simple location maps with relative ease.

In fact, computer technology is evolving to the level where geographic analysis, once the domain of large institutional mainframe computers, is now possible on the desktop. Geographic information system (GIS) software is available to perform analysis to model the interaction of spatial phenomena. GIS utilized as an analysis tool produces sophisticated maps, taking the reader beyond location to visualize interaction and emerging spatial patterns of news events. The end of 1997 will begin with new commercial enterprises launching satellites that have the capability to record high-resolution digital images. Satellite imagery is emerging as an information technology allowing news bureaus to task (jargon for request) site-specific satellite imagery on an as-needed basis. Images will be readily available for reporting events as they occur anywhere on the surface of Earth.

Several commercial map data sets are available for creating maps. The data sets, which are relatively inexpensive, are designed to work with illustration or desktop GIS programs on both Macintosh and IBM-type computers. However, some distinctions (illustration vs. GIS) are apparent and should be taken into account prior to implementing desktop mapping capabilities in a news bureau.

MapArt, offered by Cartesia of Lambertville, New Jersey, is a map product for graphic designers, especially those utilizing Illustrator and Freehand

software. MapArt data contain up to 40 layers of data (political boundaries, highways, roads, rivers, railroads). This product is ideal for creating location maps, showing general locations of news events of regional to city scale. The detail is similar in design and scale to that of a road map. News editors should be aware that illustration data sets will tend to become dated in areas where urban growth is rapidly expanding because they are usually updated less frequently.

GIS data sets are better suited for larger map scales where street details are required. For example, a GIS data set contains attributes about the graphic object; a line representing a street will contain the address range on that street. In a desktop GIS program such as ArcView, produced by ESRI of Redlands, California, or MapInfo, sold by MapInfo of Troy, New York, one enters the address of the news event and the program matches the entered address with that of the GIS data set. Once the address match is made, a point showing the address location is then plotted on a computer-generated map. GIS data sets are usually a modified form of United States Census data that are corrected and updated continuously by data vendors. Also many free GIS data sets are available on the Internet.

However, what happens when multiple events occur at multiple locations over the course of several days or weeks? Positioning many locations can be tedious and prone to error. Geographic information systems are designed to accurately plot database information and attach specific information to primitive GIS elements of points, lines and polygons. GIS primitives, when merged with data, can represent cities, roads or land use types. For example, a point in a GIS does not just represent a city location but contains the attributes of

the population living there. By varying the size of the point the population size can be represented. Furthermore, by transforming the location point into a pie chart the point can be made to represent ethnicity, age, sex and a variety of statistics that describe a city's diverse population. This is the strength of a GIS: large amounts of descriptive statistical data can be associated with location (especially addresses) to create thematic maps.

For instance, during October of 1996 in Los Angeles, vandals were shattering rear windows of moving automobiles. This occurred over 240 times on 15 Los Angeles area freeways. The Los Angeles Times reported and mapped the attacks, providing the reader with a synoptic map of events. By mapping all the attacks a spatial pattern emerged, giv-



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ing the map new dimensions of frequency and distribution. GIS analysis and the resultant map indicated more than half of the attacks occurred on three freeways, usually between 9 and 10 p.m. on Tuesday or Saturday nights. This particular map did an excellent job of reinforcing the story by not only communicating where, but also when, and how often drivers were attacked.

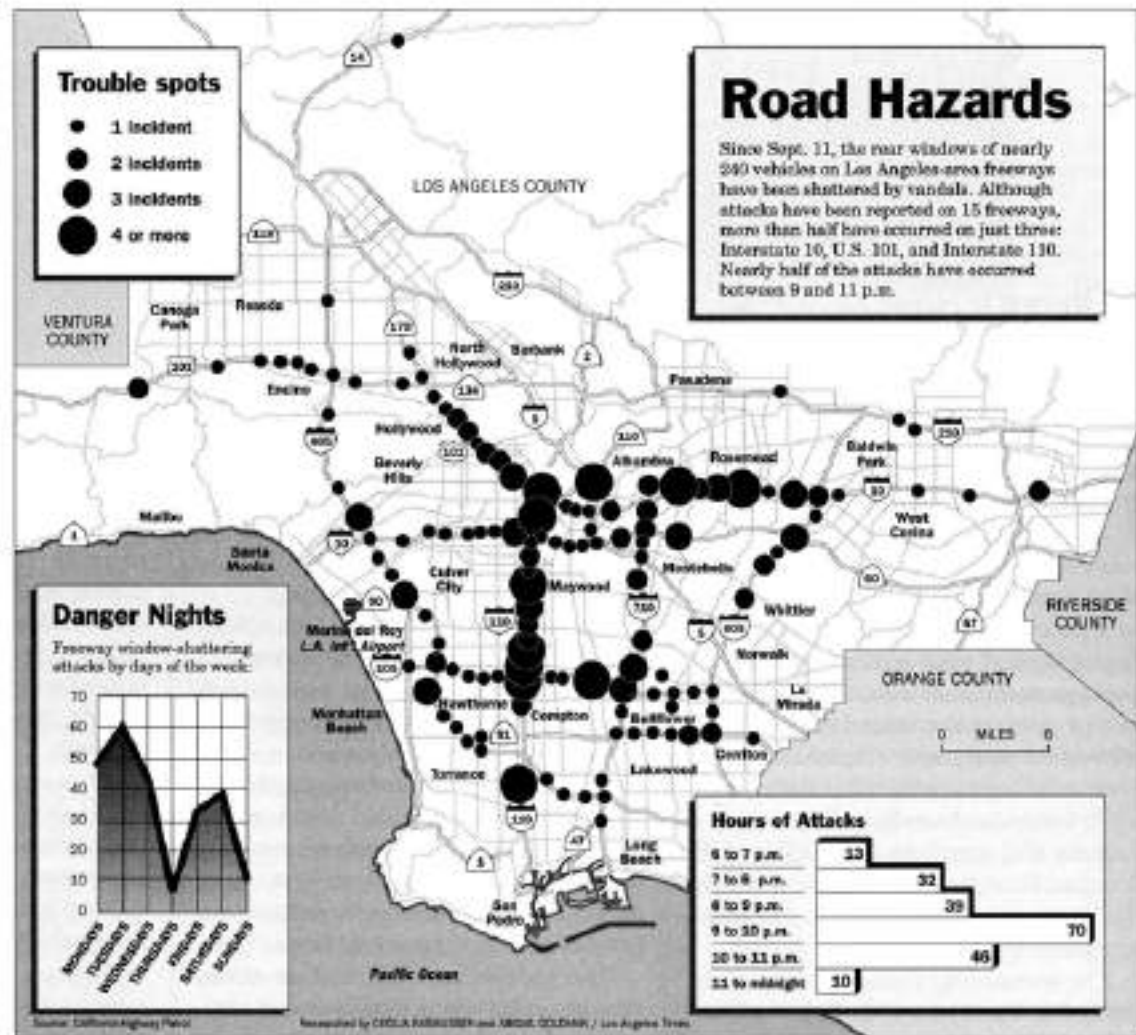
Admittedly this example is nothing new. But think for a moment of the time and effort it took to produce this kind of map before GIS and database technology existed.

Satellite imagery will soon arise as an intriguing information technology available to news services and television. The satellite, Earlybird 1, owned by Earthwatch Inc., of Longmont, Colorado, will be capable of resolving objects visible on the surface that are larger than 3 meters from 472 kilometers in space. Later in 1998 a second satellite, Quickbird 1, will be launched, capable of .87-meter resolution. Where time and monitoring of events are critical, depending on the latitude of the location, Earlybird will be able to revisit the site every one and a half to five days. With two satellites in orbit, revisit times will be even shorter.

As the image is captured by Earlybird 1 the data are transmitted to Earthwatch mission control where the image is processed. The processed image then can be written to compact disks or electronically transferred via the Internet. This technology will be very useful to observe the destructiveness of

natural hazards and regional wars remotely. When imagery is combined with the analysis functionality of a desktop GIS, analysts can measure, quantify and produce image maps, estimating property damage and loss of life.

Even though this new technology is allowing us to produce new, exciting maps, the cartographers goal is to create maps that clearly and effectively communicate location to their intended audience. It is said that cartography is as much an art as a science. An art because it takes years of experience to make maps work effectively for the map user. Today, even more a science, because of the required application of emerging technology. However, computer graphics technology is allowing anyone with access to these new tools and data the ability to produce high quality location maps.



Smart Roads, a Solution to Traffic Jams

BY PETER J. HOWE

One of the dominant trends in technological innovation has been engineers' relentless success in stuffing ever more potatoes into the proverbial ten-pound sack.

Bundles of copper cable the size of salamis have given way to pencil-thick fiber-optic strands that carry hundreds of times more phone and data calls. Higher-speed mail sorters help move twice as much mail with the same number of people the Postal Service employed 25 years ago. Digital-compression techniques bring 400 channels to cable boxes and satellite dishes.

Now, the next holy grail in this endless quest to squeeze ever more through the same congested pipes is the great American highway.

The technology being developed as part of a three-year-old, \$200 million federal research program goes by different names, such as smart roads, automated highways and intelligent-vehicle systems. The basic concept is to find ways to build enhanced roads where specially equipped vehicles can drive themselves.

In August, millions of drivers who endure soul-sapping, stall-and-crawl drives to work each day got a glimpse of what could be the new era. After months of sneak previews, officials of the National Automated Highway System Consortium formally unveiled an intelligent-vehicle system on a 7.6-mile stretch of the high-occupancy lanes of Interstate 15 just north of San Diego.

For four days, officials showed that it is possible for cars to be driven safely with a combination of computers in the trunk, magnetic nails buried in the pavement, radar-reflective road striping and dashboard-mounted video cameras.

In basic terms, the vehicles—including a bus driven by a Houston transit

driver—were turned over to a very advanced form of cruise control. With magnetic sensors reading the embedded nails to identify the vehicle's position on the road 250 times a minute and radar scanning the position of the vehicle ahead, computers handled the accelerator, brakes and steering.

The great promise of the technology is that it could squeeze far more cars into an existing roadway while safely increasing speeds from a choppy 15 or 20 m.p.h. to 65 m.p.h. or better.

"It's very difficult and very expensive to build highways or add new lanes to existing highways. Therefore, we have to begin to use the highways we have more efficiently," says consortium project manager James Rillings.

The widely flouted rule from driver education classes is that, to avoid rear-end collisions, you should always be able to count three seconds between the time the car in front of you passes a given spot and when you reach it.

In practical terms, at 60 m.p.h. that means a separation of 264 feet between cars. With intelligent vehicles and automated highways, that distance could safely be crunched down to 20 or 30 feet.

How much it would cost to outfit a car with the necessary high-tech hardware is unclear. But automated highway planners are acutely aware of Detroit's rule of thumb that car buyers will balk at spending more than about the cost of air conditioning—\$800 to \$1,000—on any option, no matter how wonderful, so a key goal is perfecting mass-producible intelligent-vehicle systems in that price range.

Realistically, automated highway champions aren't expecting to do more than double or triple the capacity of roads. But at rush hour, even 100 per-

cent more capacity could go a huge way towards easing rampant congestion.

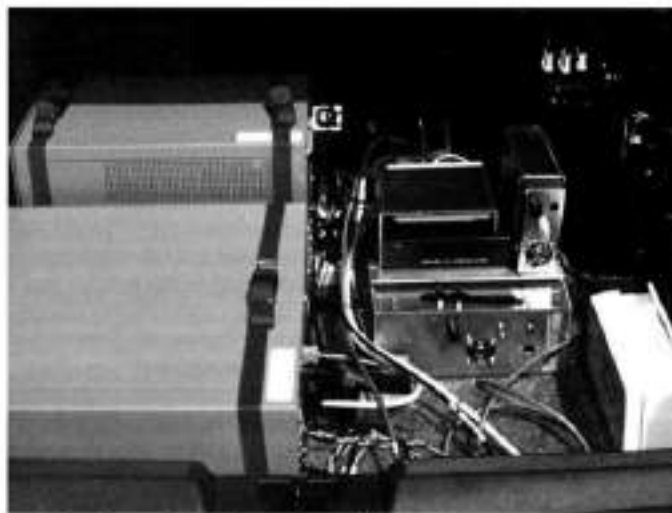
From 1970 to 1990, vehicle miles travelled in the United States grew more than 65 percent, and they are expected to double by 2020—but few imagine that highway capacity will double again. By some estimates, Americans collectively waste 5 1/2 million hours a day in traffic, and as suburban sprawl continues to overtake the countryside, those lost hours will continue to climb.

Ultra-vigilant computerized braking could sharply reduce accidents, given that driver error and inattention cause something like 90 percent of the 10.7 million crashes in the U.S. each year. Also, vehicle fuel efficiency could climb by 30 percent because, like gutsy Indianapolis 500 drivers who tailgate the race car ahead to take advantage of its slipstream, cars operating close together would encounter much less wind drag.

"It's really exciting for about the first 15 seconds, then it gets really dull. It's like driving with a chauffeur. You just let your mind wander," Rillings says.

The consortium, which began op-

Peter Howe, 32, covers the environment and the social impact of technology for The Boston Globe, where he has worked since 1986. His previous assignments include transportation, Boston City Hall and the Massachusetts State House. A Boston native, Howe graduated from Noble & Greenough School in Dedham and from Harvard College, where he earned a degree magna cum laude in American history in 1986 and was a senior editor of The Harvard Crimson. He lives in East Arlington, Mass., with his wife, fiction writer Holly LeCraw Howe, and year-old daughter, Susannah Virginia.



Platoon guidance magnets like the one shown, left, are placed just below the road surface, spaced 1.2 meters apart. Some of the components, right, that make automated driving possible are stored in the trunks of the test vehicles.

erations in 1994, has nine "core participants" including General Motors, Lockheed Martin, the California Transportation Department and major roadbuilders Bechtel Corp. and Parsons Brinckerhoff, and more than 120 associate participants.

More than 170 companies have joined the Intelligent Transportation Society of America. Allison Simmons of TRW Inc.'s Systems Integration Group, based in Fairfax, Va., estimates there is "potentially an \$80 billion market to put this infrastructure in place."

While the consortium is pushing ahead, it does not expect to have a working prototype for public use for at least five years. Some officials think it will be at least 15 years before automated highways are commonplace.

Consider just a few of the bugs that have to be worked out. How will this sit with insurers? What kind of innovation-chilling bonanza would trial lawyers reap from the first big pileup?

If, as is likely, automated lanes are built by peeling them off from existing jammed highways, what social-equity issues are raised by inflicting even worse congestion on working stiffs in pickups so that yuppies in souped-up Lexuses can read their Wall Street Journal all the way to work?

And will Americans trust the same government whose alleged incompetence they continually rail against to drive their cars?

"Before they spend money on it, they should show that a huge segment of the market will support it," says Hank Dittmar, Executive Director of the Surface Transportation Policy Project, a coalition of 200 environmental, pro-transit and anti-sprawl groups largely funded by nonprofit foundations. "I don't think the public will be that excited about letting government or big business drive their car."

In a front-page USA Today story in April, Mike Doble, technology manager with GM's Buick division, acknowledged that "the only thing we can't do yet is get people to comfortably trust the system. It's not a technology issue. Would you drive, closely spaced, at high speed, through San Diego?"

The consortium's San Diego project is only one of many efforts underway to develop an automated highway. More than a dozen U.S. research universities have major intelligent-vehicle research programs.

In May, the Virginia Transportation Board awarded a \$17.3 million contract to build the first two miles of what will be a six-mile automated travel lane connecting Interstate 81 to Virginia Tech University in Blacksburg. It is expected to be open for tests in 2000, and someday after that to the public.

And in the Nevada desert near Carson City, the Federal Highway Administration has built a 1.8-mile track where, for more than a year, driverless trucks read-

ing signals from a wire embedded in the pavement have been circling at 40 m.p.h. for 20 hours a day.

But this \$12 million project has little to do with smart highways: The trucks are actually being used to test the durability of 20 different types of macadam that have been used on the WesTrack facility.

Even if automated highways never become a reality in our lifetimes, the research going into their development is already spinning off potentially marketable innovations.

One, a form of which is already being rolled out in Japan, is "adaptive cruise control," which uses radar readings from a car's front grille to determine whether the vehicle ahead is slowing down and automatically applies the brakes.

Other systems include collision avoidance warning devices that use radar—a few thousand have been sold to truckers—and "lane-keeper" monitors using markers in the road and on-board sensors that warn a driver if the vehicle is veering out of its lane.

So even if truly intelligent highways may be a generation or more away, in the meantime, research will probably produce technology to help drivers be a little less stupid. ■

Transportation Web Sites

Directory of Transportation Resources

<http://www.dragon.priinceton.edu/dhb/>
This collection of Internet transportation-related resources is a good place to start. Includes links to all transportation mode system information; university/college research centers; private companies in the transportation industry; transportation-related organizations; listings of national and worldwide conferences and seminars with links to other sites' calendars of events. Search links for items such as bus, subway and ferry maps and schedules, construction reports, or road condition reports.

Federal Government

Department of Transportation

<http://www.dot.gov>
Clearinghouse for federal information. Provides links to many databases. The National Transportation Library covers topics from land use, congestion, transportation history and parking to energy and the environment, and bicycles and pedestrians. Includes a searchable database of DOT personnel and phone numbers, organized by division, and recent press releases, speeches and statistics.

Bureau of Transportation Statistics

<http://www.bts.gov>
Searchable databases include geographical information services, state and local statistics, transportation studies and the National Transportation Data Archive, which provides information, graphs and charts on nationwide transportation statistics. Site also carries the full text of The Journal of Transportation Statistics.

Federal Highway Administration

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov>
Search for publications and statistics, information on federal legislation and regulations, agendas for upcoming conferences and names and numbers in FHWA field offices. Includes special section on ISTEA reauthorization.

National Traffic Safety Board

<http://www.ntsb.gov>
Provides statistics, speeches, press briefings on particular accidents. Search for names and numbers of staff in regional or field offices. Includes list of upcoming events, such as public meetings and hearings on accidents and the status of investigations. Features safety improvement wish list, divided by modes of transportation.

Nat. Highway Traffic Safety Administration

<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/>
NHTSA sets and enforces safety performance standards for motor vehicle equipment. Access research on driver behavior and traffic safety, news and Administration publications, and statistics on seat belt and air bag use.

House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee

<http://www.congress.nw.dc.us/congressorg/hitranscomm.shtml>
Committee and sub-committee members; click names and receive member profiles.

Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee

<http://www.congress.nw.dc.us/congressorg/scommcomm.shtml>
Search for information on committee members.

Congressional Compass

<http://www.lexis-nexis.com/cis>
Access to U.S. legislative information from Congressional Information Services, Inc. Search full texts of Congressional publications, bills—which can be searched by topic or sponsor—laws and regulations, or schedules and membership of committees. Site also includes hot topics in Congress, such as the ISTEA reauthorization.

Federal Transit Administration

<http://www.fta.dot.gov/>
News and information related to public transportation. Includes lists of transit programs and funding, regional offices and staff names, and calendar of events. Section on ISTEA reauthorization offers FTA comparison of ISTEA v. NEXTEA funding by state.

The American Road and Transportation Builders Association

<http://www.artba-hq.org/>
Bills itself as a "home for transportation development management, design and construction personnel." Organization is a national federation of private firms, public agencies and associations that advocate for federal investment in transportation infrastructure. Site carries news, archives, and directories of related sites.

ISTEA Reauthorization

Surface Transportation Policy Project
<http://www.istea.org>
Summaries of each of the major reauthorization bills and the positions members of Congress have taken on the various proposals.

Keep America Moving

<http://www.highways.org>
National coalition of businesses and associations that promote safer roads and bridges. Carries information about condition of roads and bridges throughout country. Pro-highway view on ISTEA reauthorization.

State Governments

The Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials

<http://www.aashto.org>
Provides links to state offices with contact names and numbers. Search the AASHTO Journal for information on legislative and regulatory news on transportation. Special section on association's recommendations for ISTEA.

General

Traffic World

<http://www.trafficworld.com>
Good site for overall news about transportation issues. Search under general categories of air, motor, water, rail, logistics, technology, government, academic/professional and business. The Hub provides links to about 4,000 other transportation-related sites and includes summaries of them. The site also provides information on legislation being debated in Congress, such as the ISTEA bill, and a calendar that lists major transportation-related conferences and meetings with contact names and numbers.

Transport News

<http://www.transportnews.com/>
News, features and information about all modes of transportation.

Rail

Association of American Railroads

<http://www.aar.org>
Site includes general information on railroad industry through press releases, statistics (including safety statistics), maps of railroads in each state and an update on labor negotiations.

Federal Railroad Administration

<http://www.fra.dot.gov/index1.htm>
Information on all aspects of railroad industry — safety, statistics, surveys. Search publications, press releases, and links to related sites.

Rail Systems Center

http://www.lm.com-urichard.rsc_1.htm
Center conducts research, development, technical and educational activities in transportation industry, with a focus on railroads, rapid transit and high speed ground transportation systems. Links to city and state rail transit systems and to worldwide high speed ground links, such as the TGV in France and the ICE in Germany.

Trucking

American Trucking Association

<http://www.trucking.org>
Trucking headlines, news releases, industry statistics and information on legislation affecting

Web sites were compiled by Molly Marsh.

trucking. Site includes TT News, the ATA's online magazine. Offers daily update on trucking and transportation issues.

The Truckers News

<http://www.heavytruck.com/tn/>
Monthly tabloid and feature magazine for truckers. Library, listing of events, and "weird, wild and wonderful stories from the road."

Overdrive Online

<http://www.overdriveonline.com/>
News and features in magazine format, discussion forums for truckers.

Road King on Ramp

<http://www.roadking.com/>
News, information and entertainment.

Bicycles

Bike Federation of America
<http://www.bikefed.org/>
National nonprofit group working for more bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly streets. News and information about current efforts, including section on ISTEA.

Public Transit

The American Public Transit Association
<http://www.apta.com>
International group organized around public transit issues. Members include bus, rapid transit, and commuter rail systems, and organizations responsible for all phases of transit systems. Site includes list of transit systems in each state, transit statistics and publications, including Passenger Transport, a weekly newsletter that covers the transit industry.

National Transit Library

<http://www.fta.dov.gov/fta/nrl>
Search for laws and regulations, transit technology, national transit databases, and references and directories for transit-related sources.

Association for Commuter Transportation

<http://fimat.cob.fsu.edu/acthome.htm>
Group of organizations wanting to provide alternatives to solo commuting, reduce congestion and improve air quality. News and information about efforts on national and local levels.

Advanced Transit Association

<http://www.weber.u.washington.edu/~jbs/trans/stra.htm>
Covers all types of transit systems. Group's goal is to look at unmet transportation needs in urban areas. Access papers, books, conference proceedings, and their assessment of various rapid transit concepts.

Innovative Transportation Technologies

<http://www.weber.u.washington.edu/~jbs/trans/>
Reviews non-auto transit possibilities suitable for

major metropolitan areas. Some of the ideas described are operational, some are under development, and some are in conceptual stage. Site provides links to projects all over the world that are either operational or nearing that stage.

Land Use

Project for Public Spaces, Inc.
<http://www.pps.org/core.html>
New site for non-profit planning and design organization that wants to preserve public spaces. Site includes section on transportation and how it relates to livable communities. PPS works with public transportation projects; access case studies of existing transit facilities and information about other research projects.

On Common Ground

<http://www.oncommonground.org/>
News, policy watch, publications, survey data, and features on issues related to land use. Each month site features a particular land-use issue. Journalists, government officials and citizens can write or respond. Site includes a "journalist's corner," where text versions of On Common Ground articles can be downloaded.

Land Use Network

<http://www.off-road.com/landuse/landuse.htm>
Alerts and news regarding particular land-use issues around the country.

Air Quality

Environmental Protection Agency
<http://www.epa.gov/>
Search publications, databases, laws and regulations, and news and events for environmental issues. Site includes Office of Air and Radiation, which contains information on air quality.

Air Waste Management Association

<http://www.awma.org>
Trade association for environmental professionals. Includes links to other air quality sites.

National Resources Defense Council

<http://www.nrdc.org/nrdc>
Site includes legislative watch for news on environmental bills in Congress, and online journal. Provides links to other air quality sites.

Research Centers

Texas Transportation Institute
<http://www.tti.tamu.edu/index.stm>
State agency bills itself as largest university-based transportation research organization in country. Search links to government sites and to each state's Department of Transportation office, research centers and clearinghouses, and other sites such as the Transportation Research Board or the Institute of Transport Engineers. Search for an "expert" in transportation field by name or subject.

Northwestern Transportation Library

<http://www.library.nwu.edu/transportation>
Northwestern University. Information on transportation, law enforcement, police management, and environmental impact assessment. All transportation modes are represented. Features access to bibliographic material from magazine articles and conference papers.

Transportation Research Board

<http://www.nas.edu/trb>
Unit of National Research Council that supports and conducts research on transportation systems. Search policy studies, syntheses of current highway and transit practices, research on speed limits.

University Transportation Centers

<http://itl.acas.nwu.edu/clear/inf/utcd.html>
Directory of 13 regional university transportation centers that conduct research.

Community Groups

Community Transportation Association of America
<http://www.ctaa.org/>
Non-profit association that advocates for community transportation issues, particularly where the elderly, poor, disabled and unemployed are concerned. Search site for group's educational programs and research, including two recent publications, "Transportation and Welfare Reform" and "Dollars and Sense: The Economic Case for Public Transport in America." Site includes "federal flashes," which offer updates on current legislative actions, including ISTEA.

The Center for Livable Communities

<http://www.gc.org/cls/>
Group is initiative of Local Government Commission and a partner in the Environmental Protection Agency's Transportation Partners Program. Group wants to expand transportation alternatives, reduce infrastructure costs, create more affordable housing, improve air quality, and preserve natural resources. Search library. Information on workshops and conferences.

Associations

Assn. for Transportation Law, Logistics and Policy

<http://www.transportlink.com>
Educational resource group for people working in logistics and all transportation modes. Access list of publications from the Transportation Law Institute and papers and conference proceedings. May be a fee for some articles.

Institute of Transportation Engineers

<http://www.ite.org/>
Educational and scientific group of transportation and traffic engineers, transport planners and others. Search information on research, seminars and publications, including newsletters Washington Weekly, Congestion Management News, International News, and Intermodal Connections. ■

The Journalist's Trade

Getting It Wrong on Whitewater

By GILBERT CRANBERG

They've all said it so much that it is a given in the Whitewater coverage. It's one of those "facts" you don't even need to check out.

The New York Times says it. The Washington Post says it. The New Yorker says it. William Safire says it.

They and others say that Bill Clinton's chief accuser on Whitewater, David Hale, made a felonious \$300,000 loan of government-backed funds to Susan McDougal, and that is true. Then they all say or imply that nearly \$50,000 of that money propped up Whitewater, Bill and Hillary Clinton's ill-starred adventure in Arkansas real estate.

And that is false.

It's complicated, but it shouldn't be too complicated for The New York Times, The Washington Post, The New Yorker or William Safire.

First, you need to know that that "nearly \$50,000" is in two chunks, one for \$24,455 and one for \$25,000. The first chunk did not come from that corrupt \$300,000 loan. The second chunk did not benefit Whitewater. Now, follow the chunks.

Chunk #1. A check for \$24,455 was indeed deposited to Whitewater's account. It was used to cover an earlier \$25,000 Whitewater check to Ozark Realty, apparently for commissions for sales of Whitewater lots.

That Chunk #1 deposit was made on April 9, 1985.

Nineteen-eighty-five.

David Hale's illicit \$300,000 loan to Susan McDougal—\$24,455 of which reports say ended up in the Whitewater account—was made April 3, 1986.

Nineteen-eighty-six.

Again: the money was put in the Whitewater account in 1985—a year before Hale made that infamous loan to Susan McDougal. It's impossible, absent a time warp, for any of Chunk #1 to have been part of a deposit made a year earlier.

So what was the source of the \$24,455 chunk that went to Whitewater? It came from part of a \$135,000 loan James McDougal obtained from the Stephens Security Bank in early April 1985 for Flowerwood Farms, one of his developments. McDougal wrote a \$24,455 check to Whitewater from the Flowerwood Farms account less than a week after he deposited the \$135,000 to the Flowerwood Farms account. Clearly, the Whitewater money came from the Stephens bank loan.

But wait a minute. A big portion—\$111,500—of that fraudulent \$300,000 loan from David Hale to Susan McDougal was used to repay that Stephens loan. And since it was the Stephens money that went into Whitewater, can't you say that the misbegotten money from David Hale really did go into Whitewater since it was used to replace the Stephens money?

You can't. McDougal repaid \$40,000 of the \$135,000 Stephens loan on January 21, 1986, four months before Susan McDougal got her money from David Hale. That \$40,000 repayment more than covered the \$24,455 portion of the Stephens loan that went to Whitewater. So how can anyone say whether the \$24,455 eventually was covered by tainted dollars or by the apparently legitimate \$40,000 repayment?



Gilbert Cranberg, former Editor of The Des Moines Register's Editorial Pages, is George H. Gallup Professor at the University of Iowa's School of Journalism and Mass Communication. Graduate student Mel Shaw assisted with research for this article.

No one can. "The fungibility of money makes it difficult to say which transaction [the January 1986 transaction or the April 1986 transaction] funded the repayment to Stephens Security Bank of the funds that went to Whitewater," says the Pillsbury Report, the \$3.6 million study of McDougal's Madison Guaranty Savings & Loan that the San Francisco law firm of Pillsbury, Madison & Sutro made for the Resolution Trust Corp. Linking the Hale money to Whitewater is "tenuous" and "a stretch," Drake University's Director of the School of Accounting, Dr. Patrick Heaston, said after looking at the accompanying diagram.

So much for Chunk #1.

Chunk #2. To imply that this \$25,000 chunk benefited Whitewater is even more of a stretch.

All of the \$300,000 Hale loan was deposited in the McDougals' joint personal account. In April 1986 James McDougal wrote a check on that account for \$25,000 as earnest money for purchase of 810 acres south of Little Rock, and he put the tract for less than two months in Whitewater's name. Despite erroneous reports to the contrary, Chunk #2 did not come from Whitewater's account. According to the Pillsbury Report, "Whitewater itself never contributed any money to this land transaction." Whitewater basically contributed its name, a fact that would harm—not help—the Clintons, who were investors in the Whitewater Development Corp.

For while McDougal shortly switched ownership of those 810 acres from Whitewater to another land-development company the McDougals owned, Whitewater's name remained on the mortgage, and it still was liable for the \$470,000 balance due on the 810 acres. In other words, McDougal messed up Whitewater's balance sheet by the deal, adding a huge liability to the corporation and thus its owners, including the Clintons. The use of Whitewater initially to buy the land, which the Clintons say they knew nothing about, "did not

Tracking the \$24,455

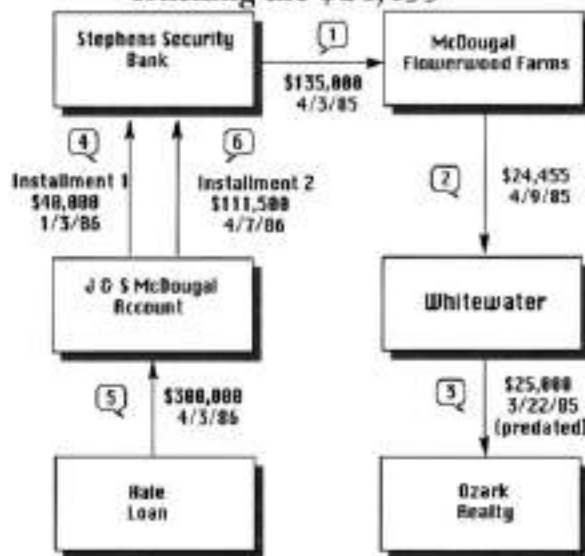


Diagram shows how 1985 Stephens Security Bank loan, not David Hale's illegal 1986 loan, was source for Whitewater payment to Ozark Realty. McDougal repaid portion of Stephens loan (Installment 1) before Hale loan financed the balance (Installment 2). Accountant calls it a "stretch" to link Whitewater and Clintons to the illegal loan.

benefit Whitewater or the Clintons," the Pillsbury Report concluded. "In fact, it left Whitewater with a large mortgage but no corresponding asset."

FBI agent Michael Patkus testified May 3, 1996, at the trial on fraud and conspiracy charges of the McDougals and then-Arkansas Gov. Jim Guy Tucker, about how Chunk #2, the \$25,000 earnest money, came from Hale's \$300,000 loan. That cropped up in stories repeatedly thereafter, but not that the money was for a tract just temporarily in Whitewater's name, nor that the chunk did anything but prop up Whitewater; it hurt the enterprise.

So much for Chunk #2.

Why, then, could the press be so wrong?

Let's start from the beginning. The New York Times on May 4, 1996, carried its edited version of a dispatch attributed to The Associated Press:

Little Rock, Ark., May 3 (AP)—The prosecution rested its case today in the trial of Gov. Jim Guy Tucker and President Clinton's former Whitewater partners after presenting testimony that money from an allegedly fraudulent loan

went to benefit the Whitewater development....

The end of the nine-week prosecution case came after jurors heard an F.B.I. agent testify that nearly \$50,000 from a \$500,000 loan to the defendant Susan McDougal was used to cover Whitewater-related expenses. The other partners in the real estate development were James, who was then her husband and is also a defendant; Bill Clinton, who was then Governor, and his wife, Hillary.

In his testimony Special Agent Michael Patkus summarized his analysis of expenditures from the April 1986 loan.

Mr. Patkus said Mr. McDougal had used \$25,000 as part of a down payment for land he bought on behalf of the Whitewater Development Corporation. Eventually \$24,455 more was deposited in the Whitewater account of Madison Guaranty Savings and Loan to cover a Whitewater payment to a realty company, the agent testified.

Mr. Patkus also listed \$13,810 in advertising bills that the McDougals paid for Bill Henley's legislative campaign. Mr. Henley is Mrs. McDougal's brother.

Prosecutors say that the \$300,000 loan from Capital Management Services was supposed to be used only for Mrs. McDougal's advertising company, Master Marketing, and that the other uses were illegal. The allegation is part of the Federal bank fraud case against the defendants. Mr. Patkus said there were no checks made on behalf of Master Marketing.

On Thursday, Judge Howard limited Mr. Patkus's testimony to summarizing complex financial documents already in evidence. Lawyers for Mr. Tucker accused prosecutors of planning to use Mr. Patkus's testimony as a ploy to get two shots at closing arguments.

The McDougals and Mr. Tucker are accused of misusing \$3 million in loans from two federally backed lenders. One was the McDougals' own Madison savings and loan; the other was Capital Management Services, licensed by the Small Business Administration to make business loans. Capital Management Services was run by David Hale, who was the chief prosecution witness.

However, the story AP distributed on its wire differed in significant respects from the edited account that ran in *The Times*. Here is the original dispatch:

Little Rock, Ark.—Prosecutors rested their case against Gov. Jim Guy Tucker and President Clinton's former business partners Friday without showing how Clinton benefited from a \$300,000 loan, as another witness had claimed.

David Hale, the Whitewater prosecutor's chief witness, testified a month ago that James McDougal and Clinton benefited from the loan, which was made in the name of Susan McDougal's advertising business.

But an FBI agent's testimony Friday made no direct link between the loan proceeds and Clinton, leaving the issue hanging after nine weeks of testimony.

Tucker and the McDougals are accused of fraud and conspiracy. Prosecutors say they illegally obtained nearly \$3 million in loans from a pair of federally backed banks.

Clinton has not been charged. He was called to testify as a defense witness by the McDougals, who say that only Clinton could counter claims Hale made during two years of cooperation with Whitewater prosecutors....

Prosecutor Ray Jahn said it was not important to link Clinton to money from the \$300,000 loan, even if the omission might undermine Hale's credibility.

"We do know it was Mr. McDougal and Mrs. McDougal who controlled how the money was spent," Jahn said. It was only necessary to prove that it was not spent on Mrs. McDougal's Master Marketing business, he said.

Hale claimed Clinton asked him for a \$150,000 loan in January 1986 and that McDougal later called and asked Hale to increase the loan amount to \$300,000 and write a check payable to Master Marketing.

Jahn said Friday that Hale didn't know what happened to the money, but under prosecution questioning April 2, Hale testified the money ultimately went to McDougal and Clinton.

When asked who would pay back the money, Hale said then, "I was looking to Jim McDougal and Bill Clinton." When asked who benefited from the loan, Hale said, "Jim McDougal and Bill Clinton."

But FBI Special Agent Michael Patkus' accounting of the money Friday did not mention the president by name. Of the \$300,000, he referred to only two payments, totaling about \$50,000, that could

have benefited Clinton as a Whitewater partner, and did not make a direct connection.

Patkus said \$25,000 of the loan was used as a down-payment on land south of Little Rock that Whitewater bought. Another \$24,455 covered a Whitewater payment to a realty company for land the company owned in northern Arkansas.

While the Clintons and McDougals were joint owners of Whitewater, McDougal ran it.

The *Washington Post* also erred when it reported, "About \$50,000 of the proceeds of that [\$300,000] loan went into a Whitewater account" (R. H. Melton and Michael Haddigen, May 29, 1996.)

William Safire went further: "That [\$300,000] was supposed to be used only to help the 'economically disadvantaged,' but a large chunk was used to buy property for Whitewater Development. If the Clintons knew about this abuse...then they would be accomplices in stealing \$50,000 from the poor." (*New York Times*, May 30, 1996.)

The *New Yorker* went even further: "The verdict established as fact—proved by the prosecution, backed by documents, and certified by a jury—that some of the money that the McDougals obtained by fraud did indeed end up in Whitewater at a time when the Clintons co-owned the company.... One of the fraudulent loans, for \$300,000, went to Susan McDougal. Of this \$300,000, \$50,000 was funneled by the McDougals into Whitewater. To put it simply, it has now been proved in a court of law that nearly \$50,000 obtained by defrauding the United States government went into a company that was co-owned by Bill and Hillary Clinton." (Michael Kelly, June 10, 1996.)

In recent months the error has persisted. On October 2 of this year *The New York Times* reported: "...\$50,000 of [the \$300,000] later wound up paying for expenses related to the [Whitewater] land development...." (Todd S. Purdum.)

And *Frontline's* "Once Upon a Time in Arkansas" announced: "What happened to that \$300,000 loan Susan [McDougal] received from [David] Hale? Twenty-five thousand dollars of it covered a debt [on Whitewater]." (Michael Kirk and Peter Boyer, PBS, Oct. 7, 1997.)

How could they all say that?

Perhaps because the testimony of FBI agent Patkus was complicated and confusing. Patkus, who has a background in accounting, was quite precise, though, in identifying Chunk #1 as coming from the Stephens Security Bank, not the government-backed \$300,000 loan, despite what the AP and *The New York Times* wrote. He was never asked if he thought the repayment of part of that Stephens loan with part of the \$300,000 loan amounted to use of the illegal Hale loan to benefit Whitewater, nor did he characterize it that way.

The initial misreports of Patkus's testimony seem to have infected subsequent coverage. Purdum of *The Times*, for instance, says he simply repeated what he found in clips. Robert L. Shaw, AP's Little Rock Bureau Chief, said: "Our story is a fair summation of the agent's testimony." *The New York Times* did not respond to requests for comment.

Perhaps the reporters were following the prosecutors, who seemed willing to put the worst possible spin to Whitewater by categorically tying Chunk #1 to Hale's loan. Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr, moreover, told a Detroit audience last fall that agent Patkus had found "some [of the \$300,000] ended up on the account of Whitewater Development."

Perhaps the stories were wrong because they reported a fact that left an implication opposite of the truth. It is true that Chunk #2 helped—for less than two months—buy land for Whitewater, but, regardless of the intent by McDougal in transferring the money, that was a transaction that turned out to be detrimental, not helpful, to Whitewater and the Clintons. That last part—the impact—was ignored.

Perhaps some reporters are just careless.

But all those perhapses are disturbing. The press has been preoccupied by Whitewater since 1992. Coverage of the "nearly \$50,000," which reputedly made Whitewater (i.e. the Clintons) a kin to fraud, has been a key element.

And it's been a key element that's been written about carelessly, or incompletely, or just plain falsely. ■

The Ken Galbraith (and Bill Buckley) Show

BY LORIE CONWAY

My interview with John Kenneth Galbraith began with his asking *me* a question. Peering down from his 6 feet 8 inches, the 88-year-old Galbraith inquired, "Just how many hours do you plan this series to be on my life?"

Standing tall at 5 feet 4 inches, I sheepishly replied "Well, just one hour," knowing that, at the time, funding for only a half-hour television documentary was available.

Over the next three days last March the Paul M. Warburg Professor of Economics, Emeritus, B.S.A., S.M., Ph.D., A.M., LL.D., LL.D., Litt.D., Litt.D., L.H.D., S.D., held court, remembering detail after detail of his life, relating historical anecdotes and offering incisive analyses. The result was a compelling, first-person account of much of the last 60 years of American history.

For me, as the producer/interviewer, it was an extraordinary experience. Having William F. Buckley, Jr., the nar-

rator and host of the program, edit my script increased the tension but helped make the story a success. The documentary, titled, "Thus Galbraith...The Life And Times of John Kenneth Galbraith," will be aired on PBS early in the new year.

Galbraith wove a tapestry of history seated comfortably in the study of his home off Harvard Square, surrounded by ceiling-high bookshelves and photographs of himself with various heads of state and newsmakers. (A needlepoint in the parlor says "Galbraith's first law: Modesty is a vastly overrated virtue.")

With little help from my one course in undergraduate economics and much more help from some willing Kennedy School professors, I began the interview. What unfolded over the course of three days of filming was a description of many of the pivotal events Galbraith was witness to or architect of since 1933.

The first thing that became apparent was the value of Galbraith's storytelling, something I enjoyed when he visited Lippmann house during my year as a Nieman Fellow, 1993-94. Galbraith doesn't just tell you about the events he witnessed, he places you in the room where history was occurring. He remembers where people were seated, the size and shape of the table on which they leaned, even the color of their ties. Galbraith's uncanny ability to recall even the smallest detail makes you feel the presence of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Lyndon B. Johnson or even "Cotton" Ed Smith, Chairman of the Senate Agricultural Committee in the 1940's.

"Cotton Ed would sit down at the end of the table and he would take a plug of tobacco out of his pocket, and we always said he'd put the plug in his mouth and the bite back in his pocket. He'd sit up and look for the spittoons

and they had been removed so the brown streak would go down on the floor and come closer to your shoes and you'd keep moving your feet around and this was a supreme achievement of Cotton Ed Smith."

He vividly recalled scenes from early in the century—he was born in Ontario on October 15, 1908—to this year. The one person most influential in his life was his father, Archie, a school teacher turned farmer. "He was head of the Liberal party in that part of Canada...he was known as a famous figure, he was in the best sense of the word, a community leader."

When Galbraith's mother died of a heart attack he was just 14 years old. Being left under the influence of his strong-willed father guaranteed his leaving the farm and going off to college. "I've often thought that if my mother had lived I would have been kept there on the farm, because she regarded that as the ultimate way in which one served oneself and one served the community.... She was much more committed to that than my father was. He was more inclined to encourage me to go off to college."

With \$500 dollars borrowed from his sister, Galbraith attended the Ontario Agricultural College, 85 miles away. His major? Animal husbandry. "One of the few economic insights of impeccable character that I had at that time was why worry about producing more and better cattle if you couldn't sell the damn things. So the real problem was the economic rather than the technical aspects of efficient produc-



Galbraith broke with his friend, President Johnson, over the Vietnam War.

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tion. So I shifted in the final year from the study of animal husbandry to economics."

After graduating in 1931, the "sour point of the Depression," Galbraith moved west to attend the University of California at Berkeley, which was surrounded by Hoovervilles, the makeshift housing of the homeless and unemployed. "There was at Berkeley at that time a very alert and active Communist community and a more cautious group to which I belonged, which had as its major commitment improving the economy...."

From Berkeley, Galbraith received a fellowship to the "other Cambridge," Cambridge University in England, to study at the feet, so to speak, of economic revolutionary John Maynard Keynes. By 1934, during the depths of the Depression, Galbraith was a devoted Keynesian, believing in government-funded programs to increase employment and stimulate business. He began testing the theory working in the Roosevelt administration. "FDR was conveniently exempt from ideology. He was responsive to what you needed to do. His only ideology was to action."

But action aside, given the media scrutiny of candidates, let alone one with a physical disability, I asked Galbraith, "Could Roosevelt be elected today?"

"Whether FDR could be elected today would depend on the economic situation more than a little bit. FDR was the product of the Great Depression...but there was the Roosevelt personality. He couldn't walk without crutches. Nonetheless he had the impression of strength.... [His election] would not be possible today, because Roosevelt was a cripple and he had to be helped, moved, supported and that would be featured on television. This would be a great disadvantage without a doubt but he did not suffer at the time."

From setting prices as the chief inflation fighter during World War II to writing speeches for Adlai Stevenson's Presidential campaigns in 1952 and 1956, Galbraith witnessed the power elite and industry lobbyists on Capitol Hill. He sees a more informed Congress

today. "There are reasons to criticize the Congress today and it is the subject of great criticism but on the whole, the level of intelligence has improved very much since those days of Cotton Ed. He would be a figure of fun today, which he wasn't at the time."

During Galbraith's five years at Fortune magazine, from 1943 to 1948, under Time/Life founder, Henry Luce, he learned to cultivate the style and expression that define his 30 books and countless articles.

Learning how to inject life and clarity into writing on the so-called dismal science—economics—brought special insight into his job as a writer. About those years he has written, "No economist ever had the slightest influence who wrote only for economists."

During my interview he explained more: "Henry Luce discovered he had a choice, between conservatives who couldn't write and liberals [who could but] he couldn't print. He chose the liberals on the whole because that was at least a start. That was the role I found myself in there."

Galbraith still writes every day, from after breakfast until noon. If he doesn't, he says he is "psychiatrically disturbed."

After Fortune, Galbraith would "enter into one of the most interesting jobs" he ever had, the Strategic Bombing Survey. Reporting on the United States bombing of German munitions factories during World War II, the findings concluded, "the air raids had no appreciable effect on production."

The results did not make him too popular with the Air Force or another member of the survey, Charles Cabot, who came to different conclusions. Since Cabot also served as an overseer at Harvard, his opposition toward the young Keynesian was voiced during Galbraith's nomination for a full professorship. There was a standoff until



William F. Buckley Jr., a long-time admirer and critic of John Kenneth Galbraith, was narrator and host of the program.

Harvard's President, James Bryant Conant, threatened to resign if Galbraith's nomination was denied. Shortly after Conant's threat it was approved.

The 1950's brought the publishing of Galbraith's epochal book, "The Affluent Society," making him close to a household name. Millions of copies were sold worldwide. Ten years later, by the time of the United States involvement in Vietnam, his name would also be known as an ardent opponent of the war. As Ambassador to India under President Kennedy, Galbraith admitted to "interfering with all manner of things, but mostly Vietnam." He believes that, if he had lived, Kennedy would have limited United States involvement in Vietnam. "I was always under the impression—the valid impression—that he wanted himself to limit his commitment there and was subject to the pressures of the generals and the Cold War liberals who wanted to go on with the war and that he was grateful for, indeed welcomed, those of us in opposition."

In 1964, Galbraith's opposition to the war meant breaking with his friend, President Johnson, whom he respected. When Johnson ordered an escalation of the war, Galbraith made his move. He accepted every proffered speaking engagement in Texas, knowing the President was an avid reader of his home state's newspapers. "I went to him several times to tell him my opposition and his answer, which was not wholly unpersuasive, was always the

same. He said, "Ken, if I weren't here you would be in much worse condition for what the generals want to do. You should be glad that I'm keeping this thing under control."

By 1968, Galbraith gave up on his persuasive efforts and increased his political efforts. At the Democratic convention in Chicago, he seconded Eugene McCarthy's name in nomination for the presidency. "I was more strongly moved by the need for opposition to Vietnam than any other major issue of my lifetime."

Galbraith has always worn his liberalism on his sleeve, proud and not afraid of the label. Today, he explains the shift towards conservatism in terms of economics and what the media, he

Princess Diana And Mother Teresa

Some of my colleagues think that with the Diana episode the media has changed definitively and inexorably. Some of us think that may have happened to some measure at the time of the O. J. Simpson trial. But I don't think we know.... I think one of the great difficulties that journalists and more to the point our management has these days is how to navigate through this totally strange and alien land—what America is interested in, what we think they should be interested in, how do we cover the rest of the world, what does the rest of the world represent, what is important, what isn't important, and when something like Diana and, dare I say it, Mother Teresa, comes along—and that, by the way, is the first time I have ever compared the two—you know it's in the sense so obvious and it's so easy for us to become as deeply engaged as we do.—*Peter Jennings, Anchor of ABC's "World News Tonight," on the National Public Radio show "On the Media," hosted by Alex Jones, September 21, 1997.*

claims, has made "fashionable." "I think that when people are happy, comfortable, they tend to be more conservative...but I am prepared to argue that the next time there is a slump, liberals will be back and it will be conservatism that is unfashionable."

I chose the conservative Buckley as narrator of the program because of his stature on the opposite end of the political spectrum, for his 30-year history of debating Galbraith worldwide and, most importantly, for his profound respect of Galbraith. "But don't expect me to suppress my differences," Buckley warned me back in May when I approached him with the idea of hosting the program. I assured him that was part of the charm.

As agreed, I wrote the script, then Buckley worked on it. My nerves were more than a bit frayed waiting to hear back from him. What he delivered three days later was a producer's dream, a narrative deftly weaving both the unique Buckley-esque style and nuance with his differences, political and economic. I was thrilled and awed by the clarity of his writing. Best of all, the main structure and content of the script were still intact.

While Buckley was recording the material to camera in New York, I watched his presentation on a monitor. It became clear why he and Galbraith have remained respected friends so long. Both possess a passion for their beliefs and convictions based on intellectual brilliance and integrity. Their differences only livened the discussion.

Buckley wrote this ending standup: "John Kenneth Galbraith is celebrated not for formal economic explorations but because of his resonance as a political moralist. 'The Affluent Society' isn't about economic policy, it is about social priorities."

Or, as Galbraith himself said: "I would like to be remembered as somebody who wanted to go beyond analysis, beyond explanation and to the social action. I spent a certain amount of my life in practical politics and I would like to see that as proof that I wanted to go beyond pure economics, pure description, pure analysis to practical action." ■

Strong Reaction To Diana Columns

"I arrived on Thursday before the funeral and survived on adrenaline, an occasional meal and scant sleep. It was helpful that I had covered Diana in Chicago for three days last year. Instructive, too, were the endless Diana tomes I have read, mostly for escapism.

"The British were by and large very gracious to reporters. Many were eager to talk about the princess. It seemed a catharsis for them. Hostility toward paparazzi and, by extension, the established press, began evaporating with each new report of Diana's driver drinking and taking drugs before the fatal crash.

"Buckingham Palace and the Church of England had periodic briefings for reporters in Church House near Westminster Abbey. Space for press in the abbey was very tight. Only two U.S. reporters, chosen by lot, were allowed to attend the funeral.

"I watched the service from Church House, where, in addition to three press rooms, there was a solemn room for press and clergy. A bishop next to me wept during the National Anthem, then gladly fielded questions on liturgy and protocol.

"While in London I also wrote columns. One man later wrote a letter to the editor saying my column on Diana and Mother Teresa made him feel like throwing up. Then a woman wrote in, seconding the motion.

"I'm back to writing news stories and accepting column-writing tips at skiba@omninet.uwm.edu." —*Katherine Shiba of The Milwaukee Journal, a 1991 Nieman Fellow.*

Too Many Degrees Of Separation

Strangers On Their Own News Beats

BY MICHAEL O'NEILL

When Loren Ghiglione was rounding up comment recently regarding the minority hiring programs of the American Society of Newspaper Editors I automatically responded with a cheer. Who could argue with such a worthy cause? But then I got to thinking about the many related issues that are also involved in the complex relationship between our profession and society.

What is the intent of the ASNE initiative, for example? Is it simply an affirmative action program to expunge long-standing biases? A drive to make newsrooms mirror images of the general population? Or, in a larger strategic sense, is it an effort to penetrate more deeply into communities in order to serve a wider range of readers?

As I see it, the problem is not just inadequate minority hiring, although that is a factor, of course. Nor is it only the challenge of ethnic diversity, or the immigrant waves that have so swiftly and, in some areas, so overwhelmingly changed the communities newspapers are trying to reach. What may be more important in the long run is a cultural gap between reporters and would-be readers—class differences, if you will, not just race, gender, or ethnicity.

As editors and journalism schools demand more and more education in the name of professionalism, staffs become more elitist. However much individuals may differ, natural selection produces a kind of social and intellectual clustering, a blend of similar interests and attitudes, that sets journalists apart from much of the society they presume to reflect. They move into their own neighborhoods, mingle with other professionals, talk about the same

things. They are no longer card-carrying members of the working class. They don't socialize with shipping clerks or truck drivers, go to the same picnics or bingo games, or join hands at prayer meetings. Sports is a common denominator and celebrity a shared affliction. But reporters are often strangers on their own news beats.

After World War II, when I first covered the police "shacks" in Brooklyn, the pattern was different. The beat reporters were mostly the offspring of firemen or garment workers or longshoremen—ordinary working stiffs who lived on the same streets and drank at the same bars as their readers. It wasn't much different 15 years later, when I returned to New York with *The Daily News* following a stint in Washington. I remember one day in Criminal Court when a hood, in the midst of being arraigned, suddenly shouted greetings to the police reporter I was with. They had been boyhood friends and still lived in the same neighborhood. Legmen in those days needed rewriters to translate their notes. But they lived the city's life. When you were with them, you could feel the city's pulse. As Pete Hamill has observed: "Their street reporting was informed by the special knowledge that came from the street. If they encountered a plumber or a longshoreman, they knew the language."

At *The Daily News* in the 1960's and 1970's, I championed the idea of "upgrading" the staff. Although Jimmy Breslin, one of the best reporters I ever worked with, never made it through college, all our new hires were required to have a degree. So fresh recruits swarmed into the city room clogged with education and determined to re-

form the world. They didn't live in Red Hook, though, or Hunts Point. Blacks didn't want to settle in East New York or be assigned to Harlem. Just as vast wealth and deep poverty existed side by side but seldom touched, most new-generation reporters were mentally and emotionally separated from the most numerous and, in many ways, most vibrant communities in the city.

The day after the great blackout in New York City in 1977, I spent some time roaming through Bushwick where looters had left whole blocks in smoldering ruins. One man rocked back and forth on a chair with a baseball bat guarding his gutted store. A woman picked through the charred remains of a church. It was stifling hot and when a cool breeze suddenly sprang up, I turned to the woman and exclaimed: "Isn't this great?" "No," she replied. "Very bad! If fire now, two apartments go, not one!" A wind that was refresh-



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ing to me was frightening to her. I was an alien in her world, only a shout away from our office on the other side of the East River.

This kind of estrangement means that millions of lives lie mostly hidden in unwatched warrens, only attracting attention at the intersections of violence and crisis when public agencies become involved and the media are alerted. Like business reporters who depend on analysts for news, city reporters get too many of their stories second hand from cops, the courts or other official sources. This is one reason why many people automatically associate blacks with crime—it's almost their only news link to black communities.

Thousands of nonprofit groups and religious organizations are working on the front lines of social stress in New York's neighborhoods. Colombian and Dominican neighborhoods, Chinese and Korean, African and Arab. There are health clinics, foster care homes, youth development programs, Catholic and Jewish schools—more than 130,000 children in the parochial schools alone. It is a throbbing universe of activity in the very heart of city life but, in the absence of disaster or scandal, much of it receives little public notice. A fact that has been brutally criticized by Osborn Elliott, former Editor of Newsweek, ex-Deputy Mayor, and presently head of New York's Citizens Committee.

Whatever the practical obstacles or professional hang-ups may be, true diversity means that reporters and editors should be in intimate, continuing and, I would add, sympathetic communication with every part of community life. When only government and politics or violence are reported then much of that life is excluded. The effect is to emphasize degrees of separation rather than the kind of bonding, the mutual interest and empathy, that ideally should exist between journalists and ordinary people. "If we are to create a sense of place for everyone," as Gregory Favre says, "then we must create a sense of belonging for everyone."

I believe one explanation for the extraordinary success of "Angela's

Ashes" is that Frank McCourt is a superb reporter who personally lived the story he told and belonged to the world he described. He didn't need any help in understanding his characters because he and they were the same. He was not an outsider who had to interview the natives to get the facts, so his readers were gripped by an intense, directly felt realism. Also, McCourt never talked down to his characters; he treated them with respect, as equals.

That is another important point—the degree to which an elitist journalism not only promotes a "curled lip" cynicism, as Elliott puts it, but also creates attitudes that, consciously or unconsciously, demean the beliefs, lifestyles, and views of ordinary people. A case in point is religion, which millions of Americans take seriously and is a central feature, for example, of black community life, but is poorly and often derisively covered by the press. I remember rushing a reporter to the South on a fruitless mission to find flimflammy in the Moral Majority movement; I prejudged the story because of a built-in bias, something that is also frequently on display now in coverage of the Religious Right and fundamentalist groups.

Peter L. Berger, writing in Commentary, says these groups are part of a

Dressing Up For Dinner

I've bought wigs and had makeup people do serious makeup. I have developed a different sense of clothes. I wear eyeglasses. I normally never wear lipstick, so if I put on lipstick and a blond wig, I'm a totally different person. It's amazing. My husband finds it pretty funny. But my elevator man knows, winks at me and says, "Aha—you're going to a new restaurant...." This is a serious eating job. I go out for 12 meals a week." *Ruth Reichl, restaurant critic for The New York Times, in the house organ "Inside The New York Times," Fall 1997.*

class-based populist revolt against the upper levels of the American class system, "the bastions of elite culture"—including the media—that have fought to compel total secularization of society as well as government. To the extent that journalists identify with these secular elites, they appear to be hostile to the convictions of millions of ordinary working class people. And this is not an ad for editorial diversity or balance.

I don't know the solution. At The News we tried to get closer to the ground by assigning reporters to community boards and neighborhood organizations. The idea was to build news from the bottom up, instead of top down from city hall and police headquarters. Although this approach produced more grassroots coverage, it was labor intensive. And it could not fully overcome the disconnect between readers and many reporters' and editors whose story ideas still were colored by their own social and intellectual predilections.

It may be argued that the destiny of newspapers lies with the elites in society because that is where the readers are, and will increasingly be as educational levels rise and new immigrants join the American mainstream. Barbara Tuchman once observed that no one knows anything about the peasants in the Middle Ages because they couldn't write and those who could didn't care. But journalists should care. Upper crust readers, no less than their fellow citizens, need to see society in all its dimensions if they are to understand the world around them. Social explosions that so often catch us by surprise can only be foreseen, and possibly prevented, if the press is operating at the ground levels of community life where unwatched stress is the incubator of silent crisis that later becomes a public disaster.

Changes in journalistic culture may be as important as increased minority hiring if we are to achieve true "diversity in the newsroom." Newspapers, especially, need to develop a closer, broader, more understanding and more trusting relationship with their communities. Their survival depends on it.

Bashing American Schools

How the Print and Visual Media All Too Often Misunderstand, Misrepresent and Thereby Misreport and Severely Damage Our American System of Public Education

BY EVANS CLINCHY

On December 2, 1996, Newsweek magazine published a story entitled "The Sum of Mediocrity," saying that it is "Time for another global-competitiveness alert. In the Third International Mathematics and Science Study—which last year tested a half a million students in 41 countries—American eighth graders scored below the world average in math. And that's not even the worst part. Consider this as you try to figure out which countries will dominate the technology markets of the 21st Century: the top 10 percent of America's math student's scored about the same as the average kid in the global leader, Singapore."

So, once again we continue to have yet another salvo in the continuing barrage of reporting in the American print (and, of course, the visual) media bashing the American system of public schooling. All this despite a growing amount of evidence marshaled by people such as Gerald Bracey, one of this country's most respected educational researchers, writing in the profession's foremost journal, *Phi Delta Kappan*, and in such books as "The Manufactured Crisis: Myths, Fraud and the Attack on America's Public Schools" by David C. Berliner and Bruce J. Biddle (Addison-Wesley), that test scores in general are actually at an all-time high (including the SAT's and the College Boards when one takes into account the vastly larger number of students taking the tests), that very few schools are cesspools of gang violence, with most of those being inner city schools suffering from Jonathan Kozol's "savage inequalities," that U.S. students actually rank high on almost all international tests of both math and science, that there is no evidence of any link

between the educational performance of American students and the health of the economy and that, indeed, American economic productivity leads all other nations, with the U.S. economy being the most competitive in the world.

Now, as Bracey, Berliner, Biddle and others have often pointed out, any examination of the public's opinion about our American system of public education must, of course, include an assessment of the quality of the media coverage of that system, since the quality of the public's perceptions of its schools is so clearly shaped by what and how the media chooses to report. Indeed, many of the policy decisions that are made by national, state and local decision-makers are all too often based upon little more than the media's reporting of what those public perceptions appear to be.

I bring up these unpleasant facts in a spirit of deep humility. When I was an education reporter before becoming a Nieman Fellow in 1959, I was as guilty as any reporter of being largely ignorant of what I was talking about. I was all too easily taken in by the rampant rhetoric that was the daily staple of education reporting in those Cold War days. The great educational myth of that time immediately before and after the Soviet Union launched its Sputnik satellite in 1958 was that the American public schools were desperately inferior to the Russian schools, especially in science and math, that this was the reason we as a nation were "behind" the Russians in sophisticated rocketry and that the schools were therefore actually causing us to lose the Cold War itself.

None of this, of course, turned out to be the case. But we in the media—and therefore most Americans—bought

into this great myth, with the result that a era of large-scale "curriculum and school reform" was launched with considerable fanfare and large amounts of federal and foundation dollars. It was along about here that I stopped being a newspaperman and switched over to the other side, i.e., the side of the working stiffs in the public schools. I did this because I realized that I was temperamentally better suited to being involved in attempting to improve the schools rather than the equally important task of reporting on the facts of the case. I first became an educational foundation program officer, then the director of an elementary school social studies curriculum program, then the director of research, development and experimental schools in the Boston public schools, then a general school consultant specializing in desegregation plans, magnet schools, parent and professional choice and eventually (as of now) an advocate of a new, entirely reconceived system of American public schooling.

Thus, nothing that Bracey, Berliner or Biddle say or my referring to them here should be taken to mean that I think that the public schools of this nation are doing the best job they could possibly do. Indeed, I have argued else-

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where and will argue here that the job we have been asking our public schools to do for the last 100 years is a task that no longer serves any realistic purpose, if it ever did. It has been and still is a task that has little relevance to what we now know about how human beings go about the task of learning anything at all, and it has virtually no relevance to what the coming century will be requiring of us either as a nation or, for that matter, as members of a still-evolving biological species that hopes to continue to survive and prosper.

But just as that Sputnik-generated hysteria turned out to be a fraud and its "curriculum reform" movement turned out to achieve only the slightest improvement in the schooling of children and young people, so today we are in the grip of a similarly ill-founded and equally misdirected "school reform" movement. This time around it is not a manned rocket launched by the Russians that is causing us to flog the public schools, but a government report that claimed, in the best tradition of the *Business Week* cover story criticized by Bracey, that the public schools are failing miserably to do the job they are there to do.

That report was called "A Nation at Risk" and was issued by the then U.S. Office of Education in 1983. The report was the result of the work of a National Commission on Excellence in Education, consisting primarily of college or university presidents, university professors, business executives, state education officials—and one lone teacher.

The commission did not begin its work with a discussion and explanation of its methods for defining and then recognizing "educational excellence." Nor did the commission members spend many hours, days and weeks immersing themselves in the daily routines of real schools inhabited by real students and practicing school people, listening carefully to what they had to say, living the lives they are compelled to live and finding out firsthand what those people believe the real problems of public education in this country to be. Rather, they relied entirely on indi-

rect, second- and third-hand sources of information: a series of 53 papers commissioned by the Commission itself produced by academic research experts in colleges and universities and policy research centers; the staff's analysis of already existing academic research on "problems in education;" on "testimony" gathered during special Commission hearings from "administrators, teachers, students, representatives of professional and public groups, parents, business leaders, public officials and scholars."

After roughly 18 months of such study and report-writing, the commission and its staff issued its "A Nation at Risk" report. This is the famous (or perhaps more accurately infamous) report that said the public schools were "awash in a tide of mediocrity" and were a manifest threat to the economic well-being of the nation. It outlined 14 "dimensions of the risk before us" that "have been amply documented by the testimony received by the commission," and they thus proceeded inadvertently to spell out not only their definition of "educational excellence" but their method of judging it. This turned out to be almost solely a judgment made on the basis of scores achieved by United States and foreign students on national and international standardized academic achievement tests in all of the standard curricular subjects, and especially scores on tests of reading, mathematics and science and on the SAT and College Board examination results.

The publication of this report and the widespread play that it received in every possible form of the print and visual media sparked what has become the most influential educational reform movement of the 1990's. This is the Clinton administration's much touted "Goals 2000" movement for "higher," indeed "world class" academic standards, a "voluntary" national curriculum and "voluntary" national academic tests.

In the "Nation at Risk" (as well as in the present) case, of course, there is a great deal of rhetoric about students fulfilling their individual potential and having the necessary skills to become productive members of society and

good workers in the global economy. But when we come to both the 1983 and the new 1990's recommendations for improving the schools, we get essentially the following basic prescriptions: that all schools adopt those rigorous "world class" academic standards and require that all students take four years of English, three years of mathematics, three years of science, three years of social studies and one half-year of computer science, along with other less basic things such as a foreign language, fine and performing arts and vocational education; that schools, colleges and universities adopt more rigorous and measurable standards and higher expectations for academic performance and student conduct; that four-year colleges and universities raise their requirements for admission; and that significantly more time be devoted to academic studies, thus requiring more effective use of the existing school day, a longer school day, or a lengthened school year.

While a few of the recommendations were not solely concerned with laying down the law from on high and "getting tough" with students and teachers in order to raise academic achievement and test scores in the conventional academic subjects and disciplines, the main thrust of the recommendations is clear. The answer to what ails the American system of public education is not more money or a greater share of national resources put into the public system to repair Kozol's savage inequalities, or a radical devolution of power down to people actually working in the schools.

No, what both the "Nation at Risk" report and the Goals 2000 program have given us is a national education agenda that is little more than an old-fashioned, authoritarian tightening of the control over what goes on in the schools by the federal, state and local authorities who control the educational policies and the educational purse strings, with the people in the schools left essentially powerless and unassisted. The message to everyone out in the schools is simple and unambiguous: "Pull up your socks! Work harder,

keep your noses to the grindstone, do more teacher and student homework, get better scores on those tests. But don't expect much, if any, additional funding, more and better materials or decent school facilities. And above all, don't expect to be given more autonomy, more authority to do what you think is best for your students. Do, instead, what we say you should do. Meet the 'standards' we determine you should meet whether you agree with them or not."

It is this totally negative "Nation at Risk"/Goals 2000 assessment of the public schools and the resulting punitive and unrealistic educational agenda that lies behind the Newsweek story cited above and that therefore lies behind much of the educational coverage that has appeared in virtually every newspaper and on every TV station in the land over the past 15 years.

So here we have once again a classic example of the misuse of social science research in the field of education and especially the misunderstanding and therefore the misuse of the results of psychometric standardized academic testing by the non-educational world, very much including the national and local print and visual media. Which is most unfortunate, since such misrepresentation and misuse not only misleads the American public about the nature and quality of its public schools but also gives all social science research an undeservedly bad image.

While it is true that this misapplication of social science research and psychometric testing has been one of the great scandals of public schooling for many decades now, the IQ and standardized academic achievement tests have on many occasions been properly used to rescue from unjustified educational oblivion children who have been unfairly labeled as failures by the educational system itself. Of equal importance, much social science research—such as the research on cognitive and human development—has been in the past and will continue to be absolutely crucial to the creation of new and better ways of educating children and young people. And it must also be

pointed out that it is our more responsible social scientists and psychometricians themselves who constantly attempt to educate people both to the legitimate uses and to the limitations of such testing.

No, the great and continuing malfeasance here, as this offense is starkly born out in the "Nation At Risk" fiasco, is that these psychometric research data are uniformly used by both the educational and non-educational worlds—and therefore most perniciously by the national visual and print media and by the chief executive officers of our big industrial corporations—as *virtually the only method of defining and then rendering judgment upon the quality of the education offered in this country's public schools*. The word "virtually" appears here because there is one other widely used and quite related criterion: the number of high school graduates accepted into the colleges and universities, and most especially our prestigious four-year Ivy League colleges and universities, including our beloved Harvard, and their public equivalents. This is, of course, a number that obviously still has a great deal to do with student success on those standardized academic achievement tests and especially the SAT's and the College Boards.

Thus whenever the question of educational "quality"—or in the "Nation At Risk" case educational "excellence"—is raised, we do not find ourselves talking about the overall growth and development of our children and young people as thinking, feeling, caring human beings, as thoughtful and responsible future citizens of a possibly more just and humane democratic society. Rather, we find ourselves defining the question of educational quality and rendering judgment *solely in terms of the numerical scores on those standardized academic achievement tests*.

What we all need constantly to remember and understand here, of course, is that by their very design and purpose these psychometric tests are arbitrary, decontextualized, depersonalized sets of mathematical figures, charts and graphs. Students and teach-

ers disappear as flesh and blood lives of lives. And equally deceptive and misleading, of course, is the fact that such tests do not take into consideration the all-too-often appalling conditions under which our teachers and students are expected to function, with this being especially true of those teachers and students in our desperately underfunded and decaying urban schools.

This misuse of these psychometric data, however, has effects that go well beyond their use as the sole measure of educational quality. As many social scientists have pointed out, these tests and their results suffer from two further unfortunate defects.

The first of these is that the tests inevitably reflect and reinforce our educational system's built-in, systemic bias against poor and minority children of every color and stripe. Social scientists who have studied the matter have made it clear that the best predictors of success in conventional schooling and high scores on the standardized tests as well as admission into and success in our colleges or universities are *the race or ethnic group, the social and economic class and the educational level of one's parents*. And in this society, despite all of the cant about the creation of a meritocratic "level playing field," of "equal educational opportunity" for all children and making sure that "every child is achieving his or her full potential," this still means that those who succeed and prosper in our American system of education—public and private, higher and lower—are the white (and now Asian), relatively well-off, largely suburban, already reasonably well-educated and largely non-immigrant portion of the American population.

The second of these psychometric faults is that, while no one disputes the importance of teaching children to read and to do mathematics, the standardized reading and math tests give us information about only two—the verbal and logico-mathematical—of the eight "multiple" intelligences proposed by Harvard psychologist Howard Gardner as existing to greater or lesser

degree in every child and young person. The other six intelligences (and ways of succeeding out in the real world)—the visual, musical, kinetic, social, personal and naturalistic—are completely ignored, as are the children and young people who may excel in those pursuits.

The unfortunate results of this misuse of standardized test results in reading and math as the sole means of judging the quality of our public schools and the quality of the students in those public schools are most dramatically displayed in the sacred ritual staged each year throughout the nation in every school system, every local newspaper, every local television station and then, of course, in all of the national print and visual media. This is the annual compilation and publication of the standardized reading and math test scores of the children in each of the nation's public schools and school systems. On the narrow basis of these test scores, schools are rated, teachers and principals are excoriated and threatened with job loss if the results are low, both the present and future lives of our children and young people are relentlessly determined and the public's belief in and support—or lack of support—of its public schools are established.

Very few local newspapers, local TV stations and even their national counterparts appear to have the in-house capacity, just as we did not have the capacity in my olden days, to carefully analyze the results of this annual ritual before they pass those results on to an innocent and unsuspecting public. They appear not to have reporters and editors capable of breaking those figures down and looking behind them to find out what the racial, ethnic, social and economic make-up of every school's student body is and then making sure that the raw numerical results of the tests are tempered in their reporting with careful explanations of what those scores really mean.

In my many years of experience working with school systems all across the country, I have always made a point of avidly following the educational coverage of the local newspapers and TV stations (as well as the national media),

if only to maintain my ties to the world's second oldest profession. But I have only rarely seen the kind of perceptive test score reporting and analysis the public really needs.

Let me briefly describe two ways our newspapers and television stations could and should be going about the annual ritual of the reporting of test scores in order to better inform the public about what is going on in its schools, i.e., the kind of questions that they should be asking and the kind of comparisons they should be making before they unleash the test results on the public.

The first responsibility here is to insist that the reading and math scores for each school be accompanied by a careful breakdown of each school's student population on the bases of race, ethnic group and socioeconomic status so that those schools primarily educating poor and minority students are identified and the public is made aware of the challenges those schools are facing as a result of the difficulties many of their students are experiencing in an inherently unfair American society and an equally unfair educational world.

Secondly, the scores should also be accompanied by a random sampling of the high and low test score schools describing firsthand the conditions under which the schools are operating—the state of the school facilities, the class sizes, the provision of educational supplies and materials (including not only books and a real library but paper, pencils and the most up-to-date computer technologies), the professional preparation and experience of the school staff, the amount of money per pupil spent in each school, whether the school has adequate facilities and teachers providing good experiences not only in the sciences but in all of the visual and performing arts and physical sports, and whether the school is adequately supplied with social and educational support services for all children and young people experiencing real social and economic difficulties (again with urban/suburban comparisons).

The scores should also then be minimally prefaced by a careful discussion

of the inherent limitations and pitfalls of all such psychometric testing, so that the public has at the very least been supplied with all of the information necessary to interpret the scores in a minimally honest and accurate fashion.

I do not mean in any way to imply here—as I pointed out earlier—that the local and national media should thus simply become unreflective supporters of what is going on in our American system of public education. There are a great many things wrong with the public schools, and these need to be widely reported and discussed. However—and very much in addition to the accurate and fair reportage of test results—what the beleaguered people in our public schools need from their local and national media is, first, the help of people who understand what real life is like in our desperately underfunded and often very dangerous public schools. They then need the help of people who are able to respect the wisdom those school people as working stiffs have derived from their everyday experience in those schools. They then need people who are able to respect the ideas they as practicing teachers have about improving public schooling, people who will report on and even help them develop and implement the good and interesting ideas the school people have about how better to conduct the enterprise of teaching and learning under the difficult conditions of real life in those schools.

Which also means that what the people in the schools need is beat-pounders who not only understand what all of the psychometric test results can legitimately say about the quality of education in those schools, but who also can then communicate what they see, feel and know so that the great American public can judge for itself whether their public schools are doing what they should be doing and serving the nation well.

If we all—school people, local and national policymakers and everyone in the print and visual media—cannot manage this level of honest concern and careful attention, then both the public schools of this country and the nation itself truly are at risk. ■

Back From the Future

BY TOM REGAN

Spending an hour talking to Jon Katz, who writes "Media Rant" for HotWired, the Web site run by Wired Magazine, is like spending an hour with someone who has been to the future and somehow found his way back. What he'll tell you will amaze, invigorate and terrify you all at the same time—especially if you happen to work in the media business, particularly newspapers. It's not that Katz is a futurist. Nor is he a Cassandra. It's just that there is no one writing today who can so surgically pinpoint the problems of media in the late 20th Century and what they must do in order both to survive *and* be relevant.

A couple of years ago Katz threw the newspaper business into a tizzy with his column, "Online or Not, Newspapers Still Suck." More recently, two columns on the same subject have become the focal point for discussion among newspaper types, particularly those of us who toil in the on-line world. Basically, Katz accuses newspapers of being "ugly, irrelevant, passive, dull, and pompous," and "the least competitive and appetizing offering in the information spectrum." Katz believes newspapers should stop messing around on line and take the money to fix the real problems that plague papers.

Why would someone who was so "on line" himself be so opposed to newspapers moving in that direction? I called him and asked.

The biggest problem that newspapers have when it comes to the on-line world is, to put words in Katz's mouth, they still don't get it.

"Papers have to think about whether they need to go digital and why," says Katz. "Just repurposing old content doesn't work. They don't make newspapers better, or more creative or more useful. All these papers spending billions of dollars on Web sites would be better off if they hired more reporters and did better reporting."

An on-line edition, Katz says, should add a dimension for readers that doesn't detract from the original print product. That dimension is interactivity. And the reason that newspapers shy away from interactivity is because it not only alters the relationship between the vendors of news and the consumer, it also alters the balance of power, taking from the vendor and giving more to the consumer.

Katz knows of what he speaks. His column is instantly available to millions around the world. Since Katz includes his E-mail address and invites people to write him back, he is constantly bombarded with replies. On average, he receives 50-100 messages a day, most of which he answers. When he writes a more controversial piece, that can rocket to 300-500.

But here's his secret. He doesn't consider answering E-mail as something separate. It is an essential part of his

column. "Sometimes I say it's like being tied to the back of a truck and dragged through downtown Manhattan," he jokes. "But what it really does is make you think about every single thing you write. It stretches you as a writer."

Katz also notes that since a column can live in cyberspace for years, you are never able to just "leave it behind." When he wrote columns for Rolling Stone and New York magazine, the feeling always was that the column was done once it was in print. But on line, a column is always a "new beginning," since it can work its way around the Internet, from chat groups to forums to E-mail postings, etc.

And what that does, Katz says, is change the relationship between the journalist and the consumer.

"That is why papers fear interactivity. It's the idea of disagreement. It takes power away from the writer and gives it to the reader. When I write my columns, it's not like I'm writing for The New York Times, where every piece is seen as the revealed word. I'm continually exposed as a fuzzy thinker, as someone who can be wrong. I'm constantly changing my mind, and learning more about what I write, based on the interactions I have with my readers. So I'm less powerful than a traditional columnist, but still more powerful than most writers. But the difference is that my readers are more powerful than those who read more traditional columns."

As for me, I don't think it's a mistake for papers to repurpose content on Web sites and use that content to find new ways to reach new people. People still want to read news, even on line, and there's plenty of statistical material to back that up. But Katz is absolutely right about interactivity and its central role in a newspaper's Web site. Or in a newspaper, period. Interactivity is the "magic bullet" that papers have been searching for since circulation began to drop in the 60's.

Because the real truth of journalism is that for all we say we're interested in what the average Joe and Jane think, we're really more interested in what we think ourselves—since we think we're always right. And we prefer that our readers agree with us, rather than engage us. The on-line world presents us with the opportunity to change that dynamic, if we're smart enough and brave enough to do it. ■

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One David, Two Goliaths

The Struggle for Independent Media in Burundi

BY BRYAN RICH

“Don't trust them. They are killers, liars and completely mad.”

It's been three years since a Special United Nations Representative conveyed that advice to me in Burundi, Rwanda's lesser known southern neighbor. It was meant, I supposed, as a cautionary word against naive hopes on working for the first time in one of the world's most violently divided societies.

An estimated 200,000 people have been killed in Burundi since 1993, when extremist elements of the Tutsi military killed Melchior Ndadaye, a Hutu and the first democratically elected president. Mass killing of Tutsi by Hutus followed, and the country immediately split into two deeply divided ethnic-political blocs. Hutu versus Tutsi. The media not only reflected this division but also actively promoted it. The media in Africa were already haunted by the role that Radio Milles Collines played in the Rwandan genocide as Western-educated Managing Director Ferdinand Nahimana broadcast programming calling for the extermination of Tutsis and moderate Hutus in 1994.

In 1995 Burundi Hutu and Tutsi media continued in this path under the banner of “free speech” to rival each other over calls to kill, or in packaging and advancing their mutually macabre ideologies. A Hutu radio from Zaire broadcast a steady stream of propaganda calling on the population to join an armed struggle against the government. The media generated mutual terror and distrust based on historical fears.

In this context Studio Ijambo was established in May 1995 by a Washington-based nonprofit organization called Search For Common Ground, with a grant from the United States Agency for International Development. One foreigner, myself, and a committed group

of five Burundian journalists, from both ethnic groups, set up Studio Ijambo as an alternative for reporters interested in trying to bring the values of good journalism into play. The premise of the project was that local journalists could make a significant contribution to opening and maintaining avenues of public discourse.

Search For Common Ground, understanding the constraints of the culture, provided specialized training to the local staff. This training combined the basic tenets of good reporting with additional techniques in negotiation and consensus building. These techniques offered a way for journalists to explore different ways of asking questions in an effort to get past fixed pos-

tures and to avoid inadvertently reinforcing negative stereotypes.

The challenges in achieving this goal were deeply rooted in the culture of the conflict itself. Burundi has a population of approximately 6,000,000 people distributed, as in Rwanda, in densely crowded agrarian hillside communities. Overcrowding, rigid family loyalty and regional and ethnic identification mean that journalists must counter incredible pressure to attain even the most basic degree of objectivity. In Burundi, being “independent” is equated with betrayal, and therefore the notion of independence itself is alien and dangerous.

Studio Ijambo evolved against a backdrop of worsening security and in-



Bryan Rich in the Ijambo sound studio with sound engineer Aline Ruzindana. Rich has been Senior International Producer for Search For Common Ground since 1992. A current Nieman Fellow, he has worked in Russia, Liberia, Bosnia and Macedonia and has just returned from two and a half years in Burundi.

creased violence. While I was recruiting and training journalists in May and June of 1995, the ethnic cleansing of Bujumbura, the capital, pushed 40,000 people into exile in Zaire and left hundreds dead. The slide into anarchy seemed to create a crucial point of commonality for the Hutu and Tutsi journalists we had recruited and seemed to be an important motivating factor in their desire to want to join forces as professionals.

The Studio Ijambo reporters began working in multiethnic teams to assure balance and credibility. The Balkanization of Bujumbura had made reporting physically impossible for a single journalist from either side. Tutsis feared for their lives in Hutu neighborhoods, and Hutus were equally terrified in Tutsi neighborhoods. By working together, reporters were able to provide the balance and accuracy that would come to define our programming.

In August of 1995 we convinced The National Radio of Burundi (RTNB) to provide two 45-minute air slots per week. The agreement was part of an attempt by the state media to quell criticism that it was overtly biased and to show that it was open to collaboration with outside producers. Under the terms, RTNB could refuse to broadcast a program but was not allowed to reedit programs that had been submitted. All programs would be signed with "Studio Ijambo" credit.

In establishing the editorial policy for the studio, I put forward the notion of a "public media" as a model where the primary source of information would be the population. All program topics should emerge out of the needs of the communities, both Hutu and Tutsi, and not the political needs of the ruling elite or the military. In essence this was an inversion of the model that had existed in Burundi since independence. More importantly, getting these programs aired on the state media was an important achievement. A small minority of journalists from the national radio indicated that our programming had pushed the editorial line enough so that they could try to provide more balanced programs.



Journalists Alexis Sindubije, Agnes Nindovero, and André Ndwiye in the sound studio.

Our goal was to position the studio as a neutral and independent voice and to be inclusive of all sides. Journalists balanced recorded testimonies from communities with roundtable discussions that included policymakers and key political players. The roundtables were highly structured to include at least three positions and were moderated by two Ijambo reporters. This meant long hours of editing but assured that there was enough material from all sides to produce inclusive and original radio. As such, each program served as a kind of intersection of views, reactions and ideas. This inclusive method of production inevitably challenged prevailing notions and stereotypes.

The Burundian journalists realized that despite the positive start in our collaboration with the national radio, there would be limitations, risks and complications down the line. Other journalists at the national radio sought to undermine the collaboration, accusing us of working for the rebel radio or somehow betraying the national interest by including opposition viewpoints within the context of our programming.

In November 1995, after five months and with roughly 20 45-minute feature programs behind us, Studio Ijambo was approached by a Swiss nonprofit orga-

nization. Foundation Hironnelle had established Radio Agatashya in Zaire in 1994. It was created as a component of emergency information strategy for the massive influx of refugees to Zaire from Rwanda following the genocide. It was the major source of news for refugees, policymakers, military and members of the international community. It was broadcast on FM throughout the region.

Radio Agatashya was one of the few common denominators in a region of insecurity, violence and instability, and it gave Studio Ijambo an additional and crucial outlet for our programming not just to Burundi but to the wider region. It also meant that if the national radio refused programming we had an alternative means for broadcasting it, thus diminishing our reliance on the state media and making the studio more viable as an independent voice.

By Christmas 1995 we had a steady stream of programming on both The National Radio of Burundi and Radio Agatashya, with an estimated combined regional listening audience of 6 million to 8 million people. Radio Agatashya provided a VHF radio transceiver as well as radio handsets and mobile units to us in Burundi. These were security measures that assured our ability to keep reporting in the event of a cut in

the telephone lines (which we experienced during the July 1996 coup d'état) or a complete breakdown in security, which seemed more than possible.

As a result of the additional production demands by Radio Agatashya in January 1996 we expanded our local Burundian staff to more than 20, with 10 full-time journalists, and additional support staff of 13 Burundians—technicians, translators and drivers. This expansion coincided with increased violence. The journalists were pushing me for more expanded editorial policies that would include direct coverage of political leadership as well as aggressive reporting on the war.

The expanded focus on hard news came as a consequence of radicalization of violence and a series of political assassinations of moderates. We dedicated a rotating team of journalists to news reporting and rotated the others on the feature and public affairs programming. It was presumed that by rotating voices and styles that it would somehow lessen the likelihood that any one individual be targeted or threatened.

We worked hard to develop techniques of verifying information in a culture of secrecy. We would cover areas in two teams simultaneously going to hospitals, markets, neighboring communities. We compared times of gunshots, when people passed, how many. If there were wounded, where were they? If there were dead, where were the bodies? We built contacts within the military, and we developed contacts among the civilian population so that stories could be corroborated with sufficient accuracy.

Studio Ijambo was soon breaking stories over the telephone line to Radio Agatashya in Zaire 250 miles away while the Burundian National Radio either didn't have the information or was trying to sit on it until they could put a spin on it. Amazingly, journalists from within the state media started to provide us with information that they themselves couldn't use but knew we would be able to corroborate and send to Radio Agatashya as part of our daily news package.



This map shows the original listening audience of Radio Agatashya. The total reach for Studio Ijambo programming when combined with BBC, VOA, South African Radio as well as Burundian national radio covered most of the region with public affairs programs, features and news reports.

As anywhere, providing information faster and in more depth translated into credibility and respect by listeners. Studio Ijambo journalists traveled throughout the country, and by extensive interviewing of local officials and community leaders we built important relationships and sources. We made clear the distinction between "on the record" and "off the record" and used information carefully knowing it could be traced back to our sources. We were actually introducing a methodology for independent reporting to Burundi during a war, which had never been tried even in times of peace.

Local officials and administrators respected that we did not manipulate or distort their views. We realized that there were nuances within communities, the military leadership and even the political leadership that had been obscured by the lack of good reporting. Furthermore, the more the journalists worked and interacted with the different sectors in visibly multiethnic teams, the more viable good fact-based reporting became.

The added exposure provided credibility but also a high visibility that meant increased risk to the staff. We consciously played down our role in order to avoid being perceived as a kind of opposition voice to one or both prevailing extremes. We used Tutsis to report on the activities of the primarily Tutsi army and used Hutus to report on the attacks by the Hutu rebels. This gave the reports credibility and authenticity since people knew the journalists by their voices.

The only protection we had was to be balanced and persistent and to work with studied transparency. We used phone lines presuming they were bugged; we called the military with any information we planned to use in order to give them the first option of responding. We constantly called the presidency asking for more information. This was a program of open engagement of the society in all its dimensions.

Routinely we changed plans in midair if we felt something was wrong and became selectively superstitious, sometimes refraining from certain reports or programs. In March of 1996, when traveling behind an International Red Cross convoy, we turned back because one of the Tutsi journalists saw at a checkpoint a military intelligence officer whom he had seen a month earlier in another part of the country. It wasn't so unusual but we still turned back.

By the time we reached the capital we learned that the convoy had been attacked and three ICRC delegates had been killed. Others suggested that we were the intended targets, though the ICRC delegate in Burundi ruled this out. The Burundians themselves had long ago accepted this danger as a necessary condition of their work. I wasn't sure, wondering what the value of the story was under these conditions.

The situation in Burundi continued to disintegrate, and it seemed that rebels were gaining ground. Some officers began to openly question the possibility of a victory, creating cleavages within the military. Thus gathering information and testimony became easier. People at all levels had given up hope.

A Hutu and a Tutsi Speak Up

BY ALEXIS SINDUHIJE

I talked with two Studio Ijambo journalists about their feelings.

"I feel ashamed to belong to the same ethnic group as those responsible for this massacre of innocent people," Adrien, a Hutu, said when he returned from reporting at Teza, where Hutu rebels had killed about 300 Tutsis, mostly women and children.

We had been gathering testimonies from witnesses of killings of Hutu civilians by the army, carried out in revenge for rebel killings of Tutsis. Coming back to Bujumbura we passed through Karuzi, where the army was involved in serious clashes with the rebels. As it was a Hutu zone, I felt afraid. Adrien told me not to worry, joking wryly that before they killed me they would kill him. I threw the same joke back at him as we passed through a Tutsi zone. I could only admire Adrien, new to journalism, for his courage, sincerity and commitment.

Abdoul, born a Muslim, used to be a paid propagandist for UPRONA, the predominantly Tutsi political party that has held power since independence. Although his mother is Hutu, Abdoul

considers himself Tutsi and became a fervent believer in Tutsi ideology, treating all Hutus as "genocidaires." "Hutus are bad," he used to say, "I don't trust them, they're killers."

Yet he had never witnessed any killing himself and seemed to be a prisoner of his party's propaganda. One day he went with a group of journalists to cover a story in the "Quartier Asiatique" in the capital. Some Tutsi youths had grabbed two Hutus, accusing them of being members of the rebel army, and "necklaced" them—put burning tires around their necks. "I confess that it took me a long time to change my reactions as a propagandist. But after working alongside journalists from different ethnic groups and being forced to cover stories, I learned that there were many things that had been hidden from me by my Tutsi brothers." ■

Alexis Sinduhije, a Tutsi, is a Shorenstein Fellow at The Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. These interviews were part of his research there.

Reuters and The Associated Press. This was an important shift since the presence of a credible team of local journalists in Burundi made the international coverage of the conflict more consistent and more accurate. Subscribers to wire service reports were getting a steady stream of information on Burundi even if it didn't always appear in major newspapers. Nelson Mandela, in refusing to advocate the lifting of sanctions on Burundi, cited "recent news reports of atrocities" as a principal reason. These reports came from Studio Ijambo.

Studio Ijambo continues to operate, providing wire service reports, public affairs programming to the national radio as well as news programming to international radios. In the 24 months of production prior to my leaving in June 1997, Studio Ijambo had produced an estimated 2,500 feature programs,

news reports and wire service reports including the coverage of over 40 massacres involving the national army or attacks by armed rebels. These reports are more than news because they exist as the sole documentation of historical events, many of which would have been conveniently displaced by political interests.

In telling this story I have obviously reduced the complexity of our work to its basic elements in hopes of illustrating how our methods of reporting evolved in a context such as Burundi. I haven't really portrayed the energy and courage of the Burundian journalists who at every point were forced to challenge themselves as journalists, stretching to redefine the concept of themselves in relation to the often tragic stories they had to tell. ■

Ambushes along the road became normal with one or two a day on main roads just outside Bujumbura. We continued to travel but bulletproof vests given by the United Nations became standard precaution when traveling.

In July 1996 international journalists from Nairobi and South Africa began to arrive in numbers after a large massacre of Tutsi civilians in Bugendana. The international correspondents worked closely with Ijambo reporters. Previously foreign reporters had written off local journalists as amateurs to be used only as translators or drivers. Three days later the military took power in a bloodless coup d'état, installing Major Pierre Buyoya as a "transitional" president.

Shortly afterwards, Radio Agatashya went off the air as Laurant Kabila marched north through Eastern Zaire to Kinshasa. The transmitters were destroyed by the local Zairian, Burundian and Rwandan staff to insure they were not used by the Banyumalenge rebels. Suddenly, as quickly as our voice had come it was gone, and we had lost our main outlet to the region. The press corps went to Zaire to cover the war. Studio Ijambo was left to make its way under a military regime that sought to "restore order." An internationally enforced embargo made gasoline immediately scarce. There was no electricity. We reduced our staff on a rotating basis.

Gradually we started providing reporting to the BBC in London, Deutsche Welle in Germany, the Voice of America. South African Radio began relying on our reporting for coverage of Burundi—usually in two languages (Kirundi and French) and sometimes three languages per day. Much of this reporting was broadcast back into the region on much-listened-to short wave in the national languages as well as in French. It was combinations of straight reports or mixed news packages. We continued with our collaboration at the national radio which was a major point of legitimacy for our efforts in the eyes of the new regime.

In November 1996 Studio Ijambo journalists began regularly filing daily dispatches to wire services such as AFP,

Taking It to the Streets

By JIM MEEK

I was mooing like a Holstein in the lobby of a Toronto hotel in 1984 when it struck me that there had to be a better way to cover a political campaign in my home and native land. Actually, we reporters following Prime Minister-in-waiting Brian Mulroney struck just the right note with our barnyard chorus of cow sounds.

Forget pack journalism, this was herd journalism.

Penned in the campaign plane with Mulroney and his royal entourage, Canada's national press corps was left with little choice but to follow the king to his carefully scripted coronation.

In every town from St. John's to Tofino, Mulroney, who won two elections for the Conservatives before stepping aside in 1993, gave a set speech referring to Canada as a "nation of small towns and big dreams."

The mumbled response from the media table—that Canada was really a "nation of small fries and Big Macs"—was an adolescent exercise in journalistic impotence. At the end of the campaign, I suggested to my editor at *The Chronicle-Herald* in Halifax that we abandon the campaign planes in the next election in favor of issue reporting. Less expensive, I argued, and more filling. (This was neither an heroic nor an original idea; most reporters who covered the '84 campaign felt the Mulroney team got the best of us.)

The *Chronicle-Herald*, along with a few other small publications, did scale back coverage of the leaders in 1988. And in the last decade, several larger newspaper and TV networks have started to pull their journalists off the campaign planes and put them in the streets. In this year's election campaign, even Canada's national wire service and some of the nation's bigger newspapers followed suit.

Terry Wills, the Ottawa bureau chief for *The Montreal Gazette*, said the Southam newspaper chain bought a single seat on the campaign planes this

year. Reporters filed to about 20 Southam client papers, most of them owned by the chain. (Traditionally, both *The Gazette* and *The Ottawa Citizen* had staffed the leaders' planes in national elections.)

"Southam took one seat on the planes and rolled reporters through it," Wills said in an interview. "The file went to all the papers in the chain. There is some question whether sticking on the planes is the best way to cover an election. You get sort of managed...and divorced from reality up there."

The *Gazette*, he said, diverted its coverage this year to ridings in Quebec. Wills called this a "better use of resources."

Gerry Arnold, The Canadian Press Bureau Chief in Ottawa, says the decision to deploy his best reporters on the ground saved money and resulted in better coverage of the issues in the weeks leading up to the June 2 vote.

"Frankly, I think you can make better use of political reporters if you don't trap them in a steel tube for 18 hours a day," Arnold said in an interview. "It freed up our specialists to look at issues like social spending and gun control—issues that really mattered to Canadians....I don't have a final figure, but our savings from covering the campaign this way were easily in six figures."

CP had to take a serious look at its spending in the campaign after barely surviving a financial crisis in 1996.

Staffing campaign planes is an expensive proposition in Canada. A seat on a leader's jet plane costs about \$15,000 (Canadian), and the Balkanization of Canadian politics has upped the ante.

A decade ago, Canadians voted for one of three traditional parties: the centrist Liberal party, which has formed the government since 1993 under Prime Minister Jean Chretien; the right-of-center Conservatives, the ruling party between 1984 and 1993; and the left-

leaning New Democratic Party.

In this decade, however, two new parties have emerged as major forces in Parliament: the separatist Bloc Quebecois, which formed the official Opposition in 1993, and the Western-based, right-wing Reform Party, which finished second to Chretien's Liberals this year.

Arnold put a reporter on the prime minister's plane for the entire campaign. "We took a lot of heat for this from the other parties," he said. "But we had to be with Chretien in case a big international story broke. If Princess Di or Mother Teresa had died during the campaign, the world wouldn't have been waiting for what [Reform party leader] Preston Manning had to say."

CP denies that it "risked anything" by refusing to staff all planes. "We covered every event on the ground," Arnold said, "using our bureau reporters."

Jim Travers, the Executive Managing Editor of *The Toronto Star*, called CP's decision to staff only the prime minister's plane "unfair" to the other leaders. Travers said in an interview that Canada's biggest newspaper will push CP to provide beginning-to-end coverage on the leaders' planes in the next election. (The *Star's* circulation



Jim Meek, columnist and editorial writer for The Halifax Chronicle-Herald, is a Nieman Fellow in the class of 1998. Meek won the National Journalism Award in 1988. He has a Masters degree in English literature from York University, 1977. He is married to Mawveen Meek and has two children.

ranges from 475,000 on weekdays to 715,000 on Saturdays.)

"We'll say to CP, this is the ideal thing for you to do."

The Star staffed all the planes in the '97 campaign, but might not do so again if it can get what Travers called "consistently high quality feeds" from CP in the next election. "What we want to do is provide more value to our customers than our competitors. Spending \$150,000 to travel all across the country to fixed events doesn't do that."

Later in the interview, Travers said it cost "at least \$150,000" to staff all five campaigns, "but it's not the cost, it's the value you get out of it. [In the next campaign] we will take our money and decide when to be on the planes, and we'll devote more time to grassroots coverage and issues. . . . You don't have your best people locked up on a plane captive to the political parties."

The *Globe and Mail*, the only Canadian paper distributed nationally, agonizes during every campaign about "whether we need to be on the buses," said Hugh Winsor, until recently *The Globe's* National Political Editor. (This fall, Winsor went "back to" column writing.)

In the end, "The *Globe* decided we had to be on the [leadership] campaigns because we are *The Globe*—the national newspaper. In fact, we dropped off the NDP and it was a mistake. We missed the fact that they were coming on." (The NDP made an historic breakthrough in Atlantic Canada this year, taking eight seats in a region where it had never held more than two.)

Winsor said *The Globe* recognized the limitations of leadership coverage. "The reporter knows all the jokes. You hear the same arguments and the same accusations every day. We recognize that who said what and where on the trail quickly loses its currency. But we could not afford not to be there."

The solution, "sometimes frustrating," for reporters: *The Globe* often packaged a single story from five reports from leadership campaigns. In addition, it published comprehensive stories on several issues.

Like CP, Canada's five major television networks launched a concerted

effort to downplay leadership politics in the '97 campaign. For the first time in history, Canada's networks pooled resources and personnel on the campaign jets. Each network placed one crew (two camera operators, one audio technician, one editor and one producer) on a single campaign.

"If a network wanted to place a reporter on any campaign, he worked with the crew assigned to it," said Christopher Waddell, CBC-TV's bureau chief in Ottawa.

Waddell said the decision to put a crew on one campaign jet, instead of five, saved the network \$300,000 in payments to the political parties.

"That's a lot of money to give political parties to run their campaigns," Waddell said in an interview. "Our coverage was not captive to what the leaders were saying. Not only that, but we had to actually think of what we put on the broadcast each night. When you have a reporter and a crew on every plane, that tends to dictate what you put on the air."

The CBC diverted its resources from the leaders' campaigns to coverage of town hall meetings and comprehensive issues reporting.

It also moved away from the "eight-second sound bite" by staging daily 15-minute news conferences every day with a Member of Parliament from each of the five parties. These events, broadcast on CBC's all-news network, "tried to answer the criticism that we never cover what politicians actually say."

Waddell said the election coverage strategy may change in the next campaign. The focus might be diverted back to the leadership tours, for instance, in a close race. (Opinion polling made it clear Chretien's Liberals would be returned to power this year.)

Klaus Pohle, a journalism professor at Carleton University, doesn't share Waddell's and Arnold's enthusiasm for the coverage of the campaign this year.

"I agree that there must be a better way to cover a campaign than to report the same rubber chicken speeches given every day by the leaders," said Pohle, who also works part-time as a copy editor for *Southam News*. "But the coverage this time was hijacked by non-issues like national unity. The polls

showed clearly that people cared more about jobs."

Arnold denied this, saying CP "packaged material on jobs and the economy when the campaign began. In fact, we covered the issue a lot in the campaign. But we can't control what the papers use, though. And everyone knows a campaign has a dynamic of its own. I'm sorry, but when [NDP Leader] Alexa McDonough started talking about the "road to civil war," national unity was the story. The media can't control that." (McDonough accused Reform party MPs of making inflammatory statements about Quebec separatism during the campaign.)

Pohle was also critical of CP's decision to staff only the prime minister's plane throughout the campaign. "What it presupposed is that the PM will always have the most important things to say. That isn't always the case. It minimized the voices of other leaders and the decision smacked of elitism."

Dan O'Connor, chief of staff to McDonough during the campaign, said the party's policy on certain issues like taxation were poorly understood by most reporters.

"And that had something to do with the fact that there were fewer people covering the campaign day in and day out," O'Connor said in an interview.

Be that as it may, election coverage in Canada isn't likely to return to the bad old days. In the first federal campaign I covered, in 1979, news organizations paid early and dearly for coveted seats on campaign planes.

That media feeding frenzy probably paved the way for the kind of slick, photo-op-per-day campaign Mulroney ran so successfully in 1984, my year of dangerously imitating Holsteins.

By the way, my editor called my bluff in the '88 and '93 campaigns by assigning me to the small eastern province of New Brunswick. In 1993, I reported on the family ties between a Liberal candidate and the province's most powerful industrial group, and the improbable geography of a gerrymandered riding that was more than 200 miles long and only a few miles wide at its narrowest point. It was lonely work for a former herd reporter, but someone had to do it. ■

BOOKS

Does Objectivity Apply to Science News?

The Heat is On

The High Stakes Battle over Earth's Threatened Climate

Ross Gelbspan

Addison-Wesley. 237 Pages. \$23.

BY CHRIS BOWMAN

When historians look back at the late 20th Century American debate over global climate change, they may wonder about the journalists of our time.

Where was the press when the scientific inquiries into the very fate of the planet and humankind got stifled, polarized and mischievously muddled by the media spinners of big oil and coal? Why did the media give indiscriminate coverage to the scientific naysayers who received funding from industries with the most to lose in the debate? Why didn't reporters see it as their public duty to expose hidden agendas and financial collusion as they do in covering political campaigns?

Ross Gelbspan saves the news profession some face with his remarkably well-timed and influential book, "The Heat is On." He provides the most clarifying report yet on the politics of global climate change.

The book examines the largely unexplored world of public relations at its most powerful—the fossil fuel industry. Scientific opinion is virtually unanimous that global warming has been occurring over the last century. And a growing body of data and analysis indicates that human activity is at least partly to blame. Yet, to the extent the U.S. public thinks about global warming at all, probably the majority perceives it as neither certain nor imminent nor related to stuff coming out of

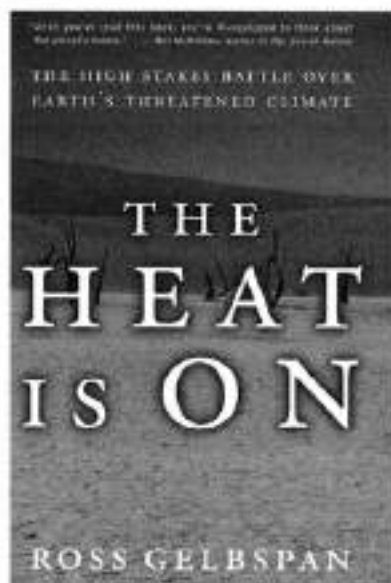
their tailpipes—let alone this year's massive forest fires in Indonesia and Brazil.

Gelbspan leaves no doubt that the industry's invisible and well-funded public opinion machine industry—a "disinformation campaign as ferocious as any in history"—has had a big hand in shaping and maintaining this view. The book was ammunition to the Clinton administration's campaign this fall to bring home the threat and immediacy of climate change. The president himself said he read it in preparation for the Kyoto, Japan conference in December, where the United States was expected to lead the world in reducing the threat by curbing the use of fossil fuels.

Gelbspan is less persuasive in his conclusion that human-generated pollution—from slash-and-burn forest clearing, power plants and vehicles—is the main culprit in climate change. He thoroughly rips apart the industry-backed scientists who attribute the crazy weather patterns all to natural climate fluctuations. But he omits any mention of the growing number of reputable scientists who argue that variations in the sun's activity—its sunspots and flares—may rival human pollution as a factor in climate change.

Gelbspan, a former reporter with *The Washington Post*, *Philadelphia Inquirer* and *Boston Globe*, starts from the largely undisputed premise that

Chris Bowman, a Nieman Fellow 1995, is a senior reporter at The Sacramento Bee.



global warming is fact, not theory. Air temperatures at the surface of the Earth have risen an average of 1 degree Fahrenheit in the last 150 years. A substantial retreat in mountain glaciers worldwide and a rise in sea levels of 4 to 10 centimeters have accompanied this temperature rise. During this period, carbon dioxide emissions have increased an estimated 25 percent and methane levels have risen 150 percent. These and other gases function like windows of a greenhouse in trapping heat close to the ground.

The high-stakes debate is whether emissions from human activities are significantly to blame for the planetary warming surrounding the greenhouse effect—the heating of the atmosphere, mainly as a result of the buildup of carbon dioxide and other gases released by the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation.

To his journalistic credit, Gelbspan interviewed leading scientists from both camps: the highly diverse body of 2,000 or more experts who endorsed the con-

clusion that "there is a discernible human influence on global climate," and the small but highly vocal band of scientists who attribute the wild weather all to nature.

To his undoing, the author commits the same journalistic crime he has pinned on the media in its coverage of the greenhouse debate. He fails to paint the true complexity of the controversy by limiting his examination to these two sides. Conspicuously absent is the solar research that received prominent display recently in *The New York Times*. There's no mention of the evidence linking temperature fluctuations to changes in the sun's windstorms, magnetism and overall radiance, developed by physicists and atmospheric scientists from Harvard, John Hopkins University and the Imperial College in London, among other research institutions.

As the title suggests, Gelbspan embraces mainstream scientists' view that the predicted global warming is happening right now in the form of erratic and extreme weather.

Consider 1995-96. A heat wave in Chicago killed 500 people. Record rainfalls drenched western portions of Australia, while the eastern city of Sydney had its first rainless August in history. Northern Mexico experienced the coldest winter in 25 years. Total snowfall in Boston was 140 inches, the highest on record. Drought-punished New Mexico saw its worst fire season ever in 1996. Heavy rains in the Midwest produced the worst flooding in decades. Malaria continued its spread in the mountains of Rwanda, where it was previously unseen. And unusual rain patterns in Costa Rica and Brazil triggered outbreaks of dengue fever.

To leading climate scientists, the congregation of so many strange weather events worldwide is an early symptom of a rise in the average global temperature. It also signals worse disruptions to come if the pollution goes unabated. Asked by President Clinton recently how close to catastrophe the planet might be, Stanford University's Stephen Schneider replied, "The canary in the cage is starting to quiver."

Gelbspan adopts the majority scien-

tific view that the United States must cut these emissions by at least 60 percent in the next decade in order to stabilize atmospheric conditions at relatively comfortable levels. He advocates a crash program—on the order of the Manhattan Project that created the atomic bomb—to replace coal- and oil-fired engines with renewable, climate-friendly energy systems like hydrogen gas or fuel cells. The American public must see that it is in their best economic and security interests to help finance these energy technologies in developing countries, much like the United States-financed Marshall Plan that helped rebuild Europe after World War II.

These are neither new nor naive ideas. Vice President Gore called for a "Global Marshall Plan" in his 1992 book, "Earth in the Balance." William Ruckelshaus, the first head of the EPA under President Nixon and now CEO of the giant Browning-Ferris Industries waste hauling company, and Henry Kendall of MIT, recipient of the 1990 Nobel Prize in physics, inspired Gelbspan's case for a national security emergency. They contend that democracy and individual freedoms would be the first casualties of climate instability as it intensifies and disrupts food supplies, water sources and human health.

Gelbspan breaks new ground by doing full-blown examinations of the greenhouse dissenters, illuminating not only their understated industry connections but also the holes in their arguments and their unscientific manner of dismissing any possibility that they could be wrong.

For example, he reports that Patrick J. Michaels of the University of Virginia received more than \$165,000 in funding in the early 1990's from American and German coal interests and the Cyprus Minerals Co., then the largest backer of the anti-environmentalist Wise Use movement. The Western Fuels Association also funds Michaels' bi-weekly "World Climate Report," which is mailed to environmental journalists throughout the United States. Similarly, another prominent greenhouse skeptic,

Arizona State University geographer Robert Balling, Jr., has never voluntarily disclosed nearly \$300,000 from coal and oil interests in research funding, Gelbspan reports.

Given their funding sources and the near unanimous rejection of their views by fellow scientists, why do these critics carry such weight with the press? Should the minority view be given equal standing with the consensus that has emerged in the scientific community about the dangers of carbon emissions?

Gelbspan provides an answer that should give journalists great pause about the way they typically cover environmental issues:

"The professional canon of journalistic fairness requires reporters who write about a controversy to present competing points of view. But this canon causes problems when it is applied to issues of science. It seems to demand that journalists present competing points of view on a scientific question as though they had equal scientific weight, when actually they do not. The problem escalates because most journalists are not qualified to make judgments about issues such as standing, expertise and integrity within the scientific community. As a result, ideology disguised as science can contaminate the debate."

The message for news managers here is not to make experts of reporters, but to have reporters know their beats well enough to ask expert questions—and not get snowed by the answers.

For reporters, this book is another reminder that scientists' statements and qualifications should not go unchallenged. Where do they receive funding? Are they engaged in original research? Do they distinguish scientific observations from their personal beliefs? In the case of global climate issues especially, the questions need to be asked not only for "the man on the street" today but also for his children and all future generations. ■

Bittersweet Tales Of The Philadelphia Bulletin

Nearly Everybody Read It

Edited by Peter Binzen

Camino Books. 192 Pages. \$22.00.

BY DOROTHY BROWN

“Consider me lucky” writes John F. Morrison, who came to The Philadelphia Bulletin in 1959, a time when “there was no such thing as 24-hour radio news, and TV news was still a bawling infant with little impact on the lives of people or their knowledge of the world.”

In the era of the Internet and Cable News Network, it may be hard to imagine the heyday of newspapers following World War II—at least the heyday of The Philadelphia Bulletin when daily circulation reached a high of 774,000 in 1947, before folding in 1982 after circulation had fallen below 420,000.

But the memories bubble up easily for the 15 former reporters and editors who contribute pieces to “Nearly Everybody Read It: Snapshots of the Philadelphia Bulletin,” edited by Peter Binzen, author and long-time Bulletin reporter and City Editor who (like myself and other ex-Bulletinos) now works at the once rival Philadelphia Inquirer.

Newspapers may have controlled the news, but it was war nonetheless—a dogged fight every day, edition after edition, to bust the competition. And leading the eight editions were brilliant, driven men (yes, virtually all were men), who wrote expressively but expressed their feelings hardly at all, loved the daily rush of deadlines and a good whisky or bet at the track—who strived to cover the news accurately, fairly and fast, even covering the news of the black community, though hardly a black was on the staff.

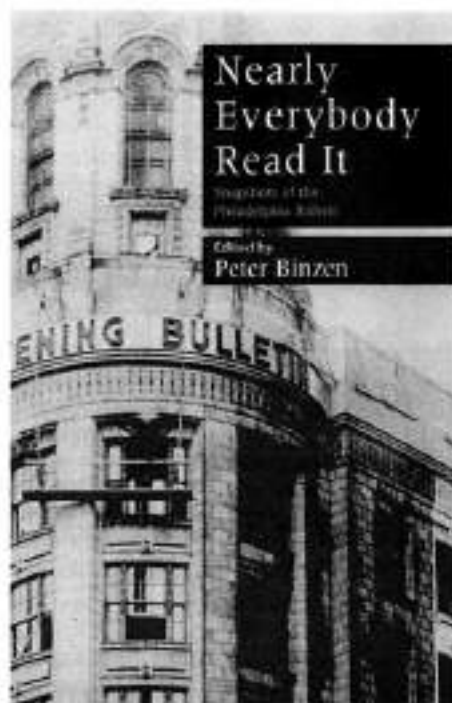
They were people like Earl Selby, named City Editor in 1959, who was “furiously dedicated to getting the news and prepared to smash anybody who got in his way,” according to Morrison,

now at The Philadelphia Daily News. Then there was Walter Lister, named Managing Editor in 1947 and described in an essay by James Smart as “a shrewd, tough, fair boss whose steely blue-eyed stare demanded the best.”

As the title implies, the essays are snapshots, taken by different people through different lenses over different eras—all in love with newspapers in general and The Bulletin in particular; all, like Morrison, considering themselves lucky. Some use their space a bit narrowly, to talk about their own reporting exploits and adventures; others to eulogize editors whose voices still echo in their ears and on their careers. And trained skeptics that they are, they also point to The Bulletin’s flaws—its slow and grudging acceptance of women and minorities; its prudish sensibilities; its rare but troubling ethical lapses; its internal bickering; its resistance to change, a trait which, in particular, hastened its demise, and its dedication to the local, covering, as Binzen says, “every nickel holdup, every grassfire, every meeting of the city’s zoning board.”

“To its critics, The Bulletin seemed stodgy, dull and overly cautious, and they probably had a point...[but] its readers found it to be dependable, prudent, accurate, fair and comprehensive,” Binzen writes. “They trusted it to cover the news without pandering to low tastes or base desires. That’s why nearly everybody read it for so long.” It was the dominant Philadelphia paper for 76 years and also the largest evening newspaper in the country for most of that time.

When I was hired as a food writer in 1971, I quickly found that the features



department was a women’s ghetto—not only largely segregated, but also barred from the rampant decades-old city-side practice of padding expense accounts, a particularly disheartening practice, given that women were paid less than men to start with.

But it was nothing compared to the barriers Rose de Wolf had to vault in her respected career at Philadelphia newspapers. In the early 1960’s, when she applied for a job at The Philadelphia Daily News, an editor told her “that he wasn’t hiring a woman at that time because The Daily News ‘already had one.’” She also recalls the story of Lynn Dalton, whose request to work the police beat in the 70’s was initially turned down by the Deputy City Editor because he “wouldn’t want his daughter down there.”

But by the time of The Bulletin’s demise in 1982, The Inquirer had a feminist columnist, a much-improved pay scale, and a woman editor, Marci Shatzman, on the city desk, albeit only at night.

For the longest time, too, at The Bulletin, there was no need to hire blacks. There already was one general assignment reporter, Orrin C. Evans. That began changing in 1967 when

Claude Lewis was hired, eventually becoming the first black columnist for a major daily in Philadelphia, a position he relinquished only last October '97, when he gave up his regular column in *The Inquirer* because of complications of diabetes.

But even Lewis, with his years at *Newsweek*, *The New York Post*, and three years as a television reporter, found he had to do more than prove himself at *The Bulletin*. "The discrimination," he writes, "was carried off with such finesse and subtlety that only the most sensitive whites recognized it for what it was."

Beyond the tales and tattling, some larger truths about news gathering emerge from these very personal pages.

For one, the public has always devoured news with the same craving for instant information that they have today. In the current handwringing over the speed of the electronic media, it's easy to forget how fast newspapers once were, competing brutally with each other and remaking their pages all day long. James Smart (who started out as a "copyboy" at *The Bulletin*, gluing together the eight-page "books" with carbons sandwiched between, on which reporters wrote their "takes") remembers the enormous deadline pressure to get out seven daily editions. A reporter who made a 9:20 a.m. deadline could find his story on the street by 10 a.m.

The Bulletin even had homing pigeons during the World War II era to wing photo negatives back from the race track or Phillies' games.

Two journalistic skills that were crucial to the blistering pace have been largely lost today: the ability to wing a lead over the phone and follow that up with a clear, pyramid-style recitation of the facts; and the fine art of rewrite. In an era when newspapers are trying to exploit the speed of the Internet, perhaps such skills should be resurrected.

I'd made it to the city desk by the late 70's, shortly before the afternoon paper transformed itself into a morning paper, signaling the end of the era of the great rewrite men. I remember the shaky moment I first said, "give me rewrite," or something to that effect. I

was at a meeting of the Philadelphia School Board, trying to meet a mid-morning edition deadline. From a pay phone, I dictated the lead I'd written in my notebook to Bob Bridgeo but had to make it up from there, feeling tongue-tied and disorganized. When I got back to the paper, I humbly went over to Bridgeo and apologized for my fumbling performance. Gently, the pro said to the kid, "Don't worry, with practice you'll be as good as the rest of us."

Adrian Lee, who eventually became a columnist at *The Bulletin*, describes the rewriters sitting "like oarsmen in a racing shell," spitting tobacco into a spittoon, and writing "pure poetry."

And here is another truth that radiates from these carefully crafted essays by aged pros: good writing is a struggle, both personal and institutional.

Today's reporters, fighting the ever-shrinking news hole, will cheer this recollection by Robert Williams (in my day the Entertainment Editor, but hired on in 1930 as a copy boy). He remembers management hiring an "expert" to improve writing at the paper. The "expert," Williams recalls, kept demanding shorter and shorter leads. Finally, copy chief Don Brook had enough. "After a motorist died in a downtown auto collision, he rewrote the story's lengthy lead to make it read, 'A man was killed in an accident today.' Only a few details followed. That was the last we heard both of shorter leads and of the writing 'expert.'"

Lister, recalls Smart, was among those who "wincing at cliché journalism," suggesting to young writers that sentences rarely needed to start with "meanwhile," "however," "of course," or "nevertheless." (James M. Perry, recently retired from *The Wall Street Journal*, has a less fond memory of Lister. He refused to publish Perry's scoop that Gov. Nelson Rockefeller planned to marry Happy Fitler Murphy, from Philadelphia's Main Line, as soon as she could end her marriage.)

Good writing was also fostered by another *Bulletin* character, Stanley G. Thompson, City Editor during the 1950's who, when asked by a reporter how much he should write, replied:

"Keep on writing as long as it's interesting."

And then there was the "unflappable" Harry G. Proctor, as Williams remembers him, who covered the April 3, 1936 evening execution of Bruno Richard Hauptmann in Trenton. In his inimitable way, he stopped for a lobster dinner on the way back to the paper, put on his eyeshades, pulled a bottle of whiskey from his drawer and began typing:

"Trenton, April 4—Bruno Richard Hauptmann has kept, at long last, his rendezvous with death. At 8:43 o'clock last night, in the death house of the New Jersey State Prison, there shot through his stalwart frame the first of three shattering stabs of man-made lightning.

"At 8:47, the incisive voice of Dr. Howard Weisler, the prison physician, sounded through the awful hush that sat upon the close-packed ranks of witnesses:

"This man is dead."

"Thus an obscure German carpenter paid his debt to society for one of the most infamous crimes of all time, the kidnapping and murder of Charles A. Lindbergh Jr., and thus was written 'curtain' to at least one act of the tragic Lindbergh drama...."

Decades later and far less dramatically, another curtain fell. With circulation of *The Bulletin* falling behind *The Inquirer* and reeling from an exodus of advertisers, the paper published for the last time on January 28, 1982.

For those who loved *The Bulletin* and for those who continue to love newspapers, this book is both a tribute to the passion of journalism and the intensity—and idiosyncrasies—of those who practiced this craft. ■

Dorothy Brown has been at The Inquirer since The Bulletin's close in 1982. She is currently Science and Education Editor. Brown received this year's Knight Ridder's Excellence in Journalism award.

Anthony Lukas's Last Book

Big Trouble: A Murder in a Small Western Town Sets off a Struggle for the Soul of America

J. Anthony Lukas

Simon & Schuster. 875 pages. \$32.50.

By JANET WILSON

J. Anthony Lukas's "Big Trouble" is a dense, awesome epic of the American West. Ken Burns and Robert Caro have nothing on Tony Lukas when it comes to excavating and dusting off the real-life dramas of our barely lost, overly glossed past.

The main stage story is the assassination on a wintry day in 1905 of the ex-Governor of Idaho, Frank Steunenberg, and the subsequent murder trials of the barely begun century of three leading union figures, William "Big Bill" Haywood, Charles Moyer, and George Pettibone. Stretched between the dynamite tripwire on the governor's garden gate, which blew off half his body, and the acquittals of the men of the Western Federation of Miners, is a minutely threaded account of lucrative, bloody mining wars in Idaho's bleak northwestern Couer D'Alene region, gross violations of civil liberties in the name of law enforcement, and fantastic boom and bust real estate developments and sports teams that all prefigure the economic and political gulf between very rich and poor today.

Lukas plays by the rules in reporting and writing his epic. There are no tell-all anonymous narrators or stilted "recreations" of pillow talk between heads of state and their spouses. There is merely layer upon layer of meticulous, riveting fact, carrying the reader "across a broad swath of turn-of-the-century America."

The central plot is laid out against a rich tapestry—from Teddy Roosevelt's politics and Ethel Barrymore's road shows to the development of "yellow," muckraking and "sob sister" journalism. Legends that lurk at the edge of

20th Century American collective consciousness—the Pinkerton detective agency, Clarence Darrow, African-American infantrymen, Samuel Gompers, the "Wobblies," William Howard Taft and many others stud the pages of this book.

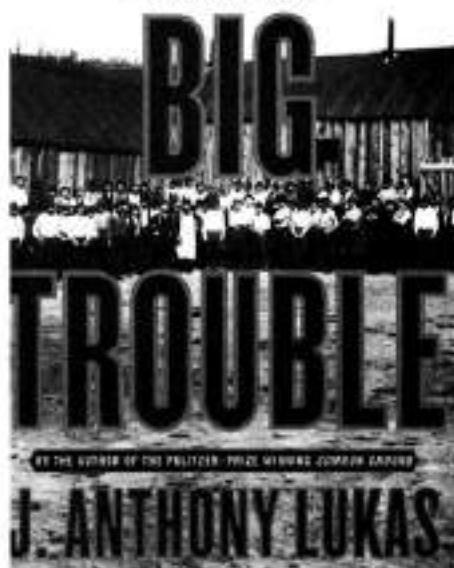
"Big Trouble" is a magnificent but occasionally irritating masterpiece, with some chapters beautifully capturing entire subsets of American society in polished miniature narrative, and other passages as hard and dry as barren Idaho land. When the side chapters stretch on too long, the suspense of what is constructed as murder mystery and Western in one frays thin.

But at its best, it is a great read. The chapter entitled "Viper, Copperhead and Rattler," for the code names detective James McParland gave the three labor leaders, is terrific. Haywood, Moyer, and Pettibone are literally kidnapped by the government of Idaho and the state's silver mine owners so they can be tried promptly with no need for messy extradition proceedings. Haywood is dragged naked from a bed he is sharing with his wife's sister in that age's version of a no-tell motel. The others are less dramatically but still blatantly hustled onto a special train loaned to the state government by railroad magnates.

All three are spirited at breakneck speed across several thousand miles and two states as regular trains are pushed off onto side tracks. The "lawmen" kidnapers know that any decent lawyer or sheriff's deputy who can man-

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A MURDER IN A SMALL WESTERN TOWN
SETS OFF A STRUGGLE FOR THE
SOUL OF AMERICA



age to board the train could derail the entire heist with a one-page order from a judge. The fact that the kidnapers are not Jesse and Frank James but government men, and their booty is not cold currency but men, adds a touch of horror. That horror increases when the U.S. Supreme Court eventually rules that the kidnapping may have been illegal, but since the men are already in Idaho and are wanted for murder there, it doesn't matter how they arrived.

Lukas's research is so exhaustive, and his detail so rich, that you not only hear the fearsome noise of the train's engine, but also choke on the thick smoke of the cigars thoughtfully procured for the captors and their prisoners as they sit in a Pullman car hurtling across time.

It took years to create this work, and it was well worth the time. Every reader will have favorite pieces—I relished the baseball tale of Walter Johnson, who fueled a small town's dreams of luring new settlers with a bang-up minor league team, then became a genuine big star.

Modern-day parallels are never forced on the reader, but anyone who suffered through the O.J. Simpson trial will recognize the "expert witness" char-

acter of Herr Doktor Hugo Munsterberg, the "father of modern psychology," who popularized the lie detector. Also amusing is President Roosevelt's sanctimonious outrage when a New York businessman from whom he has extorted a \$100,000 campaign contribution pesters the White House to make good on Roosevelt's promise of an ambassadorship.

The two characters that are best drawn by Lukas, and are the true opponents in the class war that is the book's subtext, are James McParland and Clarence Darrow. McParland is a leading but aging Pinkerton private investigator who has made a career of befriending union men, then sending them to the gallows. He spins a confession out of Harry Orchard, the henchman who set the bomb at ex-Governor Steunenberg's house, and artfully persuades him to implicate Haywood and the others.

Lukas's research is so thorough that he tracks down a job application essay a young McParland wrote, in which he describes in halting, nearly illiterate English the Molly McGuires, Ancient Order of Hibernians and other Gaelic secret societies he will be asked to infiltrate.

McParland was a hungry Irish immigrant who arguably should have had every reason to be a union man. Instead, he was responsible for the conviction and hanging deaths of at least nine, and possibly as many as two dozen miners, union organizers and violent agitators with whom he lived, worked and drank for years, then informed on and sent to the gallows.

On the other side is rumpiled, brilliant Clarence Darrow, a small-town lawyer with moxie who rocketed to prominence when he relocated to Chicago, politely deserted his wife and child to take up residence in communal apartments reminiscent of 1960's free love arrangements, and matured into positions as city attorney, then counsel for the union-baiting, labor-hating railroads.

But Darrow was a self-described "poet in the wreck of a lawyer's body" and philosopher who agonized over his chosen profession. Rather than

growing rich comfortably, he chose to defend fiery labor leader Eugene Debs and lesser known men facing capital punishment. Then he accepted what he may have thought would be the greatest case of his life—defending "Big Bill" Haywood (evolution was a subject for his literary salons at that point).

That Darrow, the well-read intellectual, should champion the common working man, and that McParland, the penniless immigrant who began his life in drudgery, should send his countrymen to the gallows, is perfectly, perversely American. In the end, Darrow wins, with an 11-hour oration in 95 degree heat in a county courtroom that is a clarion call for justice and also a neat evasion of the facts of Orchard's confession:

"Out on our broad prairies where men toil with their hands...through our mills and factories, and down deep under the earth...the poor, the weak and the suffering of the world are stretching out their helpless hands to this jury in mute appeal."

But while Darrow wins the jury's and our hearts, neither side has a lock on underhandedness. Lukas explores the very real possibility that Darrow may have ensured that Orchard's accomplice, who could have been a damaging corroborating witness, was paid off. In an epilogue, Lukas leaves dangling an untidy but intriguing bit of evidence that Haywood, Pettibone and Moyer may have indeed masterminded the murder.

The book weighs a hefty 875 pages, including the meticulous notes, voluminous index, photo credits and the one paragraph about the author on the end page, which serves as tribute and sad epitaph to one of the finest reporters the country has known.

All true reporters, from eager young scribblers at small-town weeklies to the finest national prize winners, yearn to follow a big story as far as they can push it, in every direction it can take them. "Big Trouble" is a shining example of a Big Story brought to print.

But the act of reporting is exhausting, with frustrating blind alleys, restless sleep peopled with sources and nagging questions that won't go away,

and overarching themes that appear magically as late-night truths, then dissipate in daylight. When the reporting is done, the even more daunting task of crafting it into a readable work remains. When the whole process is over, exhaustion and self-doubts loom.

If the size of the doubts is in direct proportion to the brilliance of the work, then they must have been enormous for the author of "Big Trouble." Yet the only clue of despair one glimpses in this disciplined saga is when Lukas discusses Darrow facing his deepest fears.

"No one can find life tolerable without dope," Darrow wrote, and Lukas quotes, "The Catholics are right, the Christian Scientists are right, the Methodists are right, the drunkards are right, the dope fiends of all kinds are right, but for some of us the dope must be good and strong and shot into the arm."

In Darrow's terminology, writes Lukas, "dope meant any substance that allowed one to get through the night. Everyone had his own bogeyman that could only be banished by dope. For Darrow, evidently, it was death."

And also for Lukas, a principled, gifted journalist who documented so flawlessly the complex truths of our country's rich, fissured soul. ■

Correction

Because of an error in transcribing, a passage in the review of "Faubus," Roy Reed's biography of the Arkansas governor, incorrectly referred to Ed Dunaway and Henry Woods as workers in the "McCarthy" organization. The passage should have said the "McMath" organization, referring to former Governor Sid McMath, who had aided Faubus in his rise to power.

We Can Talk but Can We Listen About Race?

America in Black and White: One Nation, Indivisible

Stephan Thernstrom & Abigail Thernstrom
Simon & Schuster, 545 Pages, \$32.50.

BY DORI J. MAYNARD

Before Rodney King. Before O. J. Simpson. Before Proposition 209 forbade the state of California from practicing affirmative action. Before all the events of recent years that have made people of different races wary of broaching certain topics in mixed company, Robert Sherman sat in his Brooklyn apartment and told the actress and playwright Anna Deavere Smith why we are unable to talk across the racial divide.

"I think you know the Eskimos have 70 words for snow?" she quotes him as saying in "Fires in The Mirror." "We probably have 70 different kinds of bias, prejudice, racism and discrimination, but it's not in our mind-set to be clear about it."

At first it would seem that Stephan Thernstrom and Abigail Thernstrom, authors of "America in Black and White," would agree.

"Today we argue without a common language," they write. "We talk endlessly, obsessively about the issue [of race], but across linguistic barricades."

By the end of their 500-plus page quarrel with affirmative action, it may seem as if we not only talk across a linguistic divide about our racial divide, but we may also be coming up against generational divides, geographic divides and perhaps even class divides.

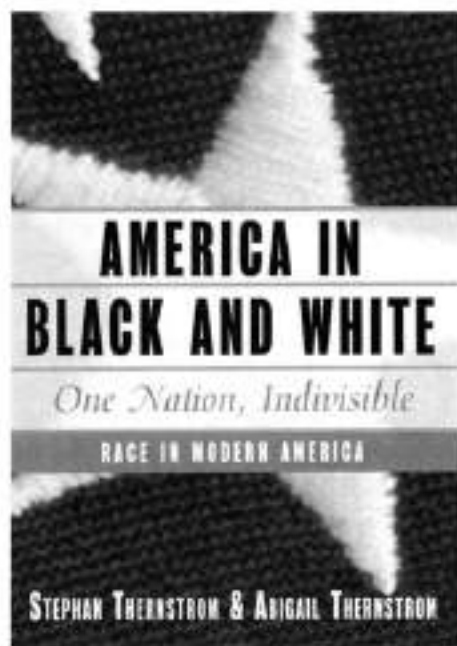
The title itself signals that the authors and I come from a different time and place. They write that the 1960's were their formative years. Possibly that was a time when we really could talk about this nation in terms of black and white. Today, in our multi-ethnic society, I think the closest we can come is to talking about whether we can talk about the nation in such stark terms, and I don't think we can. Perhaps it is my age.

I went to college when, despite a sense of growing unease, colleges and universities still believed part of their mission was to offer a diverse student body. Or perhaps it is my geography. In northern California we talk of "people of color" not just because it is the phrase of the moment, but because our colleagues are often black, white, Hispanic and Asian. And yes, white is a color, too. To talk in terms of black and white is to leave out so many people you may end up with no one talking. That sort of defeats the point of being a journalist. And journalists can help the nation find some common language that will help bridge the various divides.

But I think the Thernstroms point out another, perhaps even more serious, problem on which we need to focus. Not only do we as a nation not speak the same language, we simply don't know how to listen to each other. Near the end of the book, after the tables, the statistics and the anecdotes, the authors quote the journalist and historian Roger Wilkins as saying he benefited from affirmative action. The Thernstroms are skeptical:

"It's hard to believe Wilkins is really convinced he would have been languishing at the bottom of a bureaucratic heap had he not been rescued by preferential policies. His tale certainly does not square with the larger picture, as we understand it."

Possibly not, but it may square with the picture as Wilkins understands it. After finishing this book, it's hard not to wonder what would have happened if the Thernstroms, before writing a word, had called Wilkins and asked him whether he really believed affirmative action was responsible for his success and why. Then they would listen to



him. They wouldn't necessarily agree with him. But they would listen and begin to understand why Wilkins would think himself the beneficiary of affirmative action. Then they would call Lari Guinier and ask her why she says that for many African Americans slavery and reconstruction are not ancient history. Is it, as the Thernstroms suggest, because it is easier to hold on to past wrongs than to confront current conditions in the African American community? Or is it because she believes it? Again, they would listen, not with the goal of agreeing, but with the hope of understanding. And then they would write their book.

For what will we gain if we learn a common language and still refuse to listen to each other?

"So I think that we have sort of lousy language on the subject and that is a reflection of our unwillingness to deal with it honestly and to sort it out. I think we have very, very bad language," Sherman tells Smith. After reading "America in Black and White," I'm not sure our hearing is any better. Perhaps for many of the same reasons. ■

Dori J. Maynard is Special Projects Director at the Maynard Institute for Journalism Education in Oakland, California, and a 1993 Nieman Fellow.

Even Scud Stud Can't Sell Foreign News

Risk and Redemption

Surviving the Network News Wars

Arthur Kent

Interstellar Inc. 308 Pages. \$26.

BY DEBORAH AMOS

On Wednesday, March 16, 1994, NBC correspondent Arthur Kent won his case against his former employers. In a joint news release, NBC executives not only apologized for trying to bury Kent, but also praised him with a long, glowing list of accomplishments. NBC television network executives also agreed to pay him buckets of money, the exact amount undisclosed. In addition, they offered Kent his old job at NBC news. What a day for a journalist who had employed his keen reportorial skills to prove a major American television network had done him wrong.

Eighteen months earlier, the NBC brass ordered their network press machine to paint Kent a coward after he'd refused an assignment to Bosnia. At the time, his bosses contended that this was the reason they had dismissed Arthur Kent, who had been a media event himself during the Gulf War. Kent had captured the public's attention, and the tabloids dubbed him "The Scud Stud" for his live broadcasts from Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.

It turned out that events that led to his dismissal were much more complicated than simply refusing an assignment to the next hot war zone. In his book, "Risk and Redemption, Surviving the Network News Wars," Kent details those events through a series of depositions taken in preparation for the trial. But along the way he exposes a very important fact of network news, at NBC, at least. In preparing for the case, Kent and his lawyers showed the link between the NBC news department and the NBC Entertainment division as the news magazine "Dateline" was developed. If the unappealing credo of local news is: "If it bleeds, it leads," then Kent

defines the equivalent values for network news magazines: "Program only the stories you can sell. Promotion policy becomes editorial policy. Entertainment in Burbank steers News in New York." The importance of this book is showing that the "news" is missing from network news magazines.

There was a time when news divisions were notorious budget drains for network operations. The so-called "foreign news" was the most expensive of all. But the nightly news programs were the flagship of the television business, the identity of the network. Corporate control of American television networks changed all that. "News has to pay it's way, and audience ratings is the name of the game.

Kent shows us one of the turning points in news budgeting when Michael Gartner, then the head of the news division, arrived in Berlin to survey NBC's coverage of the momentous events that symbolized the end of the Cold War for two generations of viewers. Gartner had made the decision to "go big" on the Berlin story.

"But Michael was clearly staggered by the sheer size of the operation. There were at least 50 of us when you took drivers and translators into the count. Gartner seemed overwhelmed by that. Later, one of our senior business affairs people confirmed to me in the hallway that this had literally been a million-dollar story. And despite our unquestioned access in nailing the story on the head, we had not managed, as things turned out, to cause a huge swing in the

ratings. The reality of life at NBC under General Electric was dawning on us. We could beat the world on a story, but if it cost money, it would probably cost some of us our jobs down the line."

And that fact of network life eventually cost Arthur Kent his job. Not because NBC was spending too much money on Kent, but because his face was promotable but his stories were not. The new news magazine needed the "fame" of the "Scud Stud" to appeal to audiences, but his reporting skills abroad produced the kind of stories with no happy endings. In the end, foreign news is simply not promotable. The contradiction was too much. It is clear that Kent decided to not only get mad, but also to get even, in this detailed account of his reporting career and his battle with NBC.

In the chapters that recount his foreign assignments, Kent reminds us that his network career spanned a remarkable era for foreign correspondents. The events in the twilight of the Cold War were some of the most exciting, dangerous and momentous assignments in a generation. I covered many of the same stories for National Public Radio, and there may never be a time like that again. The world was in upheaval from Afghanistan, through the dissolution of the Soviet Empire, to Tiananmen Square to Bosnia. Arthur Kent was there and then some.

He breezes through these momentous events of reporting and short changes the reader somewhat, saving up the best parts of the book for the battle with NBC. He also doesn't tell us why the television audience tunes in for these news magazines and turns off when a foreign story is broadcast. In some ways, the complexities of the world are no longer interesting to a vast audience. There is probably another book in that fact.

It is clear that Kent writes his book after he knows that he's won his case and, in some way, his writing throughout the battle seems sanctimonious. It is a small nit to pick in a book that details what might be called the "inside baseball" of television networks. It is worth knowing because it is a guide to what is on the "tube" these days and why it is there. ■

Deborah Amos is a correspondent for ABC's World News Tonight. She also serves as a foreign correspondent for National Public Radio.

From Farm to Battlefields, the GI's Reporter

Ernie Pyle's War: America's Eyewitness to World War II

James Tobin

The Free Press. 312 pages. \$25.

BY JACK FOISIE

One would think that everything worthwhile had been written about Ernie Pyle, who captivated American readers through World War II by writing about the frontline soldier, hardly ever about generals and strategy.

Now comes the newest book about the scrawny, middle-aged aw-shucks guy who was a worrywart about his health and who had a premonition he would die while with combat troops. He did, on a small Pacific isle from a Japanese machine-gun bullet. He was killed three weeks before V-E Day in Europe, where he had spent more than two years with GI's in action before being persuaded by the Navy to "see our war, too."

Among what is new about James Tobin's book is delightful detail about Pyle's early life on his parent's farm and his total disinterest in farm life. Then his happenstance entry into journalism, after being turned down by the Army in World War I.

Pyle eventually became a Scripps-Howard columnist, traveling the then 48 states with his young wife, Jerry, in a Model T Ford, writing about ordinary people with unordinary happenings in their lives. It was often titillating stuff; editors found it a convenient space-filler.

Along came World War II. Pyle pleaded with his syndicators to spring him from the domestic beat he now found boring. He wanted to see the conflict in Europe and was finally allowed to go to embattled England, where he chose to concentrate on the "little people" in London suffering under the Nazi bombing blitz.

His accounts of British courage and defiance to the threat of a cross-channel invasion caused his columns to be widely reprinted in England.

When America entered the war and

U.S. troops joined British forces seeking to oust the Germans from North Africa, Pyle went along. He refined his column format: description shorn of flowery language, a worm's-eye view of combat and a modified honesty about its horrors. (The home-front reader with loved ones doing the fighting can only take so much gore, he reasoned.)

His admiration for the foot slogger was unbounded. "A GI's danger comes in spurts, discomfort is perpetual," he wrote.

Unlike many columnists, Pyle seldom injected himself into his writings. He never mentioned his own close calls with death, although he had a number of them. His belief that he would not survive the war apparently was a streak of fatalism.

A rare instance when Pyle did get into the story occurred one night as he watched a greatly admired company commander, Captain Henry Waskow, killed in action, come down a mountainous slope slung over the back of a mule. GI's whispered good-byes and one tenderly stroked his hand as they unloaded the body. Most everyone rates this account as Pyle's most moving example of the combat comradeship he witnessed so often.

For several months, when the Italian front bogged down during the winter of 1943-44, Pyle lived with other correspondents in a suite of rooms in a Naples hilltop apartment building. The Army hospital was across the street, and Pyle was a frequent visitor with a real or imagined illness. He would often return with a couple of off-duty nurses for drinks and dinner. The ladies were welcome company for the then all-male press corps in Naples.

On such occasions, after a generous amount of refreshment, Pyle would en-

ertain. His best act was to appear in his long johns and do a twinkle-toe jig while singing "she's just a personal friend of mineeeee!" Droll, and then gentlemanly, he would say good night to all.

Pyle left Italy to be on hand for the Normandy invasion. Not being a hard news man like wire service reporters, he was content to be assigned a second-day landing. Even so, what with censorship holding up copy of all early eyewitness accounts, Pyle's description of the devastation and uncollected bodies of the invasion-day dead was the first graphic account of how costly the Omaha Beach landings had been.

After reaching Paris, Pyle thought it was time to go home. He wanted to be with Jerry (they had divorced and then remarried by proxy). He wanted to keep nonsense out of a pending movie about himself, "The Story of GI Joe." Then he would go to the Pacific as the Navy wanted.

As author Tobin relates, Pyle discovered "a different type of war" in the boundless ocean after his slogging with GI's in Europe. In between intense but short periods of action, there was an endless sameness to life aboard ships and at remote island bases. He felt uncomfortable about the more rigid Navy caste system, in which black GI's could only be messmen.

Pyle was astonished when he found that in his initial columns Navy censors had deleted all the names of the sailors he had written about. In a rare moment of fury for the usually complacent Pyle, he demanded an end to the Navy policy that only the names of high-ranking officers could appear in print, and threatened to go back ashore where he could write about Marine grunts and Army GI's. The Navy quickly gave in.

Even so, he was soon back reporting combat on Okinawa and its satellite islands. And that is where Pyle's life ended. He is buried beside GI's in the Punchbowl Cemetery in Hawaii. ■

Jack Foisie, when a Stars and Stripes combat correspondent, came to know Pyle in Sicily and Italy. Foisie is a 1947 Nieman Fellow.

Mail Bomber and the New South

Blind Vengeance: The Roy Moody Mail Bomb Murders

Ray Jenkins

University of Georgia Press. 338 Pages. \$29.95.

No matter where they go Southerners can't get the South out of them. Roy Reed of *The New York Times* gave up Washington and London to return to the South. After wandering the national political circuit for years Curtis Wilkie of *The Boston Globe* moved to New Orleans and bought a house with a balcony. Ray Jenkins, the Editorial Page Editor of the old Baltimore *Evening Sun* and syndicated columnist, is no exception, as this excerpt from a 1976 op-ed column in *The New York Times* attests:

Unless a man has picked cotton all day in August; has sat in an outhouse in 20 degrees in January and passed this time of necessity by reading last year's Sears Roebuck catalogue; has eaten a possum and liked it; has castrated a live pig with a dull knife and has wrung a chicken's neck with his own hands; has learned at least a few chords on a fiddle and a guitar; has tried to lure a sharecropper's daughter into the woods for mischievous purposes; has watched a man who succeeded in doing just that have his sins washed away in the Blood of the Lamb in a baptism in a muddy creek; has been kicked by a mean milch cow and kicked her back; has drunk busthead likker knowing full well it might kill him; has wished the next day it had killed him; has watched a neighbor's house burn down; has drawn a knife on an adversary in fear and anger; has half-soled his only pair of shoes with a tire-repair kit; has gone into a deep dark well to get out a dead chicken that had fallen in; has waited beside a dusty road in the midday heat, hoping the R.F.D. postman would bring some long-coveted item ordered from the catalogue; has been in close quarters with a snake; has, in thirsty desperation, drunk water that worked alive with mosquito larvae called wiggletails; has eaten sardines out of a can with a stick; has killed a cat just for the hell of it; has felt like a nigger was

mistreated but was afraid to say so; has stepped in the droppings of a chicken and not really cared; has been cheated by someone he worked hard for; has gone to bed at sundown because he could no longer endure the crushing isolation; has ridden a bareback mule three miles to visit a purty girl who waited in a clean, flimsy cotton dress—unless he has done these things, he cannot understand what it was like in my South.

In "Blind Vengeance" Jenkins has gone back to the Deep South to reconstruct the 1989 mail bombings that killed a federal appeals court judge in Alabama and a civil rights attorney in Georgia. He doesn't stop there. He shows how the crime epitomized much of the New South—the bomber, Walter Leroy Moody Jr., who blamed society for his failures; the judge, Robert Smith Vance of Birmingham, who realized political change was necessary, and the civil rights attorney, Robert Robinson of Savannah, who, despite his black skin, had become respected in the segregated society.

Jenkins, a 1965 Nieman Fellow, now retired but still living in Baltimore, demonstrates his reportorial skill, as well as his knowledge of the South, as he reconstructs the lives of the three principals. Wisely, he also uses a clear, straight declarative style in telling the story of this crime.

However, like so many others these days, this book could have been aided by better editing. For example, Representative J. Parnell Thomas was from New Jersey, not Kentucky, and the prosecutor called the first witness after the opening, not the closing, statements.

But these are minor flaws. "Blind Vengeance" is a good book and should provide valuable background to reporters assigned to the upcoming Unabomber trial. ■—*rbp*

About Journalism

America's Court: The Supreme Court and the People. Barrett McGurn. Fulcrum Publishing. 208 Pages. \$27.95.

Black Journalists: The NABJ Story, new edition. Wayne Dawkins. August Press. 278 Pages. \$14.

Farrakhan Factor, The: African American Writers on Leadership, Nationhood and Minister Louis Farrakhan. Amy Alexander, Editor. Grove Press. 320 Pages. \$24.

Fighting for the First Amendment: Stanton of CBS vs. Congress and the Nixon White House. Corydon B. Dunham. Praeger. 230 Pages. \$24.95.

Free Speech in Its Forgotten Years. David M. Rabban. Cambridge University Press. 404 Pages. \$34.95.

Gender Violence and the Press: The St. Kizito Story. H. Leslie Steeves. Ohio University Press. 176 Pages. \$17.95.

Historical Dictionary of War Journalism. Mitchel P. Roth. Greenwood Press. 496 Pages. \$85.

Moral Reasoning for Journalists: Cases and Commentary. Steven R. Knowlton. Praeger Publishers. 240 Pages. \$59.95 hc, \$19.95 pb.

Press Freedom and Development: A Research Guide and Selected Bibliography. Clemente E. Asante, compiler. Greenwood Press. 232 Pages. \$75.

Reporting on Risks: The Practice and Ethics of Health and Safety Communication. Jim Willis with Albert Adelowo Okunade. Praeger. 240 Pages. \$65 hc, \$24.95 pb.

Writing News for Television. Victoria McCullough Carroll. Iowa State University Press. 304 Pages. \$34.95. ■

Misconceptions About Single Mothers

On Our Own: Unmarried Motherhood in America

Melissa Ludtke

Random House. 465 Pages. \$25.95.

BY DALE MEZZACAPPA

Melissa Ludtke begins "On Our Own" with an intensely, almost painfully personal story. She's nearly 40, and she wants a child. "Divorced, childless and on my own," she writes with brutal honesty in the prologue of this evocative and readable book, "I wanted more than anything to become a mother." So she takes the reader into her own heart and into the kitchen of her family's home as her parents—worriedly, lovingly and in the end steadfastly—come to support her decision to have a child without a husband.

A former correspondent for *Time* and *Sports Illustrated* (who first drew attention by suing Major League Baseball so women could get equal access to locker rooms), Ludtke departs quite deliberately from the traditional journalistic mode of detached observer to tell of her own experiences and those of other unmarried mothers (Ludtke adopted a little girl from China at age 46). In compiling this invaluable contribution to our understanding of the phenomenon of single motherhood, Ludtke conducts an illuminating tour of the profound social and moral changes that have occurred over the past generation, as played out in the lives of more than 30 women, including herself. She alternates her intimate and revealing accounts of their daily lives with both expert commentary and trenchant social history.

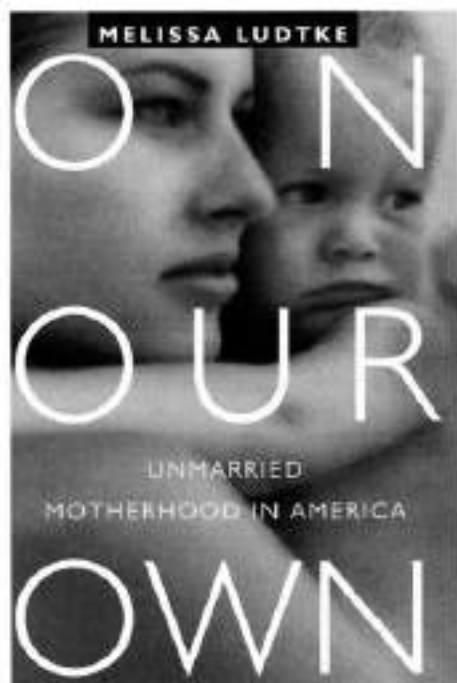
In Ludtke's lifetime, the face of the American family has been transformed. She describes her own childhood, picture perfect in suburban Massachusetts, Dad at work, Mom at home, she and her siblings free to roam their idyllic small town. "In the tiny world that my childhood eyes could see, I knew that a family was what we had," she writes. But it's a world that, for better or worse,

is past. Most children growing up today, in single-parent households or not, will never know the feeling of coming home from school to find Mom at home, waiting, with a snack already on the table. Families with Mom and Dad and children are but one-fourth of today's households, and even in those families, both parents usually hold down jobs.

In 1950, just four percent of children were born to unmarried women, and most of those were adopted and raised by couples. Today, an astonishing one-third of all births are out of wedlock. If the trend continues unabated—there is some evidence that it is beginning to slow down—the figure will be one-half within the next decade. The implications of this are mind-boggling. She quotes Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan: "The species has no experience with this." And these figures do not even account for divorce. In the mid-90's, Ludtke reports, slightly more than half the children in single-family homes were born to never-married, as opposed to divorced, mothers.

She focuses on two ends of the spectrum: half her subjects are teenagers and, by and large, poor; half are older women who want children but have given up on doing so within stable, full-time relationships. Her storytelling is affecting and her research richly detailed. Most of the older women are single mothers by choice, or, at least, their pregnancy was planned. But choice is a relative term. She points out that more teens aren't getting pregnant

Dale Mezzacappa, Nieman Fellow 1991, has been a reporter at The Philadelphia Inquirer since 1979 and has covered education since 1986. She is the single mother of Matthew, 14 years old.



than 40 years ago—the opposite is true—but fewer of them are getting married. For most young teenagers who have children out of wedlock, contraception or the lack of it is not the issue at all. She quotes Marion Wright Edelman of the Children's Defense Fund: "The best contraception is a real future."

Take the 17-year-old she calls Myicka, already the mother of a two-year-old and pregnant again. Her own mother didn't marry her father. A stepfather abused her. She was raised in poverty, saw no purpose to school. When Ludtke asks her if she thought of marrying the father of her children—a young man with no job, prospects or high-school diploma, who nevertheless wants to get married—she describes Myicka's reaction: "Her brown eyes bulge with incredulity that I'd even ask her such a ridiculous question." She's exactly the kind of young woman for whom children offer the only chance at accomplishing something.

While many of the adolescent mothers are repeating patterns of their own lives, the older women, like Ludtke herself, are usually departing from the more traditional lifestyles in which they grew up. The support of Ludtke's own

parents for her ultimate decision almost turns into a deterrent: any child she would raise by herself would never have that kind of priceless support system. It's a risky business to get that personal in attempting to deal with such a massive and complex topic, but Ludtke does so successfully. Imprinting her own story indelibly in the reader's mind makes what follows all the more memorable.

Her accounts of the women's emotional lives and thoughts are unsparring, often unsettling. Her pictures, by and large, of the men in their lives are

Panama Withdraws Expulsion Order

Gustavo Gorriti, a 1986 Nieman Fellow who is Associate Editor of Panama's *La Prensa*, was ordered out of Panama by August 29, after his one-year work permit expired.

Gorriti's deportation order came after *La Prensa* published his series alleging that the Cali drug cartel was laundering money through a Panamanian bank and that a Colombian trafficker contributed \$51,000 to the election campaign of Panamanian President Ernesto Pérez Balladares.

The Panamanian government denied that Gorriti, a Peruvian, was asked to leave because of the articles, but said that labor laws prohibit foreigners from holding senior positions in the media.

Instead of leaving the country, Gorriti moved into the office of *La Prensa*, where he stayed day and night. In September, the newspaper's lawyers held off the deportation with an injunction bid to Panama's Supreme Court.

The impasse was resolved in mid-October when Labor Minister Mitchell Doens extended Gorriti's work permit. The *Miami Herald* reported that Panamanian officials said that they had learned of a plot by Peruvian intelligence agents to assassinate Gorriti, and that Panama may have ordered him out of the country so the killing would happen elsewhere.

Gorriti, in a *Washington Post* story, said "They didn't want their lawns sprinkled with my brains." ■

troubling.

Men do not come off well in this book. Their voices are limited, although not absent, and when they do speak, it's their selfishness and inability to cope with responsibility that leave the most indelible impression.

Single motherhood is a defining social reality of our time, one that requires rethinking everything from public policy to expectations in our personal relationships to our codes of morality. Yet, Ludtke argues, the media perpetuates misconceptions about this and the political debate is trivial. Policymakers are more concerned about condemning "immoral" behavior and seeking to avoid the expense of tax dollars for welfare than they are about the reasons why so many poor young women have babies, or the impact on the children involved. She reaches harsh judgments: "Instead of designing itself in ways that would welcome and embrace its youngest members," she writes, "American society sings lullabies about its concern for children without actually investing enough resources in family-focused supports."

Nor does the media get off the hook. She notes that the media have much more interest in the older, better-educated, unmarried mother than in the less educated, poorer and younger women who, by far, have much higher rates of bearing children out of wedlock. Witness the frenzy around Vice President Dan Quayle's denunciation of Murphy Brown a few years back, which, in some ways, accounted for the most concentrated attention the subject has received from the mainstream media.

Apropos to her subject, she takes an approach that is more involved—more female, if you will, intensely focusing not just on the relationships the women have, but on her relationship to her subjects—and it is an approach that the mainstream press could use more of. Her book is a lesson that objectivity and detachment don't have to be the same thing, and that intensely personal storytelling coupled with solid research can illuminate a topic in ways that more traditional journalism may not. ■

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A Reader's View

Freelancing Abroad

BY MURRAY SEEGER

So, you want to be a foreign correspondent. Fat chance. With publishers, editors and the big broadcasters refocusing on domestic news, the opportunities for getting a job as a real, trench-coated overseas reporter are limited.

"All right, I will be a freelance. I will find a spot that the big boys and girls are ignoring and I will sell enough print and air pieces to pay for rent and food and I will show them what they are missing."

Those who have been there and have done that sigh over the novice's naiveté. No, freelancing is a synonym for starving, especially in foreign climes.

Still, there are bold men and women who take their life savings and invest in their own chances of making it overseas with no certain employment. Maybe they know the story of Art Buchwald, who just walked into The International Herald Tribune and offered to work without pay or, more recently, William Drozdiak, who went to Europe to play basketball and evolved into a first-class correspondent for The Washington Post.

Perhaps they have heard of reporters who got to Central America before editors discovered big, U.S.-related stories were gestating there. There have been other lucky freelancers who happened to be in place when Rwanda, Zaire and Bosnia became page one news.

Unfortunately, these stories are the rarities. More common are the tales of journalists who set out to launch overseas careers with little preparation but lots of optimism and hubris. Brussels regularly attracts hopefuls as a likely place to scrape out a living: capital of Europe, home of the European Union, NATO and many American companies.

Still, many organizations avoid stationing people in Brussels because it is too close to Paris, Bonn and London; too expensive, and not productive enough of stories for American audiences to warrant a full-time staffer.

On any given day, newcomers walk into press bars in Brussels or Geneva, another popular target for freelancers, and meet reporters who have already staked out the territory. The newcomers get chilly welcomes, even after paying for drinks, for they are seen as rivals for the few paying opportunities that develop in those towns.

These pitfalls and the attractions of freelancing overseas are described in a handy little paperback, "The World on A String: How to Become a Freelance Foreign Correspondent" (\$12.95), published by Henry Holt & Co. Al Goodman and

John Pollack used their own experiences in Madrid and tales from many other freelancers to illustrate their story.

"Those journalists willing to head abroad on their own can and do find great opportunities," the authors assert. "Steady work as a freelance foreign correspondent is challenging, rewarding and available right now. With a little imagination and careful planning, an escape from Plainville could be just around the corner."

Pollack escaped from Plainville, Conn., to set up shop in Madrid, where Goodman was already working a handful of strings. They tell of others who followed their dreams overseas and managed to survive when they were in the right place when an important story developed.

The authors give good advice on the kind of equipment a modern reporter needs overseas and on the various details that must be taken care of such as bank accounts. But they dodge some of the issues that can change an optimistic, hopeful correspondent into an angry, frustrated, unemployed reporter.

They recommend that freelancers "be discreet" when asking about visas and work permits for foreign countries. Inquire by telephone, they say, and do not give your name. "This way, if you must apply for a tourist visa because that's the only practical means of getting into the country, nobody's the wiser about your intentions."

But there are many countries (Singapore, Indonesia, Nigeria) that are very sticky about such rules and take it seriously when journalists—particularly freelancers—bend or break them. Many of us have done that just as some have purchased visas from corrupt clerks. But this is a dangerous game.

Pollack and Goodman exaggerate the rewards implicit in overseas reporting and minimize the risks. Too many Americans believe that the First Amendment will protect them any place in the world. They need to know there are many governments that do not want reporters wandering around their turf and that "freelance journalist" is often a disguise for a charlatan.

Sure, take your chances, but read further to better understand the risks you will face overseas. And hold on to your return air ticket. ■

Murray Seeger, a 1962 Nieman Fellow, teaches at George Washington University.

LETTERS

The Faith of Journalists: Agnosticism and Power

WASHINGTON

"The Faith of Journalists" was absolutely engrossing. I came away from this superb issue (Nieman Reports, Fall 1997) admiring the courage and self-searching honesty of the contributors, starting—but hardly ending—with Steve Benson, Chris Hedges and Michael White.

Despite the diversity of these believers and non-believers, their journalistic professionalism has, it seems to me, a common denominator: agnosticism toward power and all who wield it. In saying this, I should own up to being agnostic myself, in my private as well as in my professional life.

Agnosticism was my conscious choice. I made it long ago, the result, at least in part, of the influence of my father. As a boy of 11, in what is now Lithuania, he told me, he came home from Hebrew school one day and put a question to his father: Is it really true that Jonah lived in a whale? My grandfather's response was to beat him up. On the spot, Dad told me, he became an atheist; and despite his love of the Jewish heritage, which, to his sorrow, he believed could not but wither and die if severed from the nourishment of its religious roots, he remained one until his last breath. Atheism demanded its own form of faith, as I saw it. It was not for me. Just as I could not reconcile the idea of a kind, loving and merciful God with the world as it is, so could I not dismiss the notion of some kind of supernatural creative force. Agnosticism, however unsatisfying, I finally told Dad, suited me, as a reporter and as a person, just fine.

Eugene Patterson and Philip Gailey recalled how most of organized religion in the South shamefully shunned the civil rights movement. A related point needs to be made: to this day, organized religion—the religious right, in particular—maintains a rarely broken silence about corporate miscon-

duct and crime that kills, injures, sickens and robs huge numbers of people, and that ravages the environment. This is a point I've been making at every opportunity for at least 35 years, as illustrated by the following excerpt from a letter of mine to the Columbia Journalism Review, published in 1993:

"Do electronic evangelists ever address the moral and religious implications for the c.e.o. who kills people—perhaps including the preacher's own followers—by knowingly marketing unsafe products? Or who intentionally sells such products to foreigners but not to Americans? Or who deliberately exposes his employees to avoidable health and safety hazards? I'd be pleased if any CJR reader could cite evidence that Pat Robertson or other television preachers discuss corporate crime and misconduct, but I confess I'd also be surprised to hear that they do. Consider what I was told in 1985 by Rice University sociologist Dr. William C. Martin, a former minister of the Churches of Christ, for my book "At Any Cost: Corporate Greed, Women, and the Dalkon Shield" (the italicized paragraph was omitted from my letter to CJR):

"I have listened to radio and television evangelists for over twenty years. I may have missed something, but I can't recall a single instance of their having addressed the issue of sin or crime or malfeasance committed by otherwise moral people as a consequence of their occupational roles.

"Traditionally, of course, they have concentrated on the well-known catalogue of personal sin—alcohol and drug abuse, illicit sexual behavior, gambling and so forth. In recent years, they have railed at the shortcomings of institutions, but they seem to think these problems can be cured simply by staffing the institutions in question with born-again Christians.

"For whatever reasons, they show little evidence of being aware of the structural factors—for example, the need to show a profit, the desire to keep or improve one's position in the institution...or the distance between one's decisions and those who are harmed by them—that cause otherwise moral man or woman to act in immoral ways."

It's four years later. I have yet to hear the first dissenting word.

Morton Mintz

The writer, a 1964 Nieman Fellow, is a retired correspondent of The Washington Post.

Shocking for Frankness

SÃO PAULO

Some of the pieces [on the Faith of Journalists] were shocking for their frankness—particularly the item by Alan J. Borsuk. I was stunned when he wrote that he simply walked away from the year's most important story so that he could observe the Sabbath. What if every Christian newsman decided to stop working on Sundays?

First Borsuk admits that he was not an observant Jew when he joined the paper, turning wholly Orthodox only later. Suddenly his faith became more important than his obligation to his newspaper, an attitude I can't condone. Then he makes a point of stressing that his religion does not interfere in his work, reporting and writing. But I doubt it. It may not hinder his tasks consciously but I bet it does unconsciously. I always felt that extremism in anything is pernicious.

Other authors in this issue also stress that they remain objective in spite of their faith or lack of it. But after reading

the entire issue, and being aware of human nature, I think it is virtually impossible for anyone to be wholly objective, no matter how hard one tries.

The other article that had my eyes glued to the text was "Good-bye to God," by Steve Benson. A bit radical and extreme—yet Benson also nudged himself fully and I admired the candid way in which he stated his message.

Philip Querido

The writer is a long-time American journalist living in São Paulo, Brazil.

Good-bye to God

KNOXVILLE

As an American and a student of journalism, I fully support Steve Benson's right to express himself. Five years ago, I would have written this letter with words of rage and condemnation for him, but when I read this article, I felt, more than anything, a profound sadness.

This article was in stark contrast to the generally positive tone in your Fall volume. But I'm glad you included it. As a regularly attending Baptist, I hear whispers of scandal and controversy within my congregation and denomination regularly. But I have come to the conclusion that churchgoers frequently are not morally superior to anyone else. However, for the most part, they recognize their frailties and their need for communal support and redemption.

My religious background is most nearly 180 degrees from Benson's. I was raised as an only child in a moral, but not church-going family. I did not start regularly attending church until the 8th grade. Later, I chose to attend a religiously affiliated university for my undergraduate education. Most of my religious enculturation was of my own choosing.

I believe that when people come to faith of their own choosing, they frequently have a more positive attitude about it than when they are immersed into a culture in which they had no choice but to participate.

His blanket implication of organized religion as being the "principal enemy of moral progress in the world," is a rather harsh and vitriolic condemnation based more, I believe, on his negative experiences within the Mormon church, than what is the reality.

I am not trying to make a pitch to Benson to join a congregation, but I write in the hope that he will have a more open mind about the positive traits of organized religion and the potential good it can do for communities and individuals.

Edward A. Sanchez

The writer, a recent graduate of Baylor University, is a candidate, M.S. Communications, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

McVeigh Trial Press Not Pack of 'Wolves'

DENVER

As a person who has spent two years getting sunburned, bug-bitten, muddy, and lost on dirt roads that are not on the map, trying to find out more about the people behind the Oklahoma City bombing, I was surprised to read in the article by Dick J. Reavis ["Understanding Timothy McVeigh," Fall 1997] that "The sovereign, solitary and sometimes idiosyncratic reporter has been replaced by the pack," and that "originality, doggedness and passion are passé." I guess my editors at The New York Times didn't get the word. Neither did other newspaper, magazine, television, and radio reporters whose tracks I have crossed along the way.

I have gone alone, on many an occasion, to speak with people who, if you believe what they write and say, would just as soon shoot me, so I was amazed that Mr. Reavis felt it necessary to enter one of the most heavily guarded buildings in this nation, the Denver Federal courthouse, in a van with covered windows. The men and women out front were not "wolves," visual or otherwise. Some of us were waiting in line to get in. Others were photographers and electronic media

crews confined in all kinds of weather to a fenced area designated by the court. Any of us would have talked with Mr. Reavis, and I do not think it would have taken a rocket scientist to figure out that we were not the power lunch bunch.

There are trends in journalism that worry me, and Mr. Reavis hit on some of them. But the shoot-from-the-hip style he criticized is just what he has used, blasting us without bothering to speak to us about what we've experienced or what we're doing.

As Mr. Reavis observed about the siege at Waco, people and events are not always as they appear. The Oklahoma City bombing trial was not the O. J. Simpson trial.

And the story leading up to the McVeigh trial was one of terrible pain that some of the Oklahoma journalists, of which I am not one, have shared for more than two years. One of the many Oklahoma journalists I have come to respect and admire, a devoted parent who is haunted by the suffering in this case but will not walk away from it, has children who now describe themselves as bombing victims. Mr. Reavis should not attack us without cause.

He should direct his remarks to the people who have it coming.

Jo Thomas

Jo Thomas, a New York Times correspondent, is a 1971 Nieman Fellow.

Big-time Journalism

KALISPELL, MONTANA

Timothy McVeigh's state of mind has been appraised by dozens of writers and broadcasters. All concluded that McVeigh was a primitive and inquiry into what led him to the destruction of the main federal building in Oklahoma City was a fool's errand.

Now along comes the fall edition of Nieman Reports and in it Dick Reavis takes a peek into the mind of McVeigh. While he is peeking, he looks also into the minds that run American journalism.

It turns out that something was going on in the mind of the dynamiter and

nothing much in the minds of the lords of American journalism.

Quite a lot is going on in the mind of Mr. Reavis. Too much, I must gather, to fit into the workings of big-time journalism. He was Senior Editor of the *Texas Monthly*, a journal quite often distinguished by its flash in the brainpan and by its honest and ground-level reporting. But the *Texas Monthly* was not distinguished by its number of subscribers, or by its count of ad pages or by the enthusiasm with which it was greeted by the men who run things. Mr. Reavis was a Nieman Fellow, class of 1990....

A bit cranky about work in the journalism of the Nineties, he says: "Though my decision to snub and upbraid former peers was made in Denver [where he had gone as a witness in the McVeigh trial], my attitude antedated the trial. It had taken root in the years surrounding the reign of Carlos Salinas, when I wrote extensively, and against the grain, about Mexico. Salinas, the press told us again and again, was Mexico's savior.... Editors and investors authored [the doctrine] in offices far from the scene. The press got Mexico wrong—that is discreetly conceded today—and yet heads did not roll in the newsrooms....

"My Mexico suspicions were reinforced by what I learned about Waco...."

What I assumed—and Mr. Reavis corroborates—was that the ultimate judgment on McVeigh's guilt was made before the regiments of journalists were dispatched to his trial. What passes for crises in American journalism today occurs when a journalist bucks the line and tells the truth as he uncovers it. A rare event indeed. Or when—almost as rarely—when civilians fail to take their directions. That is what happened in the O. J. Simpson criminal trial. A jury—though over and over bombarded with guidance in the air waves and the printed newsprint—listened to the evidence and acquitted.

My mind goes back to the fall of Communism in Russia. That was another when the American press spoke as one. What it said, "Communism is a failure. Believe in it and you end up on the rocks."

Clarifying Whittaker Chambers

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

I appreciated your book review of the biography of Whittaker Chambers, "The Man Behind the Alger Hiss Case: Who Was He?"....

I thought your review was cogent and clarifying.

I never knew Whittaker Chambers, but did not doubt his account, differing in this respect from most of my Harvard College faculty colleagues. I assumed that it had taken courage for Whittaker Chambers to change sides, in terms of the danger of attack from active Communists.

Which is true. But it would have been more helpful to have the larger truth. Which is, "Regimented thinking is wrong. Believe any ism—including Russian Communism or American Capitalism—to the extent that doubts about it don't enter your mind, and you'll wreck."....

In Washington, there are grumblings that Representative Gephardt, the leading Democrat in the House, was betraying something when he opposed the President, who was really three-fifths Republican.

Across the West, bellyaching grew louder against the Indians—why should they enjoy advantages not available to others? The answer is they were here first, they owned the entire continent, and gave it over to the Europeans as a result of brute force and fraud.

The answer to those apoplectic about the demands of the Negroes will include that they came in chains, in accommodations not first class and that—once they got here—were held and then in a sort of semi-slavery. They did an immense portion of the nation's work, including an even more outsized portion of its dirtiest work. Then they, better late than never, demanded recompense.

For the poor of every color, you take away the federal guarantee of stingy support, turn 'em over to new corporations to learn job skills and turn 'em loose to seek jobs where were weren't

In the Harvard College and more general intellectual milieu at the time, it was Chambers who was the villain and Alger Hiss who was the endangered hero. "Great Day Coming," among its other contributions, makes that constellation vivid.

You have managed to compress a great deal into a relatively small space, and I am grateful to you.

David Riesman

Dr. Riesman is Henry Ford II Professor of Social Sciences Emeritus at Harvard University.

any.

For the worker, you have advantaged the employers enormously in their struggle against the unions. Then you crow about the vanishing membership of the unions. You have taken the pensions and turned 'em into marks that you can play the market with. You managed thusly to turn every American into a capitalist, of sorts. Whether he was comfortable in that role or not. Whether he made or lost money.

A decidedly minor guessing game right now is, What name would you give the decade?

I'd call it the Twenties.

Patrick Owens

The writer, of the Nieman class of 1963, is the former chief editorial writer of Newsday. He freelances from Kalispell, Montana.

Letters

Nieman Reports welcomes letters from readers commenting on our articles and journalism in general. Please address them to The Editor, Nieman Reports, 1 Francis Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138, or send them by E-mail to nreditor@Harvard.edu

NIEMAN NOTES

COMPILED BY LOIS FIORE

Perils of the Digital Camera Age

BY FRANK VAN RIPER

At one point during my long career as a newspaper reporter, *The Daily News* of New York—my home for more than 20 years—made a boneheaded move.

In the late 70's, faced with a dwindling circulation base and fearing competition from such afternoon papers as *The New York Post* and *Newsday* of Long Island, *The Daily News*—a morning paper that at the time was also the largest daily newspaper in the country—decided to publish an afternoon edition.

Until then, my fellow reporters and I normally would have all day to cover our beats, then write our stories in plenty of time for the first edition deadline that evening. Now, with a PM paper looming, *The News* would be publishing virtually 'round the clock. This raised the prospect of reporters having to write on the fly for the multiple afternoon edition deadlines—then "write-through" these stories, inserting updated information in time for the first deadline of the morning paper. But it wouldn't end there. There would have to be yet another version of the same story, a wrap-up "overnight," that would go into the first edition of the next day's PM paper the following afternoon, to start the cycle all over again. On a major story, with news breaking into the night, a reporter could wind up writing and rewriting over the course of 12 to 15 hours, day after day.

Of course, management assured us it wouldn't be like that. "We'll use the wires (AP, UPI, Reuters, etc.) to fill the PM paper," our editors in New York said. "You won't notice a thing."

Only it didn't work out that way.

Slowly, but inexorably, the pressure increased on us to write for the PM paper as well as for what we always called the "real" paper. After all, we were covering the story anyway and most of my colleagues felt as I did: bound to keep writing. During the 1980 presidential campaign, for example, as *The News* White House Correspondent, I was reduced to being a virtual wire service reporter, writing for every deadline in the ever-hungry dual news cycle.

Instead of actually going to a rally or speech by President Carter, I stayed back in the press plane—with the wires—and listened to the audio feed piped back to us, so I could pick up the phone by my seat and dictate a new lead on deadline. (The wire services, it should be noted, almost always double-teamed, meaning not only that someone would not have to cover two news cycles, but also that there would be someone actually to witness an event—and, most important, to be there in the event of trouble.)

Bruce Drake, my counterpart on the Reagan campaign, was, if anything, even more zealous never to miss a deadline. "We have the wires and Bruce," Reagan Press Secretary Jim Brady joked as he watched Drake feverishly dictating over the phone.

Working as a one-man wire service, I might as well have been listening to the radio. And by the time I had to write for the "real" paper—the one that more than a million people read—I often felt written out and burned out. It was no way to cover a story. And, try as I might to prevent it, I'm sure the quality of my work suffered.

Late last fall, as the '96 presidential campaign drew to a close, a revealing lunch with three of my former colleagues—all of them photographers—brought back to me all over again the dismal days of *The Daily News*'s short-lived afternoon "experiment." Only this time, the culprit was the same digital technology that everyone and his brother seem to be hailing these days as the greatest thing since rolled oats.

Over crab cakes and steaks, all three photographers emphasized that digital cameras have revolutionized the transmission and printing of news photos. Harry Hamburg of *The Daily News*, with whom I've logged more miles than I can remember, was especially high on digital for its ability to free the shooter from having to always worry if his or her exposure is on the money or if the color temperature of the light is right for the "film."

And, when speed is paramount, Harry declared, nothing can beat it. He noted that he was able to station a photographer in the outfield seats at Yankee Stadium during the American League playoffs and have that shooter transmit digital pictures via phone directly from the outfield. Great images made it onto the sports pages literally within minutes—nothing short of a technological miracle we all can applaud.

Similar thoughts that day came from Paul Hosefros, senior Washington photographer for *The New York Times* and Bill Auth, lab chief for *U.S. News & World Report*.

But all three photojournalists also reported something else that was not so wonderful: a tendency by their organizations to have photographers in the

field shoot and transmit more pictures than ever before, with what sometimes seemed to be a scant regard for content.

The rationale was distressingly familiar. Since the photographers were there anyway, on the story—and since transmission was so easy—why not have them shoot and transmit damn near all the time?

One might expect such an attitude from my old paper—after all, we used to call ourselves “New York’s Picture Newspaper”—or from a glossy magazine like *U.S. News*, always on the lookout for a striking color cover. But from the good gray *Times*?

Sadly, Paul said yes.

Granted, I may be blowing this out of proportion or seeing a problem where none now exists, but I fear the computer, and by extension its photographic offspring, the digital camera, can too easily turn news photographers into mere conduits of raw data, not professionals paid to cover a story with a discerning and critical eye. Like the Internet, the digital news camera has the disquieting potential to herald in photography the electronic triumph of quantity over quality.

I couldn’t help recalling our late friend and colleague George Tames, Paul’s predecessor on *The Times*. Covering a story on the Hill or at the White House, George rarely carried more than one camera, a battered old Nikon F with a sportsfinder. And he never used a motor drive. He was content to squeeze off a frame or two—at just the right moment—and capture in one picture “the whole thing, the feeling of a hearing, the feeling of an event.”

This is not to say that George’s successors aren’t doing the same thing—they are. But, in the clamor for more output, more images, more of anything that can be gobbled up and spat out digitally with such humbling speed, pros who once prided themselves on their ability to see and capture a telling image may wind up satisfying their bosses by shooting first and thinking later. ■

Frank Van Ripper, 1979 Nieman Fellow, is a photographer and writer.

—1953—

Melvin Mencher’s book, “The Sayings of Chairman Mel: Curmudgeony Wisdom on the Craft of Journalism,” has been published by The Poynter Institute for Media Studies. The book is filled with brief but clever and thoughtful insights from Mencher, who has taught at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism since 1963. For instance, a few chapter headings: “Misspell a word and the reader presumes you’re stupid. You are;” “Don’t trust an expert;” “Know everything;” and, under “Don’t miss a deadline:” “The journalist’s rhythm is attuned to the sweep of the clock’s second hand. If the copy doesn’t make the deadline, the public is uninformed. And you may be out of a job. Start writing the story on the scene, in the car, taxi, or subway on the way back. When you sit down, you are ready to write.”

—1958—

Stanley Karnow’s latest book, “Paris in the Fifties,” was published in October. Karnow recently revised his earlier book, “Vietnam: A History.” His book, “In Our Image: America’s Empire in the Philippines,” was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in history in 1990.

—1960—

Peter Braestrup died of a heart attack on August 10 while on vacation in Rockport, Maine. He was 68. At the time of his death, Braestrup was Senior Editor and Director of Communications for the Library of Congress in Washington.

Braestrup had a long career as an editor and war correspondent at newspapers and magazines, including *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. He covered the Vietnam War for *The Post* and later wrote a two-volume book, “The Big Story,” about how the American press covered the 1968 Tet Offensive. He became an authority on the role of the press during wartime, writing and giving speeches on the subject. In 1973 he was a fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. While there, he conceived

of the idea for *The Wilson Quarterly*, the general interest magazine of the center, and was its founding editor. During his tenure it became the largest circulating publication of its kind in America, reaching a peak of 100,000. He stayed at the *Wilson Quarterly* as Editor until he moved to the Library of Congress in 1989.

Born in Manhattan, Braestrup graduated from Yale University in 1951 with a degree in English literature. He is survived by his wife, **Sandra Newing**, his mother, Elsebet Braestrup, a sister, children, stepchildren, grandchildren, and stepgrandchildren.

—1962—

Murray Seeger has been named Adjunct Professor at the George Washington University Journalism Department. In May and June, he spent four weeks teaching journalism in Nigeria. Last December he lectured and met with journalists in Papua, New Guinea, and Indonesia. The foreign ventures were sponsored by the United States Information Agency.

—1964—

Robert C. Steyn died on October 16, at 70. His funeral service was held on October 22 at the Crematorium in Maitland, Cape Town, South Africa. Four South African Niemanians were in attendance, **Louis Louw** (1967), **Ted Doman** (1974), **Andrew Drysdale** (1975) and **Stewart Carlyle** (1972). Steyn worked for *The Cape Argus* as a political correspondent and for the University of Cape Town. He later became the first and only clergyman for the Unitarian Church in South Africa.

Steyn is survived by his wife, **Marie**, a son and a daughter. Condolences may be sent to Marie Steyn at 26 Yeoville Road, Vredehoek, Cape Town, South Africa, 8001.

—1965—

Smith Hempstone’s “Rogue Ambassador,” a memoir of his four tumultuous years (1989-93) as George Bush’s Ambassador to Kenya, was published October 26. The book is an account of Hempstone’s struggle to expand de-

mocracy in Kenya and provides an insight into the United States intervention in Somalia, which Hempstone was the only official to oppose publicly. Copies can be obtained from the University of the South Press, 1-800-367-1179. Hempstone was a syndicated columnist and Editor-in-Chief of The Washington Times.

—1966—

Hodding Carter III has been elected by trustees of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation to succeed Creed C. Black as President and CEO effective February 1, 1998. He will also be a member of the Knight Foundation Board of Trustees. Carter is President of MainStreet, a TV production company specializing in documentaries and public affairs television, and he is a chief correspondent for the PBS documentary series, "Frontline." He has held the Knight Chair in Journalism at the University of Maryland since 1995, focusing on public affairs reporting. He is the author of "The Reagan Years" and "The South Strikes Back," and has won four Emmy Awards for his public affairs television documentaries.

—1978—

Danny Schechter has a new book out, "The More You Watch, the Less You Know: News Wars/[sub]Merged Hopes/Media Adventures," published by Seven Stories Press in New York City. Schechter is co-founder and Executive Producer of Globalvision, a New York-based television and film company, where he produced the award-winning series "South Africa Now" and co-produced "Rights & Wrongs: Human Rights Television." He has produced and directed many TV specials and independent films, including "Beyond Life: Timothy Leary Lives," "Sarajevo Ground Zero," and "Mandela in America." "The More You Watch" is both autobiographical and an analysis of how Schechter feels the media works and why it doesn't work the way it should.

—1982—

Margot Adler's book, "Heretic's Heart: A Journey Through Spirit and Revolu-

Jim Thomson Retires from B.U.

Former Curator **James C. Thomson** (1972-84) retired as Professor Emeritus of history and journalism at Boston University in August 1997. He remains a Harvard officer, for his 31st year, as Associate of the Fairbank Center for East Asian Research and plans to do more writing—"on U.S.-China relations, memoir stuff, and maybe even the press." Jim's wife, **Diana**, who taught

Nieman fiction-writing seminars, is recovering at home from two difficult years of surgery (three operations) and hospitalizations (seven). The Thomsons have four grandchildren, thanks to daughter Anne, a psychiatrist, and son Larry, who teaches English as a Second Language. They still live in their Cambridge doll house with their two cats.

tion," has been published by Beacon Press. Adler, New York correspondent for National Public Radio, writes about her personal and political development during the intense events of the 1960's, including political activism at the University of California at Berkeley, civil rights work in Mississippi, antiwar protests and observing the socialist revolution in Cuba.

Alex Jones left the job of host of National Public Radio's "On The Media" after four years. The new host is Brian Lehrer, who for the past eight years has been the host of WNYC-AM's "On the Line." Jones says, "I am very proud of 'On the Media' and I think we set out to do something important. We tried to look at the press in a way that was rigorous, penetrating and still fair. We tried also to explain how the very human endeavor of journalism actually operates. I think sometimes we cracked the shell and let in some light...."

—1984—

Jacqueline Thomas has been named Editorial Page Editor of The Detroit News. Thomas had been the paper's Washington Bureau Chief.

—1985—

Jerelyn Eddings has joined The Freedom Forum as Director of the foundation's new African Center, which opened in November in Johannesburg, South Africa. Eddings had been senior writer for U.S. News & World Report, covering politics and trends in Washington and the South. She covered Bob

Dole's presidential campaign and was the magazine's chief congressional correspondent in 1995 and 1996. Previously, Eddings worked for The Baltimore Sun for 11 years as a reporter, editorial writer and columnist, and was the paper's Johannesburg Bureau Chief from 1990 through 1993. Eddings earlier provided special assignment coverage of Africa, including reports on famine and war in Ethiopia and the Sudan. She began at U.S. News & World Report in May 1993.

The Freedom Forum, established as a nonprofit foundation in 1991, also has international centers in Latin America, Europe and Asia.

—1986—

Carmen Fields is Director of Communications for United Way of Massachusetts Bay. Fields is also host and producer for "Higher Ground," a monthly show about religious and ethical issues, which is shown on Boston's Channel 7. Fields had been spokeswoman for Suffolk District Attorney Ralph C. Martin 2d for five years, and from 1986-91 was co-host of Channel 2's "Ten O'Clock News."

—1987—

In September, **Al May** joined the faculty of the School of Media and Public Affairs at George Washington University as a Visiting Associate Professor. It is May's first teaching job after a career as a newspaper reporter and editor. He left his job as government and public affairs editor of The Atlanta Journal-Constitution at the end of 1996, mov-

ing to Washington to join his wife of five years, **Carol Darr**. Darr served in the Clinton administration as a Commerce Department lawyer and telecommunications official and is now vice president of a trade association for the computer industry. They currently live in the same city, McLean, Va.

—1988—

Bill Dietrich has left The Seattle Times to freelance. The author of two nonfiction books, his first novel, "Ice Reich," is scheduled for publication by Warner Books in the fall of 1998. His E-mail is: wdietrich@msn.com

—1993—

Heidi Evans writes with an update since she wrote last in 1994: "After two and a half years at The Wall Street Journal, I embarked on a new writing adventure—a book. The book, a humorous and intimate look at the war between the sexes over money, will be published by Simon & Schuster in February 1999. Apart from the modest advance, I was fortunate to have a five-month fellowship earlier this year at the Media Studies Center in New York where I did most of the reporting and research. My husband, **Josh [Getlin]**, is doing well, going strong in his 18th year at The Los Angeles Times. Our daughter, Alex, is almost four and we think stand-up comedy is in her future, not journalism. Josh and I can be reached by E-mail at josh.getlin@latimes.com. Please write."

—1995—

Paul Stoop is still with the Berlin daily Der Tagesspiegel as an editor in the politics section. As usual in Germany, the job means editing as well as reporting, writing commentaries and even doing layout once in a while. He is covering the never-ending German debate on its national history, reporting on Holland and has begun writing on issues of international criminal justice like the UN tribunal on former Yugoslavia and the establishment of a permanent international court of justice.

Having successfully finished his second marathon in September, Stoop will

be working on shaving off another 20 minutes in order to qualify for the Boston marathon in April 2000. Any Niemans who would like to join him in that race are invited to contact Paul (paul.stoop@berlin.snafu.de). Maybe it could turn into a major Nieman event. His wife, **Adelheid Scholten**, is working for the European Volunteer Service, a program initiated by the European Union, and managing events on Dutch literature, film and art in the Berlin area.

—1996—

Laura Eggertson left The Globe and Mail, Canada's national newspaper, to go to work for The Toronto Star, the country's largest newspaper. She is based at the paper's Ottawa bureau. Eggerston says, "I'll be covering the Finance Ministry and Paul Martin, widely expected to be the next Liberal leader and possibly the next Prime Minister. I'll be working for the national desk instead of the business pages, which suits me better, I think. I also hope to do some writing on aboriginal and environmental issues."

Patricia Guthrie began work with The Atlanta Journal-Constitution as a medical and environmental reporter on December 1, 1997. Guthrie had been with The Albuquerque Tribune in New Mexico. Guthrie said, "I will cover community/public health issues, chronic diseases, aging, women's health and other fields at AJC where I will be one of five medical/health/environmental reporters. But I won't be covering the Center for Disease Control or AIDS, as that's another reporter's beat."

Gwen Lister was named winner of the 1997 Press Freedom Award of the Media Institute of Southern Africa. The award was announced in October by MISA Deputy Regional Chairperson Phasha Mayisela at a dinner held at the end of a three-day MISA conference and annual meeting in Victoria Falls Town, Zimbabwe. Lister is Editor of The Namibian newspaper.

In accepting the award, Lister, referring to The Namibian staff, said "I accept this award paying tribute to where

it belongs." She continued, saying that the 1990 struggles of Namibians won their country political independence, but "did not automatically" guarantee democracy. "Most of our journalists worked hard and courageously, but it's the second liberation [democratic governance] which is more difficult," she said. Lister added that the second liberation is more painful because "you are working with the people you helped and fought to get to power but who now regard you as an enemy, because you criticise them." Lister said that while press freedom is still very fragile in Southern Africa, it must be nurtured and worked for, and that the media should be open to criticism.

Lister has been a journalist in Namibia for 22 years. She began The Namibian on August 20, 1985.

The MISA press freedom award is given annually to persons in the region who have distinguished themselves in the fight for media freedom in Southern Africa. A previous winner is **Allister Sparks**, Nieman Fellow 1963. ■

The Best Year of Our Lives—Continued

The NF '94 Can't Get Enough Club had its latest reunion in August, hosted by **David Lewis** and **Danica Kombol** in Martha's Vineyard. It was a grand gathering, as they welcomed **Butrus Bishara**, **Majeda El-Batsh's** new husband. Privately perplexed by this group of alleged grownups who gather and re-live their Nieman year at regular intervals, Butrus was most gracious, building bookshelves and cooking up a storm. The other newest member was John Kassel Lewis, 15 months old, son of David and Danica and brother to Miranda and Thea. **Loric Conway**, **Melanie Sill**, **Maria Henson** and **Katie King** also attended and, yes, they are already planning the next reunion. ■

End Note

Pilgrimage to Ghana

BY BETTY BAYÉ

For many black Americans, going to Africa is as strong a desire as a Muslim's lifelong mission to visit Mecca. This summer I finally made my journey. I spent three weeks in Ghana for what turned out to be as much a spiritual experience as a vacation. A highlight was for me to reconnect with my Nieman classmate, Kabral Blay-Amihere.

I wasn't in Ghana an hour before I realized that Kabral is a great man. It is one thing for American Niemans to see our international colleagues in Cambridge, on our stomping ground, so to speak, but quite another to see them in their own environments.

Everywhere we went, Kabral was accorded great respect. Journalists, politicians, business leaders and school friends look up to Kabral as a relentless crusader for a free press in Ghana and throughout Africa.

Kabral used to be president of the Ghana Journalists Association. He also taught many of Africa's young journalists when he was director of the Ghana Press Institute. Now, Kabral is president of the West Africa Journalists Association. It is from this platform that he moves throughout Africa, Europe, Asia, South America and the United States spreading the gospel of a free press.

Kabral earned his freedom to travel by lovingly training the staff of young people to whom he's now turned over day-to-day operations of the newspaper he founded and still owns, *The Independent*. The dedication of these young journalists to their task is impressive. It was a laughing Kabral who whispered to me one afternoon, "They're making the paper more profitable than I ever did."

Because of Kabral's connections and the efforts of members of Louisville's Sister City Committee in Tamale, the largest city in Ghana's Northern Region, I was able to meet with, and to be interviewed by, journalists in both Accra and Tamale.

I was deeply moved by the journalists I met. Most of them work for little or nothing and often work in less-than-ideal conditions. Many work without so much as typewriters, much less computers. They write their stories on long strips of newsprint. And more often than not, the stories are edited by hand as well.

A group of women journalists with whom I met in Accra shared their frustration at the sexism in their profession and at their efforts to get themselves taken seriously, to be given top jobs and to receive advanced training.

The passion of the young staff of *The New Ghanaian* newspaper was equally impressive. The year-old newspaper is the brainchild of a Tamale businessman, Alhaji Aliu Mahama.

A primary mission of *The New Ghanaian*, said Mahama and his staffers, is to awake the people of the North from their long slumber, people who economically, politically and socially lag far behind residents in Ghana's southern cities and villages.

The newspaper's mission is also to draw more tourists and government and private investment into the region, which in Tamale, at least, has a strong Muslim influence.

Mahama and others in Tamale have a pet peeve, too; it is that when African Americans, in particular, visit Ghana, they aren't made aware that most Ghanaians who ended up in America as slaves were, in fact, captured from the northern region. In the northern city of Yendi, for example, there is the grave of Babatu, a notorious, Niger-born trader, who reportedly was responsible for selling thousands of fellow Africans into slavery.

An individual who deeply touched me was Philip Bunmi Aborisade, a Nigerian who is in exile in Ghana. Bunmi, as he's known, was jailed in Nigeria for writing critically of the government. While in jail Bunmi was tortured and, when he was released and still under government pressure, fled his country. Somehow he got to Ghana and met Kabral, who gave him refuge and a job writing for *The Independent*. Kabral is Bunmi's hero, and the young Nigerian is gathering material to do a book about him. Bunmi, desperately missing his family and friends, doesn't know when, or if, he'll see them again.

I left Ghana more dedicated to my work, more convinced that journalism isn't simply the career many make it out to be, but a mission. I left Africa determined to encourage journalists here in the States to give our brothers and sisters around the world moral support in their efforts to get the word out about repressive regimes.

I also left Africa committed to asking people to help journalists in developing countries by giving them basic tools of the trade, new or used, such as typewriters, computers, notebooks, dictionaries and even pens and pencils. Meanwhile, we also can help by making more journalists abroad aware of such study opportunities as Nieman Fellowships, which would perhaps give them their first opportunity to breathe easy, and to say what they want to say, and write what they want to write, without fear that someone will burst in in the middle of night and haul them off to jail or to their deaths.

■
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