

# NIEMAN REPORTS

THE NIEMAN FOUNDATION AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Vol. L No.3 Fall 1996

FIVE DOLLARS

## Violence

**Do the media understand it?**

**Do the media abet it?**

Sit in at an assignment desk in a big-city [TV] newsroom and listen to the questions, listen to the assignment editor bellow into radios, telephones and reporters' faces. "Did you get a shot of the victim? Did you get a shot of the hero? Did they walk the suspect yet? Did you get the family?" The desk, like the whole operation, is trapped in a daily morality play of bodies, heroes, victims, grieving families and clenched-jawed politicians going to pay their respects and get on TV...after the latest outrageous crime.

**The Asian Media**  
From Kashmir to Taiwan

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

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

## NIEMAN REPORTS

AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

**Vol. I No. 3**  
**Fall 1996**

**Publisher** Bill Kovach  
**Business Manager** Susan Goldstein  
**Technology Editor** Lewis Clapp

**Editor** Robert H. Phelps  
**Assistant Editor** Lois Fiore  
**Design Editor** Deborah Smiley

Nieman Reports (USPS #430-650) is published in March, June, September and  
December by the Nieman Foundation at Harvard University, One Francis Avenue,  
Cambridge, MA 02138-2098.

Telephone: (617) 495-2237

Internet address for circulation: [nreports@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:nreports@fas.harvard.edu)

Internet address for editorial matters: [lfiore@harvard.edu](mailto:lfiore@harvard.edu)

Copyright ©1996 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

Subscription \$20 a year, \$35 for two years; add \$10 for foreign airmail. Single copies  
\$5 plus postage. Back copies are available from the Nieman Office.

Please address all subscription correspondence to One Francis Avenue, Cambridge,  
MA 02138-2098 and change of address information to P.O. Box 4951, Manchester,  
NH 03108. ISSN Number 0028-9817

Second-class postage paid at Boston, Massachusetts, and additional entries.

POSTMASTER:  
Send address changes to  
Nieman Reports,  
P.O. Box 4951,  
Manchester, NH 03108.

# NIEMAN REPORTS

Vol. L No. 3 Fall 1996

## Violence

Violent Crime and the Media's Role .....	Michael J. Kirkhorn .....	4
TV Violence and What to Do About It .....	George Gerbner .....	10
A Major Public Health Crisis .....	Robert E. McAfee .....	13
A Grueling Standard to Live By .....	Carole Kneeland .....	15
Trying to Muzzle the Beast .....	Diana K. Sugg .....	17
The Test of a Sportswriter .....	Bill Dwyre .....	19
A Primer on Covering Victims .....	Frank Ochberg .....	21
Tips on Interviewing Victims .....	William Coté and Bonnie Bucqueroux .....	27
Race and Violence .....	Lester Sloan .....	28
Reporters Are Victims, Too .....	Charollette Aiken .....	30
Swimming 'A Wild, Raging River' .....	Roger Simpson .....	33
Why I Turned Down Oprah Winfrey .....	Migael Scherer .....	35
Cops on the Edge .....	Hubert Williams .....	38

## The Journalist's Beat

John Chancellor Remembered .....	Jon Margolis .....	40
A Shaman Looks at Campaign '96 .....	Robert D. Deutsch .....	41
Travails of a Textbook Author .....	Melvin Mencher .....	43

## Asian Media

Fear, Journalism and Democracy .....	Peter Eng .....	51
Satellite TV Transforming Broadcasting .....	William Atkins .....	55
The Internet—Screening Out the Flies .....	Larry Campbell .....	58
South Asia—Regional Press Thriving .....	Vikram Parekh .....	61
East Asia—Media Booming but Leashed .....	John Schidlovsky .....	65
India—What's Murdoch Up To? .....	Vinod Mehta .....	69
Pakistan—Transition in Midst of Dramatic Change .....	Owais Aslam Ali .....	71
Kashmir—'Between the Devil and the Deep Sea' .....	Surinder Singh Oberoi .....	73
Hong Kong Mogul: Keeping Ideals After '97 .....	Judith Clarke .....	74
Taiwan—Relishing but Abusing Freedoms .....	Osman Tseng .....	75
Philippines—Opinionated, Rambunctious .....	Sheila S. Coronel .....	77
Malaysia—Media Tightly Prescribed .....	Eric Loo .....	79
Thailand—New Setbacks .....	Paisal Sricharatchanya .....	81
Teaching Western Journalism .....	Geoff Murray .....	82

Curator's Corner .....	2
Technology .....	49
Books .....	84
Letter to the Editor .....	94
Nieman Notes .....	91

The quotation on the cover is by Ray Suarez of National Public Radio. A longer quotation is on page 11.

# Curator's Corner

## *A Summer of Corrosion*

There were a couple of important warnings for journalists this summer that caught some of us by surprise. Like the British on Singapore during World War II, we were looking for assault from the wrong direction. While we were watching for government intrusion we failed to notice a corrosive mixture of marketing and celebrity eating away behind us. These events of the summer deserve to be recorded again.

The first event was the disclosure that Newsweek columnist Joe Klein, bewitched by the marketing plan of Random House Publisher Harold Evans, had lied to conceal his authorship of the novel, "Primary Colors." The two were aided and abetted by Newsweek Editor Maynard Parker, who knew of Klein's deceit but allowed two articles to appear in his magazine suggesting that other people may have written the book.

Klein insisted he never lied in his journalism. Editor Parker protested that he tried to say no to the deceptive articles. All of this may be true.

But consider these markers of erosion of journalism standards:

- Publisher Evans resigned as Editor of The Times of London because the new owner of his paper did not have sufficient respect for truth and independence.
- Columnist Klein celebrated his reputation for measuring presidential candidates against a lofty standard of truth.
- Editor Parker presented the readers of Newsweek two articles that he knew to be untrue at the same time he was insisting the late chairman of the joint chiefs of staff had a duty to be honest with the public about his military citations.
- Eleanor Clift, another Newsweek columnist, seemed to endorse a new standard for journalism in a market-driven world when she said on National Public Radio that "Newsweek will do fine in this publicity-driven world."

Four accomplished and highly visible journalists have given the public an interpretation of journalistic ethics that says they serve the needs of the marketplace and the personal interests of the journalist. Nowhere in any of the conversations of the quartet is there a notion of the public's right to honest information. Nor do any of the four seem to acknowledge a journalist's responsibility to weigh that right when balancing competing values and interests.

Two grace notes were sounded. Most journalists formed a Greek chorus sounding notes of reproach. And the scam was exposed in The Washington Post, which owns Newsweek.

The second warning was sounded in a Financial Times column written by Jurek Martin when he discovered in Bob Woodward's book, "The Choice," a new sort of political journalist. He calls it "the reporter manqué." Woodward's book is the latest in a genre of intimately detailed accounts of

a political campaign rushed into print within weeks of the event. Details not shared with daily readers of the newspaper are then splashed all over the front page in exclusive reprints of book chapters.

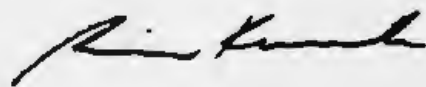
These books are increasingly written by reporters who occupy positions in the newsroom and tie up resources that could be invested in news reports to the voters.

Reporters withholding information until it is too late to inform voters is a trend that has been evolving since Theodore White captured the 1960 presidential campaign in a book in a way no daily journalism had. As a result political reporting in the '70's and '80's became more aggressive and penetrating. Frustrated reporters for the newsweeklies became reporters manqué, trading promises of timely secrecy in return for access to detail. By the 1980's streams of detailed reporting on campaigns and insights into presidential character were published—after the elections.

There are two important reasons for this evolution. The first is that some print journalists are motivated by the desire to be seen visibly influencing events. They compete with those on radio and television who offer fleeting whims they hope will pass for ideas. The second factor is that most newspaper editors monitor CNN and believe everyone knows "what" happened today. As a result they press for stories that "get ahead of the curve." Tom Rosensteel, who has monitored press behavior for several years, calls these stories "two parts attitude, one part spin and one part poll data."

But readers have a problem here. Most of them do not watch CNN. For all its impact on government officials and journalists, CNN's audience is minuscule. Commercial television's audience is larger. But the "what" of today's political story was squeezed out of commercial television when producers replaced it with "campaign moments"—narrative segments that reach out to grab viewers' emotion. They are events crafted by masters of the art of mind control.

In an era of information overload it might be well for editors to remember that truth is in the detail before the reporter manqué carries the detail completely out of the daily news report. The fact that daily political journalism of recent primary campaigns left such telling detail lying around suggests it may already have happened. The success of some of the insights in Klein's fiction and the detail of Woodward's book should be less a tribute to their analytical and reporting skills than a caution to the editors who were directing daily news coverage at the time.



# What They're Saying



## Amos B. Hostetter, Jr. Back to Local News

Local newspapers and local TV stations... increasingly are going to have to go back to their roots and really be local, because the national and global news sources will be so dominant. I think that at the local level they're going to have to rediscover why they are there; they're going to have to redefine themselves. It's the perfect environment in which to say, "Look, you know, if I'm going to make it I've got to have a local identity, I've got to give them something that can't come raining down off a satellite."—*Amos B. Hostetter, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Continental Cablevision, Inc., at Nieman Foundation seminar, April 22, 1996.*



MICHAEL P. McLAUGHLIN

## Julia Child Occupational Hazard

No, and I would never like to. I have too many friends in the restaurant business. And then I think you would have to eat so much awful food. It would be horrible.—*Julia Child, when asked if she had ever been a restaurant critic, at a Nieman Foundation seminar April 17, 1996.*



CHARLES KARP/AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

## Jeffrey N. Vinik The Insightful Press

One thing you learn in this industry is you're never as smart as the press says you are when things are good, and you never are as dumb as they say you are when things are bad.—*Jeffrey N. Vinik, after resigning as manager of the Fidelity Magellan Fund, the nation's largest mutual fund, May 23, 1996.*



1996 Ewan AUSTIN/OVERSEAS PRESS CLUB

## Walter Cronkite CEO's Need Courage

It takes a certain kind of courage to go against the common wisdom of [a] pack of colleagues. It takes a certain kind of courage to face the opposition of friends and neighbors to report an unpopular cause. It takes a certain kind of courage to stand up against authority that controls access to news sources. It takes a certain kind of courage to stand up against a boss whose version of the truth differs from yours. The working journalist faces those challenges every day. It seems to me that we have the right to demand a little courage on the part of those in the seats of power—the presidents and publishers and CEO's—courage to face their stockholders and impress upon them the responsibility that goes with their stewardship of our free press, the basic foundation of our democracy.—*Walter Cronkite, on receiving the President's Award for Lifetime Achievement from the Overseas Press Club, April 25, 1996.*

# Violent Crime

*While Improving, the Media Need to Sharpen the Public Perspective  
And Devote More Time to Explaining the Causes*

BY MICHAEL J. KIRKHORN

I am sitting a few feet from a young man who is about to be convicted for murder. He slouches in his chair, showing no sign of remorse, or even discomfort. Now and then he glances indifferently at the jury. The jurors, 12 residents of Spokane County, Washington, are doing their best to follow Judge Kathleen O'Connor through the sheaf of instructions that will guide their deliberations, though they will not deliberate long before finding the young man—a boy, really, 16 years old—guilty of the most severe crime with which he is charged, aggravated first degree murder.

A member of a street gang called the Crips, Kenneth Comeslast is on trial for murdering Cindy Buffin, 17, and Kendra Grantham, 16, with an assault rifle as they sat talking with friends on a front porch one summer evening in Spokane's Hillyard District. Wearing a dark hooded shirt, the killer approached the porch across a shadowy yard and without warning fired an assault rifle at the girls, killing two and wounding another.

Comeslast did not testify, but from similar incidents elsewhere we can guess that the shooting was an act of adolescent bravado or vengefulness, couched in the barbaric jargon of young gangsters (one place where the girls gathered was referred to in testimony as a "slobhouse").

In his summation the prosecutor displays large portrait photographs of the victims and reminds the jury of the power of the rifle. "Bam-bam-bam-bam-bam," the prosecutor says, showing a police photograph of the scene on the porch, emphasizing that the girls were murdered with five hollow-point bul-

lets that shatter on impact and cause horrible wounds.

The jury goes out, reviews the evidence and returns with the guilty verdict. A week or so later Judge O'Connor sentences Comeslast to consecutive terms of life imprisonment. "There are some people in our society so dangerous that they cannot be permitted to live with the rest of us," she tells him, thereby emphasizing the legal system's most drastic method of dealing with teenage violence and, indirectly, society's failure to come to grips with its underlying causes.

The general public learns as much as journalists choose to tell them about incidents of this kind. Indeed, news about murders, assaults, domestic violence, rape and other sex crimes is the most traditional kind of daily news reporting. Increasingly, however, under competitive pressures, the media have adopted more aggressive practices in coverage of crime and its handmaidens, violence—practices that sometime spotlight reality and lead to reforms.

For example, all forms of media have jumped in to expose the extent of abuse of children by parents, the battering of women by husbands and male companions and rogue cops's overuse of weapons against blacks, Hispanics, homosexuals and other minorities. The result has been improvements in police and court procedures.

Moreover, newspapers that once downplayed crime are now devoting more space and more prominent display to such stories. The New York Times and The Chicago Tribune are obvious examples.

Nevertheless, the increased emphasis on crime often distorts reality:

- Early this year the media, both print and broadcast, trumpeted the burning of black churches throughout the country as an epidemic with strong intimations that racists had revived an old tactic to intimidate blacks. It was not until USA Today in June and The Associated Press and The New Yorker in July checked that the media learned and reported that the number of burned churches fell within the normal pattern of such incidents.



*Michael J. Kirkhorn, a 1971 Nieman Fellow, worked for 14 years as reporter, columnist and editor for five newspapers, including The Milwaukee Journal and The Chicago Tribune. He has taught at the University of Kentucky and New York University and is now Director of Journalism at Gonzaga University. He and his wife, Lee-Ellen, and their 10-month old daughter, Amelia, recently completed a 4,500-mile trip to the Midwest and Mountain States. That's Amelia on his back in photo.*

- Television, especially local TV, by devoting so much of its time to street news, often from other cities—with flashing-light police cars, handcuffed suspects and blanketed bodies—gives a warped impression of the incidence of violent crime, thus raising fears of the viewing public at a time when statistics show that such crimes are decreasing. Indeed, rates of murder, aggravated assault, and forcible rape have been dropping while the general crime rate has shown little change for the last decade.
- TV anchors sometimes add to fears of random acts of violence with comments like “No one is safe anywhere any more” without noting the decline in violent crime rates and without pointing out that most murders and rapes are usually committed not by strangers but by people the victims know.
- Despite years of scientific study and myriads of documents, reporters and editors have failed to recognize that violence is an American public health problem rooted in our history and culture and extending beyond criminal justice to race and economics.
- While TV producers and newspaper editors are more sensitive to the risk of stereotyping criminal suspects—as Arabs or as Hispanics or especially as blacks—insufficient protective measures are used to avoid stigmatizing whole groups.

In recent years the American press has begun to explore several directions that have helped people understand violence, and while it is too much to hope that a skeptical public will appreciate these efforts, they should at least be noted. Journalists across the country have begun to look closely at common and once invisible forms of violence, the “domestic violence” that destroys families. The press also is reporting in detail on sex crimes, once a taboo topic seen darkly if at all. It pays



*Kenneth Comeslast, left, in juvenile court where he was charged with killing two girls.*

more attention to victims and the suffering caused by violence. It has begun to devote increased attention to children, whose welfare is the test of any civilization. And journalists are learning that a responsible form of dramatizing events—short of sensationalizing—is the best way to report when it is necessary to focus public attention on violence. Joseph Pulitzer, the master sensationalizer, would have been proud to print *The Chicago Tribune's* series “Killing Our Children,” which reported in detail on every Chicago child under the age of 15 who was murdered in 1993.

In the Comeslast case in Spokane, a bit of the testimony along with some descriptive detail reached the public through *The Spokesman-Review*. The district attorney was interviewed and the verdict and sentencing were noted along with a few words from a statement read by a survivor. On that day nothing was reported from a dozen other busy courtrooms, including the juvenile courts across the street, where judges and commissioners spend about half their time on youth crime and half on depressing cases of child abuse and neglect.

All of this took place in Spokane County, Washington, a relatively peaceful, uneventful metropolis of 400,000, which regularly assures itself that it is less unruly than Seattle, as Seattle sees

itself as a not entirely willing refuge from the greater disorder of Los Angeles, which is filled with people who are happy they are not in ungovernable New York.

Everywhere these days, violence and victims are part of the journalistic routine. Is this emphasis justified or does the press exaggerate? Both the FBI and Bureau of Justice Statistics report a drop in some categories of crime in 1994, which FBI Director Louis J. Freeh described as “moderate decreases.”

FBI figures, compiled from law enforcement agencies across the country, show, for example, an 8 percent drop for 1994 in violent crime in nine cities with more than one million population. Preliminary data for 1995 show the first decline in juvenile crime in a decade, but the numbers are still alarming. The 1994 FBI figures reported 716 violent crimes for every 100,000 Americans, an increase of 40 percent from 1985. The number of forcible rapes reported in 1994 was the lowest since 1989, but the total was still 102,096 in a category of crime that is reported at a lower rate than others.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics, which surveyed 50,000 households and 100,000 individuals, thereby providing a better indication of unreported crime, estimated 10.9 million violent crimes in 1994 involving Americans over the age of 12. The bureau reported that

women are victims of 4.5 million violent crimes each year, including 500,000 rapes or sexual assaults.

Crime rates fluctuate with demographics. Freeh noted that the "ominous increase in juvenile crime coupled with population trends portend future crime and violence at nearly unprecedented levels."

In the past the press has reported inaccurately on the level of crime, often when politicized information was turned into journalistic boilerplate, as was the case when a decade or so ago the press reported an epidemic of kidnapping that turned out to be mainly the result of child custody disputes. The press too often is susceptible to claims from advocates for victims that contain alarming misinformation that is never subjected to critical judgment or even common sense before it is reported.

But the problem is not erased by these discrepancies, partly because violence is a permeating cultural fact as well as an actual occurrence. On the question of violence we often find our-

selves in the awkward position of exploring in one sphere what we prefer in another. We seem, most of us, to enjoy violence in entertainment, to celebrate it in movies and television and even at times in our popular music, to gloat over the superiority of our precise violence in the Persian Gulf War, perhaps even to harbor violent personal motives that we would never care to admit.

Without question we live in a world where violence is common. When Washington Post correspondent Blaine Harden begins a piece on Liberia by saying, "Serbs murder Muslims. Tutsis and Hutus murder each other. Liberian gunmen chop off human heads and set them out as turf markers" he is simply describing extreme examples of cruelty that in lesser form any of us might find on any day, no matter where we live. A visit to the local courthouse is the easiest way to test this premise.

But we don't like to admit the fact. It's tempting to guess what might happen if we dusted off a statement by H. Rap Brown to see if it would cause the

same outraged reaction as it did when it was uttered a few decades ago. "Violence is as American as apple pie," Brown said, and a righteous uproar ensued. People, including columnists, seemed flabbergasted by the notion, not because the statement could be disproved but because it didn't sit right with our idea of ourselves, and of course, coming from a black activist, it was seen as incitement rather than empirical observation. We don't like to admit it, and in certain, subtle ways the public is taught by the media not to acknowledge the consequences for all of us of a culture that smolders with violence.

Journalists, however, cannot evade the issue. The press is often criticized for exaggerating or "sensationalizing" violence, and of course we will forever have the O.J. Simpson case before us as a spectacle of an entire profession jumping overboard in pursuit of sensation. But what choice do journalists have? Print the "good news"? Broadcast more happy talk? No. It would be an unforgivable breach of responsibility if the press deliberately downplayed violence more

## Five Crime Myths

*According to the National Criminal Justice Commission's 1996 report, "The Real War on Crime," there are at least five major myths about crime that exercise a powerful influence over criminal justice policy, despite the fact that they are demonstrably false. They are:*

### **Myth 1: Street Crime Is Increasing**

**Reality:** As studies have shown, street crime dropped slightly in 1993 and 1994. In the last 20 years, robbery has dropped 17 percent, forcible rape has dropped 30 percent, and murder has stayed the same. Overall, rates for most categories of crime have been either stable or slightly declining.

### **Myth 2: Street Crime Is More Violent Today**

**Reality:** Street crime is no more violent today than it has been in other periods in American history. The serious violent crime rate for the United States stands 16 percent below its peak level of

the mid-1970's. In the mid-1800's, several cities were convulsed by urban riots far deadlier than those in Los Angeles in 1992. Juvenile gangs commonly beat and mutilated Chinese immigrants in San Francisco in the late 1800's. Homicide was the tenth leading cause of death in 1952. Today, it is eleventh. Moreover, the overwhelming majority of contemporary crime is nonviolent. Injuries occur in just three percent of all reported crime.

### **Myth 3: More Police Officers Are Being Killed**

**Reality:** Policing is highly stressful, but it is not the most dangerous line of work. Farmers are twice as likely as police officers to be killed on the job. Largely because of bulletproof vests, killings of law enforcement officers dropped by half between 1973 and 1993. Police officers spend most of their time doing routine administrative tasks or in peaceful contact with civilians. Most officers spend their entire careers without fighting a street battle with firearms.

### **Myth 4: Street Crime Costs More Than Corporate Crime**

**Reality:** Corporate crime, like the savings and loan scandal, costs Americans far more than street crime. According to the Justice Department, all personal crimes and household crimes cost approximately \$19.1 billion in 1991. The comparable cost of white-collar crime is between \$130 billion and \$472 billion—seven to 25 times as much as street crime. Moreover, many more people die from pollution than from homicide. There are six times as many work-related deaths as homicides.

### **Myth 5: Criminals Are Different From the Rest of Us**

**Reality:** Actually, criminals are not that different from the rest of us. Many Americans admit to having committed a crime punishable by a jail sentence sometime in their lives. These crimes include failing to report income, filing a false expense report, drunk driving, illegal drug use, stealing and spousal assault. ■



than it does already—as it was inexcusable in an earlier period when the press overlooked violence in minority communities, justifying its deliberate indifference with various vicious theories about human nature.

It may sound strange in this period of sensational coverage to suggest that violence is downplayed, but what the press tends to do is reach out for the lurid footage while overlooking the cases that parade through the juvenile and family courts every day, cases that are revealed in spotty ways through journalism's new emphasis on victims.

The direction American journalism must take, and in some places already is taking, is to report the extent and consequences of violence by doing what the media is supposed to do, apply careful observation and intelligent explanation to the issues in combination with a careful examination of its causes and a refined sensitivity to its circumstances and effects. If there are social and political reasons for the widespread prevalence of violence they should be explained to the American people.

Are journalists equipped to report on violence, victims and suffering as part of the routine and not only as exceptional projects, and in ways that will truly enlighten the public? Are they prepared to connect the violence that pervades popular culture with violence in the streets and in homes? Can they bring revealing contextual information to the discussion? Can they help the public learn? The problem is deceptive because violence is both familiar and alien. I recognize the face of the young killer, I know how rare it is to find contrition among criminals his age, I have read the essays that try to account for the typical triggerman's vacuum of human feeling. But I don't know him. The rage, contempt, thwarted affection—whatever it was that brought an armed killer barely old enough to have a driver's license to the place the prosecutor called a "porchful of girls" is beyond me. To me his mind is a wilderness as trackless as the Gobi Desert.

We have no Truman Capote in Spokane to explore the minds of the violent, and in any case Capote spent seven years writing "In Cold Blood." It is fair



DAVID M. COOPER/THE SEASOURCE-BOOKS

*A porch light shattered by a bullet during Spokane shooting.*

to ask whether many news organizations are prepared to do more than they do now: report the proceedings and outcomes. How many newspapers could undertake a project that required time from more than 30 staffers and resulted in four full pages of reporting on the life of Theodore John Kaczynski, accused in connection with the Unabomber case, as *The New York Times* did May 26? How many newspapers have 30 staff members?

American journalism has reached a point in its evolution in which the predicaments it fails to cover satisfactorily should also be seen as opportunities for reform. The problem of violence is a profound one, and in the public mind it consists not of the daily reported incidents but of the threat to social stability that the incidents imply.

I have an old friend who lives securely and happily with her husband on the Oregon coast. Every morning she drives to the post office to pick up *The Oregonian*. Does she unfold it confidently? No. She "peeks at it." She is an experienced woman, no wallflower or paranoiac, but she wants to avoid having her worst fears confirmed by the news. She skirts the predictable bad news. I have become convinced that a great many Americans reading the newspapers and watching broadcast news have a sort of cosmic dread of what the news signifies.

These fears subside during periods of relative calm, but all it takes to revive

them is the murder of four women in New York's Central Park, the downing of TWA Flight 800 off Long Island, the explosion of a bomb at the Atlanta Olympics Games or a terrorist act unrelated to the American crime situation, like the bombing of the American building in Saudi Arabia.

Cosmic dread is not the journalist's outlook. Journalists are sunderers; they divide the world into stories. They move from story to story, they switch interests. The public moves more slowly. Some of these stories are parts of persistent problems. The public is interested in the problems. Journalists must find ways to help the public solve problems by applying intelligent observation and explanation in ways that are interesting and in contexts that encourage people to act.

The movement called public journalism is a step in this direction. A response to public defection from newspapers, an attempt to make daily journalism more pertinent to the daily lives of citizens, it also intends to do something about the crumbling of a coherent society based on citizen consent and involvement. When journalists make an effort to report on the issues that bring about this apparent disintegration, or might correct it, or when they change their practices to allow greater public involvement in the newspaper, they often find that the public is grateful. The public tends to think of the local newspaper in an old-fashioned way as a "common carrier" or a public trust.

But while public journalism encourages journalists to be more sensitive, more involved, more agreeable to the idea that the press should be available as a way of bringing about constructive social change, perhaps simply more sociable, it does not necessarily require that they be smarter in their approach to the troubling topics they encounter every day.

Sensitivity is not enough. Journalists are too good at practicing it. All too readily compassion becomes part of the reporter's repertoire, another way of eliciting information. Trauma itself has become an element in journalistic melodrama. Every other year or so, my

## Violence and the First Amendment

Obscenity is a well recognized exception to First Amendment protection. Society has, however, lost sight of what is truly obscene. With regard to sex, the acts themselves are not offensive or disgusting. It is only the public display of those acts or depictions of those acts that society finds offensive. With regard to violence, the acts themselves are offensive and disgusting. Public display or depiction of such acts cannot make them anything but even more offensive.

Obscenity speaks even better to violence than it does to sex. The history of the concept shows the earliest concerns to have been over the depiction of violence. The legal history, at all constitutionally relevant times, fails to distinguish between sex and violence for purposes of obscenity law. It is only the Victorian-era obsession with limiting masturbation, and sex generally, that led to the capture of the word "obscene," and the claim of exclusive use of the word in legal contexts, by the forces opposed to the depictions of sex. Those opposed to depictions of violence have just as good a claim to the term and to the legal implications of such a label.

A culture in which sexual expression is suppressed, while violent depictions are permitted, is not a better place than a culture in which the exposure to violence is limited, whatever treatment is accorded sex. It may not be certain that limiting media violence will lead to a more peaceful society. It is certainly likely that any resultant decrease in actual violence would take years to develop. Nonetheless, it is rational to believe that the violence that is pandemic in our society would decrease as a result of a decrease in media violence, and the benefits seem worth the attempt. Something must be done. Restrictions on media violence seem a reasonable step, though not a cure-all, and the recognition that violence may be obscene provides a constitutional basis for such restrictions.—Kevin W. Saunders, *Professor of Law, University of Oklahoma, in "Violence as Obscenity," Duke University Press, 1996.*

O.J. Simpson and everybody else involved in that case.

In a few years the century will be over, so it's convenient to take a long view. Suffering has been a great theme of the 20th Century—suffering on a grand scale, made available to more and more people by more and more effective instruments, from machine guns to napalm to nuclear weapons, often in the hands of those bound by ideology or by fanaticisms.

Journalists have responded to this great fact of human suffering, and their response transcends the sympathy for the underdog that has been part of the journalistic outlook since the crusades of Joseph Pulitzer. Because it is universal and therefore compelling, suffering has its pitfalls. The pits are those into which intelligent judgment vanishes when the journalist's sympathies are too deeply engaged. Or simply when it seems safe to go with a story because it involves authoritative sources, or at least sources whose authority ought to be reputable, as in naming a suspect in the Atlanta Olympics bombing. Or when a journalist does not bother to find out

the disagreements between authorities, or to read the background material. The repressed memory controversy is a fairly good example of how much intelligence a complicated story requires if it is to enlighten and not mislead the public.

A few years ago there was a reaction to victimization. Victims seemed to be overstepping and stretching public sympathy and credulity by declaring themselves victims retrospectively, as they seemed to be doing in repressed memory syndrome, in which victims who had repressed memories of rape, incest or other violations, remembered them years later, often while undergoing therapy, and then accused their suspected tormentors. The skepticism led to the publication of articles like one written by Joseph Epstein for *The New York Times Magazine* in 1989, in which he described victimhood as a "real growth industry" with people "rushing to identify themselves as victims." A veteran of the war on poverty, Epstein observed that while "once the idea was to shake off victimhood through acts of courage, now the idea

town, Spokane, experiences an event called "firestorm." At the end of a hot summer wildfires burn down homes built in dry pine woods. I know that when the next firestorm strikes the television anchors will blame the "wrath of Mother Nature," and reporters will go out and interview the people who have lost their homes, describe them as victims (not as people unwise enough to buy or build homes in dry pine woods), draw out tearful stories of loss, describe the arrival of grief therapists and conclude that the victims "will go on." It's the same on the East Coast. Winter storms and hurricanes erode beaches and destroy homes, yet the media treat owners, who know the risks, only as unfortunate victims.

The same kind of stories are done regularly about victims of crime or violence. If they encourage a sympathetic response, they are worthwhile. But maudlin journalism has its limits and it reveals the absence of other kinds of reporting. The stories that would ask intelligent questions about the factors that produce firestorm victims like clockwork: the building and real estate practices, the zoning laws, the planning, the fire protection. Or those that would investigate local patterns of crime and violence, correct rumors and misconceptions, such as the common notion that downtown districts are necessarily more dangerous than other parts of town. Or focus public attention on largely unseen violence that goes on in households, often involving abuse of children, which leads in the next generation to more violence.

No, sympathetic reporting is not enough, and in any case, that struggle is over. Journalists have learned to report with compassion. The sympathetic reporter is now so firmly fixed in the gallery of journalistic types that the opposite type can be parodied. The reporter who thrusts a microphone into the face of a suffering victim and asks her how she feels is a villain in journalism ethics courses across the land whose flagrancy ranks with other uninstructional examples, such as the photographer who makes pictures rather than dousing the self-ignited protester or the sensation-mongers who hounded

seems to be to wallow in it." A victim, he said, "is simply someone who insistently declares himself a victim."

The mainstream press, particularly in feature sections, seems fad-prone. Often stories that introduce information that is misleading, demoralizing or silly appear first as features, sometimes as features introducing new categories of victims. This is a legacy of the "new journalism" of the 1960's, a rebellion of feature writers who, led by Tom Wolfe, argued that the undervalued feature writer could explore the uncharted byways of American life more entertainingly and with less stiffness than the traditional news approach would allow. The movement woke up newspaper writing—the modern style section would be unthinkable without it—but like many innovations in journalism it expired before it happened—that is, the new journalism became a popular and easily cheapened style of writing and editing. Unfortunately reforms implied in its critique never emerged.

Reporting that encourages people to protect themselves from reality by claiming innocence is another way that journalists mislead the public. Newspapers and TV newscasts overflowed with reports in which citizens expressed "amazement" or "horror" at the possibility that a bomb could explode in Oklahoma. Even the staid Economist headlined its piece "Horror in the Heartland."

Of course no Heartland is on the map. The Heartland is a rhetorical device that journalists use when they want to invoke deep sentiment, in this case wounded innocence. In the folklore of journalism the Heartland is a fairyland where innocence prevails and nobody deserves to have bad things happen because unblemished virtue protects them. Invoking the counterfeit Heartland is a way of cultivating public incredulity for the purpose of inviting people to believe that things that happen to other people should not happen to them.

It should come as no surprise that terrorists plant bombs in Oklahoma or that Americans soldiers are not universally admired in Saudi Arabia. By coaxing incredulity from the public, or by



*Susan Smith and David Smith in front of the Union, S.C., courthouse at a press conference concerning the disappearance of their two young sons. This was before she confessed and was convicted of drowning the children.*

assuming that the public's response ought to be "it can't happen here" journalists employ their newfound compassion for victims to create damaging illusions.

The Heartland notion also is an indirect way of expressing a moral concern. It suggests that we ought to be innocent. But what we really ought to be, with the help of journalism, is realistic. The next time a terrorist strikes it would be refreshing and useful to find reporters going beyond empathy for victims to explain why these things happen.

Do the ethical or moral responsibilities of journalism enter into the question of reporting on violence and victims? Certainly there is a moral judgment in the recognition that suffering is a journalistic responsibility—and has been, really, to pick a landmark, since Ernest Hemingway did his remarkable reporting on refugees in the Balkans in the early 1920's. In an age when violence is an issue that cannot be evaded, journalism's moral responsibility is intellectual. It is, simply, to be as smart as possible, therefore resourceful, therefore imaginative, comprehensive and interesting, in its reporting on the topic.

It's hazardous to invite any collection of humans to see itself as a moral

authority, and with journalism there's the additional danger of warped purpose in the assumption that it ought to compensate for the failure of other authorities, to try to remind people of what they should have learned in school and through religious instruction. The indispensable purpose of journalism already is under strain from budget and staff cuts and the growth of its entertainment function.

But a journalistic equivalent of moral purpose could be found in a determined—indeed, a crusading—desire to bring to bear the powers of observation needed to allow us to explain to ourselves the wilderness of American violence. The keystone of this effort would be, not empathy or sensitivity or compassion, though these have always been ingredients of great reporting, but intelligence. The victims for whom journalists are learning to show sympathy are citizens, and as citizens they benefit from an intelligent daily press, printed, broadcast or computerized. The perpetrators, too, are citizens. How did they develop their violent behavior? Was there something beyond an extramarital affair that prompted Susan Smith to drown her two children in South Carolina? The media certainly need to tell the public more about what the experts say about causes of crime and possible ways to prevent it.

Intelligence will be the most precious commodity of the Information Age, when the truth about anything, including violence, will be as elusive as ever but less visible amid the drift of worthless and distracting information. Smart editors and smart reporters will be needed—smart enough to see through the deceptive assumptions of their own trade as well as the deceptions of others. Good reporters and editors who are able to observe and study human behavior—and who are given time (another precious commodity) to do so—can help us grasp the meaning of violence, victimhood and suffering that has been the constant theme of human life all this very long century. ■

# TV Violence and What to Do About It

BY GEORGE GERBNER

**F**ormula-driven media violence is not an expression of crime statistics, popularity or freedom. It is de facto censorship that chills originality and extends the dynamics of domination, intimidation and repression domestically and globally. The violence overkill is an ingredient in a global marketing scheme imposed on media professionals and foisted on the children of the world.

There is a liberating alternative—an independent citizen voice in cultural policy-making, speaking for greater diversity and creative freedom.

Humankind may have had more bloodthirsty eras, but none as filled with images of violence as the present, primarily because of television's obsession with crime. Yet, while violent crime rates remained essentially flat or declined in the last few years, television networks doubled the time given to crime news coverage between 1992 and 1993. Moreover, TV Guide's August 13, 1994 survey showed a steep increase in stories of violence, especially in local television news.

Other studies show that TV's stress on crime and violence skews news priorities. Monitoring by The Des Moines Register found that of the six top stories on Des Moines evening newscasts during February 1994, one out of four—118 stories—dealt with crime and violence. By comparison, 27 featured business, 17 dealt with government, 15 reported on racial relations, and two discussed schools. A 1994 study of local news by the University of Miami found that time devoted to crime ranged from 23 to 50 percent (averaging 32 percent) while violent crime in the city remained constant, involving less than one-tenth of one percent of the population.

Minority leaders have often said that

blacks and Hispanics are demonized by the choice of faces shown in crime stories. Evidence supports this charge. For example, a study for the Chicago Council on Urban Affairs found that "a high percentage of African Americans and Latinos are shown as victimizers of society, and few as social helpers." This distorted portrayal, the council said, contributes to the notion that "the inner city is dominated by dangerous and irresponsible minorities."

(Newspapers as well as television are also to blame. The 1994 winter edition of *The Journalism Quarterly* reported that Chicago newspapers carried stories on only one of every three homicides in the city and that the slayings most likely to be selected were those in which the victims were white rather than black or Latino, contrary to the actual crime statistics.)

As part of the Cultural Indicators television monitoring project since 1967, we studied local news on Philadelphia television stations in the summer of 1995 and concluded that crime and/or violence items usually lead newscasts and preempted balanced coverage of the city. Furthermore, only 20 percent of crime and violence on local news was local to the city and 40 percent was local to the area. As other studies have found, whites were more likely to be reported when they were the victims and African Americans when they were the perpetrators.

While violence dominates much of television news, it plays an overwhelming role in TV entertainment children see long before they can read. An American child today is born into a home in which television is on an average of over seven hours a day. By the time children learn to read and to distinguish news from other stories, they are

fully integrated into a television view of the world.

Violence is a stable and integral part of that world. The percentage of prime time television dramatic programs with overt physical violence was 58 in 1974, 73 in 1984, and 75 in 1994. The average rate of violent scenes was 5 per hour in 1974, 5 per hour in 1984, and 5 per hour in 1994—unchanged.

Violence is, of course, dramatic. It is not just legitimate news, it is necessary



*George Gerbner is Dean Emeritus of The Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania, and Director of the Cultural Indicators research project. He was Executive Editor of the quarterly Journal of Communication, chair of the editorial board of the International Encyclopedia of Communication, and reporter for The San Francisco Chronicle and other newspapers. His recent publications include "Invisible Crises: What Conglomerate Media Control Means for America and the World" (Westview, 1966) and "Television Violence: The Power and the Peril, in Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Critical Text Reader" (Sage, 1995).*

to show its tragic consequences. Exceptional programs such as "NYPD Blue" and "ER" still try to do that. However, a tragic sense of violence has been swamped by "happy violence" produced on the dramatic assembly line. "Happy violence" is cool, swift, painless, and always leads to a happy ending, so as to deliver the audience to the next commercial in a receptive mood.

Action movies further escalate the body count. A count by Vincent Canby in the July 16, 1990 New York Times found that "Robocop's" first rampage killed 32 people; "Robocop 2" slaughtered 81. The sick movie "Death Wish" claimed 9 victims; the sequel disposed of 52. "Rambo: First Blood," rambled through Southeast Asia leaving 62 corpses; "Rambo III" visited Afghanistan killing 106. The daredevil cop in the original "Die Hard" saved the day with a modest 18 dead; "Die Hard 2" achieved a phenomenal body count of 264. I myself observed that the great movie "Godfather I" produced 12 corpses, "Godfather II" put away 18 and "Godfather III" killed 53.

### What Does it Mean?

Violence is a demonstration of power. It shows who can get away with what against whom. That exercise defines majority might and minority risk, one's place in the societal "pecking order."

The role of media violence can be seen in our Cultural Indicators analysis of prime time network programs monitored since 1967. Women play one out of three characters in drama, one out of six in the news. Young people comprise one-third and old persons one-fifth of their actual proportions of the population. Most other minorities are even more under-represented. And most of the groups that are under-represented are also over-victimized.

The typical viewer of prime time television drama sees, every week, an average of 21 criminals arrayed against an army of 41 public and private law enforcers. Crime and violence engage more characters than all other occupations combined. About one out of three speaking parts, and more than half of

## Why Crime Stories Lead Local TV News

I've done my share of stupid hot-weather stories, stupid cold-weather stories, pointless, titillating murder stories, gratuitous urban minority pathology stories, celebrity stories, new gadget stories, and so on. I was one of the foot soldiers sent into battle every day by, in my case NBC, to make the money and wind up their viewers and in this context there is nothing more dangerous than a reform sinner. I think there are several reasons why local TV news is as bad as it is. One, it must—must—make money. Two, it is produced by a talent pool of writers, producers, editors and reporters who are schooled in the ways of the business as it is and can't imagine doing things in any other way but the tried and true, the formulaic, the rote ways. Here's what I mean:

Sit in at an assignment desk in a big-city newsroom and listen to the questions, listen to the assignment editor bellow into radios, telephones and reporters' faces. "Did you get a shot of the victim? Did you get a shot of the

hero? Did they walk the suspect yet? Did you get the family?" The desk, like the whole operation, is trapped in a daily morality play of bodies, heroes, victims, grieving families and clenched-jawed politicians going to pay their respects and get on TV doing it after the latest outrageous crime. And the last big reason (there are plenty more)... is consultants.—Ray Suarez, host of National Public Radio's "Talk of the Nation," on the Alex Jones show "On the Media," March 24, 1996.



all major characters, are involved in violence either as victims or as victimizers, or both.

But violence and victimization are not evenly distributed. As part of the Cultural Indicators project, we calculated a violence "risk ratio" by counting the number of victims for every 10 perpetrators of violence on television shows. That risk ratio expresses the "price" paid for committing violence. The overall average risk ratio (the number of victims per 10 perpetrators) is 12. But the ratio for women perpetrators is 17, meaning that for every 10 women written into scripts exerting power that men employ with impunity, women suffer 17 victims. The figure for lower-class characters is 19, for elderly characters 20, and for women of color 22. In other words, television tends to show minority groups paying a higher "price" for their use of force than do the majorities.

### What Are the Consequences?

Our surveys show that heavy viewers are more likely than comparable groups of light viewers to over-estimate their chances of involvement in violence, to believe that their neighborhoods are unsafe, to state that fear of crime is a very serious personal problem and to assume that crime is rising, regardless of the facts of the case. Heavy viewers are also more likely to buy new locks, watchdogs, and guns "for protection" (thus becoming a major source of handgun violence).

Viewers who see members of their own group under-represented but over-victimized develop an even greater sense of apprehension and mistrust. Insecure, angry, mistrustful people may be prone to violence but are even more likely to be dependent on authority and susceptible to deceptively simple, strong, hard-line postures and appeals.

### What Drives Media Violence?

The usual rationalization that media violence "gives the public what it wants" is disingenuous. The public rarely gets a fair choice in which all elements are equal, including placement, headline, promotion, airtime, celebrity-value, treatment, etc., and, most importantly, cost of production. There is no evidence that, cost and other factors being equal, violence per se gives audiences "what they want." As the trade paper *Broadcasting & Cable* editorialized on September 20, 1993, "the most popular programming is hardly violent as anyone with a passing knowledge of Nielsen ratings will tell you."

We compared the ratings of more than 100 violent shows with the same number of nonviolent shows aired at the same time on network television. The average Nielsen rating of the violent sample was 11.1; the rating for the nonviolent sample was 13.8. The share of viewing households in the violent and nonviolent samples, respectively, was 18.9 and 22.5. The nonviolent sample was more highly rated than the violent sample for each of the five seasons studied from 1989 through 1993. The amount and consistency of violence further increased the unpopularity gap.

### The Globalization Factor

On July 10, 1996, Reuters (but no major U.S. news outlet) reported that the European Competition Commission raided the London, Paris and Brussels offices of United International Pictures, a U.S.-based, transnationally owned, film distribution cartel accused of violating European Union competition rules. This is only a recent example of the world-wide revolt against a handful of transnational conglomerates such as Time Warner, General Electric, Disney/Cap Cities, Westinghouse/CBS, Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation and the German Bertelsman group, which dominate more than half of the world's screens.

Concentration of media production and distribution denies access to new entries and to alternative perspectives. Having fewer buyers forces the remain-

ing "content providers" deeper into deficit financing. As a consequence, most television and movie producers cannot break even on the domestic market. They are forced into video and foreign sales to make a profit. Therefore, they need a dramatic ingredient that requires no translation, "speaks action" in any language, and fits any culture. That ingredient is violence.

Syndicators demand "action" (the code word for violence) because it "travels well around the world," said the producer of "Die Hard 2." "Everyone understands an action movie. If I tell a joke, you may not get it, but if a bullet goes through the window, we all know how to hit the floor, no matter the language."

Our analysis shows that violence dominates U.S. exports. We compared 250 U.S. programs exported to 10 countries with 111 programs shown in the U.S. during the same year. Violence was the main theme of 40 percent of home-shown and 49 percent of exported programs. Crime/action series comprised 17 percent of home-shown and 46 percent of exported programs. NAFTA and GATT will dump even more mayhem on the world in the name of "free trade."

### What to Do?

People suffer the media violence inflicted on them with diminishing tolerance. A March 1985 Harris survey showed that 78 percent disapprove of media violence. In a *Times Mirror* national poll in 1993, 80 percent said entertainment violence was "harmful" to society.

Local broadcasters, legally responsible for what goes on the air, also oppose the overkill and complain about loss of control. Electronic Media reported on August 2, 1993 that in its own survey of 100 general managers, three out of four said there is too much needless violence on television and 57 percent would like to have "more input on program content decisions." A U.S. News & World Report survey published on April 30, 1994 found that 59 percent of Hollywood media workers saw media violence as a "serious problem."

The liberating alternative to the present system exists in various forms in all other democratic countries. It is an independent citizen voice in cultural policy-making. One such alternative is the Cultural Environment Movement. CEM is a Philadelphia-based nonprofit educational corporation, an umbrella coalition of independent media and professional, labor, religious, health-related, women's and minority groups opposed to corporate as well as government censorship.

The role of Congress, if any, is to reverse those parts of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 that unleash media monopolies, and turn its antitrust and civil rights oversight on the centralized and globalized industrial structures that have squeezed independents out of the market.

More freedom from inequitable and intimidating marketing formulas, and a greater diversity of sources of support, are the effective and acceptable ways to increase diversity of content. That is also the democratic way to diversify media solutions to human conflict and to reduce media violence to its valid role and reasonable proportions. ■

### 'It's Very Dangerous'

What the press does with the sort of bleed-lead philosophy is take the most unusual and extraordinary crimes and present those to people as though they are the everyday ordinary experience of the streets. They take the most unusual crimes and make them the most ordinary ones. And this in turn leads to some real fear and distortion of public policy. It's very dangerous.—Bruce Shapiro, a Contributing Editor of *The Nation*, commenting on a Connecticut TV station's use of a film clip of him after he was attacked by a mental patient, to illustrate a proposal to get tough on criminals. *National Public Radio's "On the Media," February 11, 1996.*

# A Major Public Health Crisis

BY ROBERT E. MCAFEE

**W**e may live in the most violent country in the world. U.S. homicide rates far exceed those in any other industrialized country, and our rates of violent crime are always among the world's highest. Violence does affect all of us—if not through individual experiences, then through the daily confrontation of news accounts of violence, terrorism and its aftermath. Although violent crime rates appear to have stabilized since 1992, after rising significantly for the previous seven years, increases in juvenile crime, as well as homicide rates in the 18-24 age group, have increased sharply since that time. (Preliminary data for 1995 show a significant drop in youth crime from 1994, but the numbers are still large.) It may be that we are allowing, if not teaching, our children to become violent, and while most agree that violence is learned behavior, there is no question that it is higher in neighborhoods with high poverty, inadequate housing and high unemployment. Much needs to be known about the biology of violence and more research needs to be done.

Because of major medical expenditures in addition to loss of life and disability, the problem of violence, particularly family violence, has been identified by the American Medical Association as a major public health crisis and problem to be solved. Family violence includes child physical and sexual abuse, domestic or partner abuse and elderly abuse. There is, indeed, frequently a connection in all these forms of violence and several studies have indicated that children growing up in an environment in which parents fight, are much more likely to adopt similar

behavior when they become parents, as well as be victims of abuse themselves. Elderly abuse probably remains the most underdiagnosed abuse in our society, and yet one that physicians see on a daily basis.

Child abuse remains a reportable condition for all physicians who treat these victims in every state; elderly abuse is reportable in 42 states, and domestic violence is required currently only in a handful of states. This discrepancy takes into account the safety of the victim once reporting has occurred. We have resources by and large to protect the child, as well as the elderly patient, once violence is reported. But there is a paucity of resources to provide the safety net for victims of domestic violence. In fact, that reporting seems at present to increase substantially the danger of violence to the victim. It is for that reason that debate continues as to whether reporting from a public health point of view should be carried out.

The American Medical Association presents an annual Report Card on Violence. The first report, given by me in 1995, indicated an overall grade of "D" for four categories: family violence, sexual assault, public violence and violence in entertainment. The "D" indicates little progress based on four criteria: (1) Whether the problem is getting better or worse according to statistics. (2) The status of public awareness and attitudes toward violence. (3) The effectiveness and availability of treatment and intervention programs. (4) The cost to society in dollars, pain and human suffering. This year's Report Card, presented in June by Dr. Lonnie Bristow, then President of the AMA, also regis-

tered a "D." We will continue to monitor those kinds of violence as an ongoing alert to policymakers in this country.

The American Medical Association's "Physicians Coalition Against Family Violence" is now entering its fifth year in an attempt to develop a broad-based coalition of physicians. The coalition was formed after research found that when victims of domestic violence were asked who could have made a difference in their lives, and whom they would have preferred to tell of the



*Robert E. McAfee, a surgeon practicing in South Portland, Maine, is the immediate Past President of the American Medical Association. Dr. McAfee has taken an active role in his community and state on health-care issues, focusing on domestic violence. He also serves on a number of Federal boards dealing with violence.*

## Getting Guns Out of Kids' Hands

repetitive events that may have led up to a near fatal injury their family physician was, surprisingly, identified 87 percent of the time. That was slightly more than would wish to tell their priest, their pastor or rabbi, and considerably more than would wish to tell the police.

Given that ominous responsibility, one then asks how good a job as physicians do we do when the victim is in our office, our clinic, our emergency ward. Additional research indicated that we average probably less than 10 percent of the time to routinely ask or screen for violence. It then became apparent to the American Medical Association that we needed to elevate the discussion of violence to the public health problem that it is, encouraging dialogue and routine screening. It also was apparent that we needed to improve each physician's diagnostic ability. Therefore we have published six separate protocols dealing with aspects of family violence.

The Physicians Coalition now has an advisory council with over 37 specialty societies and organizations involved in an ongoing effort to help disseminate information and create new knowledge.

No initiative on violence can be successful without acknowledging the impact of "virtual violence" in our society. The impact of television, motion pictures, video games and rap music enter our lives on a regular basis. The AMA has been part of initiatives within the network and cable television programs to assess the degree of violence, to advise regarding research allocations, to make suggestions regarding an improved rating system, particularly for children, the manner in which gratuitous violence may be diminished, as well as ongoing parental advice to monitor and develop better viewing habits of children growing up in our society. The next protocol from the AMA will deal with the physician's role in advising patients and parents of the impact of the media and how we can minimize its adverse affect.

The National Family Violence Defense Fund in San Francisco, which has been working for a number of years in the field of domestic violence, contin-

Alfred Blumstein, Dean of the H. John Heinz 3d School of Public Policy and Management at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, has said that the most dramatic change in the crime story in the last five to 10 years is the growth of homicide by young people of young people. Asked in an interview in the April 30, 1995 edition of *Law Enforcement News*, a publication of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York, for suggestions on dealing with the problem Blumstein said:

"I think that in almost all jurisdictions it's illegal for young people to be carrying a gun—and 'young people' may mean 18, it may be 21, and maybe it should be something like 22 or 24. They are violating the law, and enforcement of that would entail not violation of Constitutional rights that has been claimed by some. . . .

"We have been obsessed with the illegal drug markets for the past 15 years and have paid no attention to the illegal gun markets. So we should do that quite aggressively. In the federal crime bill of 1994, both possession of guns by kids and the sale of guns to kids were made Federal crimes. The first

one hardly seems an appropriate Federal crime because that really relates to local enforcement. The second is clearly an appropriate Federal crime because much of the gun sales do, in fact, involve interstate commerce.

"In most cases, the police confiscate guns and don't do anything with them. They may put them in a gun locker but they don't use them as a means of investigating that gun market. Just as we do plea bargains, there might well be 'gun bargains:' attach bargains to giving information in regard to the gun and the source of it. That allows the police to track the chain of supply up from the bottom. There is also a serial marker on the gun, which you don't have with drugs. The serial marker allows them to track the chain of supply down from the top. Furthermore, they should be doing much more in the way of matching serial numbers that link guns confiscated in crimes, guns confiscated from kids, pawnshop records, records maintained by manufacturers and wholesalers and retailers, so that we can do a much better job of tracking how these guns got there." ■

ues its significant agenda and has been a depository of information that has been disseminated to the country. Contacts to the corporate world, particularly with organizations such as Marshall's, Polaroid, and others have indicated the corporate commitment for diminished violence in the work place and to assist in the family violence that may pervade employees lives. These initiatives will continue because it is a substantial source of absenteeism and disability in the work force.

Within the federation of organized medicine, initiatives at state and county levels have been significant throughout this country. I can think of no state in which some initiative on family violence has not taken place within the last

five years, most of which are on an ongoing basis and will not only provide direction, information and assistance at the organizational level, but also commit their members to an important role with their patients in their own offices.

The increasing number of efforts by all parts of our society to eliminate the problem of family violence must be recognized. It may take a generation to save a generation in this country. We need to continue to heighten our efforts in the educational arena, particularly involving children, to accept alternatives to violence in our society, if the rates of youth violence are to continue to fall. ■



# A Grueling Standard to Live By

BY CAROLE KNEELAND

Violent crime rates have been falling, yet sensational crime coverage on television news has been rising. So have the fears of viewers who have an exaggerated sense they might be victims of such crimes. At KVUE-TV, we decided it was time to fight back against a perceived crime wave we in the media helped create. We vowed to take a more responsible approach, trying to paint a more balanced picture of violent crime in our community. We've been working all year to raise the standard for covering violent crime news on television.

Violent crime can be easy to cover. It's shouted out to us on police scanners in our newsrooms. The video is dramatic. The police do the research. Often all the people we need to interview are right there at the scene—the victim, the suspect, the police, the neighbors. Our tendency has been to gather our video as quickly as possible and rush to air. Often the only questions asked were "How good is the video?" and "Can we get live?" It's as if the police scanners were hot-wired into the television set. And the result is one meaningless violent crime story after another, wallpapering the television newscasts with blood, body bags and police tape.

We decided we must begin asking ourselves the same type of questions about violent crimes as we ask about every other story we consider covering. After months of analyzing how and why we were covering individual violent crime stories, we arrived at these five questions as guidelines:

1. Is there an immediate threat to public safety?
2. Is there a threat to children?
3. Do viewers need to take action?

4. Is there a significant community impact?

5. Is it a crime prevention effort?

Violent crimes that didn't meet at least one of these guidelines would not appear in our newscasts.

There were daily, heated discussions as we made decisions, one violent crime at a time. We received dramatic video from our network of a man shooting another man in the head in Hawaii. Other stations aired it. We did not. The network sent video of a New York subway scene where four people had been killed by a gunman. Other stations aired that. We did not. An 82-year-old Austin man stabbed his wife and the police SWAT team surrounded his house for several hours before he came out. Clearly feeble and nearly blind, the man was arrested without incident; the woman survived. There was no history of abuse. Neighbors and family felt it was an isolated, private matter unlikely to recur. The other stations led their newscasts with it. We did not air it at all.

But these guidelines are a grueling standard to live by. It takes more time to be this deliberative about covering violent crimes. We still rush out to cover violent crimes, but we expect our journalists to gather more information. And there is considerable discussion before we air a story. Sometimes we don't. We deliberate while the competition is going to air with sketchy details and breathless reports live from the scene of the crime. We're not used to getting beat on a story. We're used to being first on the air with it. This sort of thoughtful delay goes against our competitive instincts.

One of the most difficult calls was a weekend murder of three people in the tiny neighboring town of Elgin. They were strangers to Elgin citizens—three

men from Mexico, working temporarily in Austin, who came out to an abandoned house in Elgin to party. There was a lot of drinking, and then they started firing guns at each other. Three died. We spent two days asking our questions before deciding not to air it.

- Is there an immediate threat? Police said no. They told us the men had killed each other and they weren't looking for any suspects.

- Is there a threat to children? There were no children in the vicinity.



*Carole Kneeland directs a news staff of 50 as Vice President/News Director of KVUE-TV, an ABC affiliate in Austin, Texas. She covered state government for WFAA in Dallas from 1978 to 1989 and was the Austin Bureau Chief from 1981 to 1989. She also covered the 1988 presidential election and many spot news stories, including hurricanes, the Ixtoc I oil spill, train derailments and fires. Born in Salem, Oregon, Kneeland grew up in Kent, Washington. She is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of Washington.*

• Do viewers need to take action? The incident was over. The problem wasn't expected to continue. There were rumors this house had been used as a place of prostitution. Neither the neighbors nor the authorities could confirm that. We don't air rumors.

• Is there significant community impact? For two days we asked neighbors and other citizens of Elgin how they felt. We couldn't find anyone expressing great concern. People said no one knew these three men. They said it wasn't surprising when three men mix drinking and shooting, someone might get killed. They didn't feel the abandoned house would be used again for such purposes, or that anyone would follow their example.

• Is it a crime prevention effort? None was initiated.

Worried we might be accused of minimizing the story because they were Mexican nationals rather than U.S. citizens, we hypothetically changed them to three white guys from Lubbock, Texas. We came to the same conclusion that it wasn't important to air the story.

There were other violent crimes that did fit the guidelines, and we aired them:

• A University of Texas student murdered his wife and 4-year-old child with a gun that was illegal on UT property. In addition, there was a history of domestic abuse that, had it been stopped, might have prevented these murders.

• A white man pulled up in front of a black family gathering, pointed a shotgun, shouted some racial threats and killed one black man.

• A young woman hitch-hiker was killed in a hit-and-run case by two men pulling a cattle trailer and police were still looking for them. Another woman was abducted from the parking lot of the grocery store as she arrived for work in the early morning hours. Police were still looking for her killer. As part of our more in-depth investigation of both of those crimes, we uncovered a serious situation in a neighboring county where the sheriff's office didn't have a big enough staff to continue its pursuit of criminals. As a result, county officials allocated more money.

• An 11-year-old was indicted for the beating death of a 4-year-old in day care. We did, of course, a number of stories about the circumstances. But we also reported that the age of violent juveniles was dropping and we investigated day care standards.

• When a gunman killed many children in a schoolyard in Scotland, we aired it. We also aired a similar attack on tourists in Australia.

Because we were spending less air time on individual violent crimes, we also had more time for stories on other important subjects: an explanation of how the flat tax proposals would affect viewers; an analysis of why the cost of living had skyrocketed in Austin; the story of a principal of an elementary school full of higher-income, successful students who decided to transfer to a low-income school where kids are failing because she thought she might be able to make a greater difference there. We did numerous stories on violent crime prevention efforts by neighborhood groups and people working specifically to bring down the juvenile crime rate.

We don't hold our criteria out to be perfect. And we're not sure we've always made the right call. But we do feel we're making a difference by making the effort. We advertised that we were going to cover violent crime more responsibly, that we would give viewers a more balanced picture of violence in our community. We asked for feedback. We got a lot, overwhelmingly very positive. Viewers told us that they felt valued by us, that finally someone was listening to their concerns. Some said they had started watching local news again. Austin Police Chief Elizabeth Watson called it commendable from a community service standpoint because she feels sensationalized reporting fuels unjustified fear.

But a few people worried that they might miss crimes they should know about, that we were somehow sanitizing the crime situation. They were helpful and instructive. Still, even now we carry far more crime, as a percentage of our newscasts, than the rate for Austin.

A few also suggested that by not reporting every violent death we were

devaluing the life of each victim. Yet we also don't report on dozens of other lives lost each week because of heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and AIDS. Far more people die of these diseases than die of violent crimes.

One of our competitors labeled it censorship, as if every crime has a constitutional right to be on the television news. Yet that station, like all of us, chooses every day not to air some news for lack of interest or time. We've simply raised our standard for including violent crime in our newscasts and we've let the public know our standard.

The effect on the KVUE 24 journalists has been profound. They are investigating violent crimes more thoroughly. The level of discussion about violent crime coverage is more thoughtful and constant, and the search for solutions is much more determined. We plan to continue on this course, trying to air information viewers need on violent crimes, while not deluging them with sensational violence. But we consider it a work in progress.

Of course, there's the bottom line: ratings. In February, the first ratings period when we were implementing this policy, we came out a strong number one, across the board, with every newscast. They were our highest numbers in a decade. We held our lead in May. There's no way to tell how much the new approach to crime is contributing to our success. But it certainly isn't hurting. ■

## Causes of Violence

[Television] accounts for about 10 percent of violence, which means that 90 percent is caused by other things. Violence is a multidetermined behavior. It's caused by genetic, biological, physiological, macroeconomic and macrosocial factors, all of which can account for some part of the variance.—*Leonard Eron, Adjunct Research Scientist at the University of Michigan Research Center for Group Dynamics, in Michigan Today, June 1996.*

# Trying to Muzzle the Beast

BY DIANA K. SUGG

**R**unning up the wide steps two at a time, I suddenly realized the huge mansion was empty. Nothing decorated the beige walls, or covered the oversized windows. In room after room, pieces of hot sunlight hit the naked hardwood floors. My sneakers squeaked against the shiny wood. The portable police scanner shoved in my purse beeped and echoed through the hall. I turned the corner. The meat freezer sat in the exact center of the room. I charged over to it, lifting the heavy white top. The body was inside, blood leaking thick over the ice.

I let the top drop shut and scribbled down some notes. I felt everything in my stomach coming up as I tried to run out. But my legs wouldn't work right. It was 4:20 a.m. I was a police reporter at *The Sacramento Bee*, and I was sleeping. This was one of my nightmares.

A full five years after covering crime, I can still remember every detail of this dream, and of so many real tragedies that I came upon every day in a four-county area of 1.5 million people. Using arrest sheets, rounds of phone calls, and, most often, visits to crime scenes and interviews with families and victims, I sifted the facts, trying to determine which ones should get my time and the newspaper's space.

But, unlike other beats, crime often lacks elements that can help measure a story's worth. A shooting doesn't involve 467,000 people, or \$2.2 billion, like Maryland's Medicaid program. Still, in our efforts not to overplay crime and to put it in context we sometimes make arbitrary judgments and miss human stories.

We need to follow our instincts, get to know the cops and the coroners, and dig up the details on a shooting that might seem routine. That's because trying to create rules for which rapes, murders or beatings to cover, or how to play them, can be like trying to muzzle a raging beast.

At least that's how it seemed to me.

Day after day, I carefully wrote down all the details. The woman raped in front of her two children. The baby stabbed after her mother held her up as protection when her boyfriend came at her with a serrated kitchen knife. The 11-year-old girl who watched, through her apartment window, as a man killed her best friend's father, leaving the body in a puddle in the parking lot.

With all the basic information, I numbered the potential stories and marched up to my editor. I ran down the list, and we disposed of items quickly. The woman who saved herself from rape by running into her bathroom, locking the door, and calling 911 with her cellular

phone, earned a digest item because of her ingenuity. A mentally ill man who held off several officers on the roof of his house for more than an hour with a steak knife—until he was temporarily shocked with a taser—was crossed off because it was considered a family situation.

But creating neat lists and being efficient can never clarify a thing that is living. The police beat sucks a reporter into a vortex of painful lives and intense emotions. I felt that nothing was more important. This was life and death, and all shades in between.

I can still hear the screeches of the woman high on crack, or the hiss of the crack dealer into the narcotic officer's

*Diana K. Sugg, 31, covered crime at The Sacramento Bee. The photo shows Sugg interviewing Carl Webb, a Blood gang member, as he was booked in the Sacramento County Jail. Sugg had been riding with narcotics officers when Webb pulled a sawed-off shotgun on one of the officers.*

*Sugg was the first winner of the Al Nakkula Award for Police Reporting, a national prize. Her account of working the police beat will be published this fall with a dozen others in "Crime on Deadline." She has worked for The Associated Press in Philadelphia and The Spartanburg (S.C.) Herald-Journal. She earned her*

*master's degree on a Kiplinger Fellowship at Ohio State University in 1992. In 1993, she became the medical writer at The Bee, winning a national prize as the outstanding young health/science/medical reporter. She is now a health reporter at The Baltimore Sun.*



LOS BERNSTEIN

hidden microphone: "If I find out you're a cop, I'm going to slit your throat." I can still see the mother falling to the ground and pounding the turf of a golf course where her daughter had been killed by a falling tree.

At *The Bee*, the editors encouraged these human stories. But I still wonder about the ones I passed on.

The mentally ill man who was finally brought off the roof, for example, was a story I considered at the time to be too long, too complicated, a private situation that had suddenly boiled over into a public spectacle. I watched as police flashlights exposed the man in shafts of white light. The story was important, about a man and his illness, and how millions of American families struggle to take care of relatives because there are so few places for them to live. But we never wrote about it. Like so many other items these incidents were somehow ruled out. That can be a blessing when you are struggling to write two or three daily stories and several digest items, and you've just heard a "possible kidnapping" call over the scanner.

However, the police beat is a gold mine, an almost endless continuum that holds so many gems. Ordinary people who make an extraordinary impact. Police officers who become so jaded they can't bring themselves to live within a half hour of the area they patrol. Sherry McGowan, a middle-aged clerk at Goldie's Adult Bookstore, a woman who always had spare change and a kind word for the lonely and the homeless—until she was murdered.

The crime beat is also the place where so many of society's troubles eventually come to the surface, from the powerlessness of restraining orders, to the families who struggle to live with a mentally ill relative. Interviewing neighbors on one particularly crime-ridden street, Caselli Circle, I discovered that these people were discriminated against because of their location. No one would deliver a pizza or even a newspaper there because of the danger.

Deaths, be they accidental or criminal, also point up holes in the social safety net. The lax oversight of the mentally retarded and other needy people who receive Social Security checks

wasn't exposed until seven of their bodies turned up in the yard of a downtown boardinghouse. The woman who was supposed to be watching over them was cashing their checks.

Other trends may not be as sensational, but still warrant attention. While following narcotics officers for three months on a series, I noticed how we kept running into children on drug raids. They poked their heads out of bedroom doors to see their parents shoved on the carpet and handcuffed. I wrote about the increasing number of children who were themselves taken away in police cars to the receiving home, and how it affected them.

Reporters do have time and space constraints. Editors are careful to present crime in context and not overplay it. The sheer volume and often sensationalistic tone of many television news programs and true crime shows have only increased the print media's burden to use perspective.

Over time, many newspapers have developed a rough set of standards. The determining factors are often the location of the crime, who the victim was, and whether there were any extenuating circumstances that increase the incident's importance. With these realities and their workload, though, reporters often don't find out about the extenuating circumstances. A quick check to make sure the area is a high-drug zone, and a comment from police that it's no big deal, can squelch interest on the part of reporters or editors.

It is easy to grow cynical, to dismiss anything that doesn't absolutely require attention. Perhaps the most important job of a reporter is to care, even after covering dozens of child murders, even when editors are dismissive.

We have an obligation to break down stereotypes, to check out some shootings labeled "drug-related" by police, to talk to the criminals as well as the victims. They are the citizens of our community. They have been lost. Someone should recognize that. Their stories are the ones that readers remember—and learn from.

I once wrote about a homeless man, Joseph King Jr., who committed suicide. He jumped from the loading dock

behind Sacramento's Memorial Auditorium on a December night. I discovered that King, 49, had worked as an electrical engineer. When his marriage broke up, he began drinking and lost his job and everything else.

But this tall, shy man couldn't fend for himself on the streets. Another homeless man, Michael Lockhart, began to watch out for him. For four years Lockhart taught him how to get services in shelters and beat the cold. In the parks at night, King slept in the middle, with Lockhart and another friend on either side for protection. In turn, King taught them to be gentle, to call their mothers the few times they stayed in motels. He once stopped them from stepping on a line of ants.

On this chilly night, though, King seemed to be worn out. He talked with his friend about finding a job, maybe at Taco Bell or Burger King, and living normally again. Then he looked Lockhart straight in the eye and, inexplicably, said, "Please don't leave me. Don't leave me." He walked quickly over to the railing and without a moment's hesitation, dove over the side.

Lockhart found his friend face down and called 911. But he didn't know for sure that King had died until homicide detectives told him. I heard the tape of their conversation. "That was my partner. He can't go out of here like this," Lockhart said, kicking his chair and hanging his head on the table. Then, he whispered under his breath, "God, please take care of him."

The next day, I talked with him. Only 31, Lockhart was wrinkled, dry and dirty. He was almost yelling and crying at the same time. "He was my best friend. That was the only friend I ever had that was something to me."

I don't have an answer for how newspapers play crime and violence. My perspective as a police reporter is that maybe I lost my perspective. The people I wrote about still crowd my mind and my heart. Even though it could be a terrible grind, I brought their details back to the newsroom, and I fought for them. I consider it one of the most important things I have ever done. I can't forget them.

And I'm saying we shouldn't. ■

# The Test of a Sportswriter

BY BILL DWYRE

Looking back now, all the way to the late 1960's, I still remember it vividly. In fact, I'm both amazed and ashamed at the color and texture of my recall. It happened in Des Moines, where I was a very young sportswriter, fresh out of college on my first job, and taking a night off from *The Register and Tribune* by attending a hockey game. When you are 23, employed full-time on a big paper sports desk, with a regular salary and perks like good hockey tickets with which to impress your new wife, life doesn't get much better.

These were, after all, the Des Moines Oak Leafs, a scrappy contender in the International Hockey League. This was pro sports, up close and personal. This was well before journalistic cynicism set in, well before I was old enough to notice that all the players in this league were either too young to shave or so far on the other side of the hill that they couldn't even make out the peak in the distance. Nor would I have paid attention to the clientele in attendance, their red necks nicely accenting their hefty bellies. At this stage of my impressionable life, I thought it was neat to stand in the aisles, belch loudly and bellow, "Kill the SOB."

On this night, before a thousand or so of the "rounded red ones," as I took to calling Midwestern hockey fans later in life, my Oak Leafs were playing Billy LeCaine and the Port Huron, Michigan, team. I think their team name was the Flags, but whatever nickname it was, it and all the rest paled badly in comparison to the Fort Wayne Komets. To this day, I remember that name, and to this day, there is a Fort Wayne Komets hockey team.

The big match-up of the night was going to be LeCaine versus Des Moines

defenseman Ivan Predigar. LeCaine was a journeyman, which really was a nice way of saying that he was old and playing out his string in the IHL because nobody in a better league would have him any more and because he didn't know a lot of other ways to make a living, meager as it must have been. LeCaine could still skate and score. He also used his stick in a lot of ways not recommended in the hockey rule book of proper etiquette. Thus LeCaine was hated by Oak Leaf fans, who hated all opposing players, but hated him more.

Predigar was younger. He was a big guy, the player designated as the enforcer for his team. If there was a penalty to be had, or a fight to be started or joined, Predigar was your man. With a few more years of experience, he had a chance to become a full-fledged goon, but at this stage of his career, he was more reckless and exuberant than malicious.

Two guesses what his nickname was. Yup, Ivan the Terrible. That might somehow sum up nicely the wit and wisdom of Des Moines, Iowa, sports fans in the early 1960's.

Some even said he had a chance to make it in the big time. A few years later, when I knew a few people up the rung a few notches in hockey, I brought up his name, asked if he had ever even had a chance, and was answered with laughs and sneers. But in Des Moines in the late 1960's, the Oak Leafs were pretty big stuff, even if reality wasn't part of the show.

From our seats right behind the glass on the ice level, we could see things building early. Predigar would check LeCaine hard and LeCaine would elbow or slash back. Soon, the worst—and most exciting—moment I had ever seen in hockey developed.

With the rest of the players and the officials standing back a bit and trying half-heartedly to intervene, LeCaine and Predigar circled each other, ready for a stick fight.

Even back then I knew how serious this was. Even in a sport that condones its violence by its very rules-making and look-the-other-way approach, a stick fight is a mortal sin in hockey. Never can two men be allowed to slash at each



*Bill Dwyre, Sports Editor of The Los Angeles Times, is the 1996 winner of the Red Smith Award for service to sports journalism. Nicknamed "Billy Red" in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, where he was born 52 years ago, he received his A.B. degree at Notre Dame and began his journalism career at The Des Moines Register, writing picture captions. The next stop was The Milwaukee Journal where he served as a reporter, columnist and eventually Sports Editor. He joined The Los Angeles Times in 1981. He was honored for his coordination of The Times coverage of the 1984 Olympics.*

other with sharp, lethal pieces of wood. The hockey people are all in synch on this: break some arms, bash some heads, punch some noses, but never, *never* fight with sticks.

Yet it happens, and when LeCaine started maneuvering on Predigar and cutting and slashing at the slower, less crafty defenseman, you could also see what a terrible thing this was.

LeCaine made two or three thrusts forward and connected at least once. I know that for sure, since speckles of Predigar's blood landed on the glass right in front of me. Thankfully, one of the officials and a couple of the more mature players on both teams were able to dart in and wrest the sticks from each player. Murder had been averted and I'm not sure the "round reds" around me were happy about that.

Nor were the "round reds" particularly happy that both players were removed from the game and the Arena and that both would not come back for four or five games. "Let 'em finish," one beer-breathed Rhodes Scholar yelled, time after time, invoking an age-old macho cry that reaches new levels of disregard for pain with true hockey fans.

When tennis player Monica Seles

was stabbed in the back during a match by a German fan and ended up missing a couple of years of competition, the hockey guys around my sports desk at The Los Angeles Times were fond of telling each other, "Hell, if she'd been a hockey player, they'd have stitched her up and she would have finished the game."

When the LeCaine-Predigar stick fight was over, the game went on, almost as if nothing had happened. Players skated, checked, shot and scored. Amazingly, my interest in the game went on, too. Then and there, although I didn't realize it, or think about it until much later, I had passed my first test as a sportswriter. I had accepted what had happened as part of the game, part of my life for years to come as an observer, editor and writer.

This meant that I would have what it takes to view these things and report on them as an observer. I could do this job. I was, at birth or somehow along the way, equipped with a shield of insensitivity; I had a mechanism that told me to report about and analyze LeCaine and Predigar, rather than call the police and scream and holler until they book everybody in the place for felony, inhumanity and stupidity.

Yup, I was going to make it. I would stand back in years to come, a leader of opinion, while Kermit Washington nearly killed Rudy Tomjanovich with one roundhouse punch at center court in the Forum in Ingelwood one night; or as Woody Hayes sucker-punched the kid from Clemson; or as boxer after boxer bloodied opponent after opponent; or as Nick Van Exel knocked the referee over the table; or after a Colombian soccer player was gunned down at home after he suffered the misfortune of kicking in an own-goal against the United States in the World Cup in 1994.

It is many years later now. I've seen hundreds of such things. I always think they are frightening, often even stupid. But if I'm being honest, I also tend to find excitement in them. I reason that it is the excitement of having something high profile and different to write about—that it is the writing opportunity, not the violence itself, that drives my sweat glands.

I also know that, even when I write

or edit in a way that tells the public what a bad thing certain violent events are (Van Exel, Woody Hayes, etc.), I harbor no expectations that either my editorial stance or my eloquence will change anything.

The games we play in this country feature large athletes with huge competitive drives and huge financial stakes. Nothing is going to change. We just need to keep the level of violence reasonable. Huge explosions should be the exception rather than the rule.

A week after we saw LeCaine and Predigar's stick fight, my wife and I saw Predigar. He was in church for Sunday mass, dressed in coat and tie, his wife nicely dressed and holding hands with their young son, whose scrubbed look and fresh face made him look like a choir boy.

I remarked on this to my wife. She snarled a reply that indicated she had no tolerance, in any situation, for somebody who could, and did, willfully pursue the act of murdering another with a hockey stick.

I was stunned. I had already separated the game and the church scene in my mind. She never could.

Nor, clearly, could she ever make it as a sportswriter. ■

## Violence as Art

We traveled on Friday evenings by subway to the old Madison Square Garden. Before the fights, the lobby was jammed with neighborhood tough guys and off-duty cops, old fighters with crumpled faces, gamblers with dead eyes and pearl-gray hats and velvet collars on their coats. There were a lot of pinkie rings. Some guys brought their women with them, great fleshy creatures with blinding hair and glistening scarlet lips. Everybody smoked. And the very air seemed charged with the coming blood rite. We were all there to see violence transformed into art.—*Pete Hamill, now disillusioned, describing his infatuation with "the great dark prince of sports."* *Esquire*, June 1996.

## Tabloid Spirituality

And at its best, a healthy tabloid culture raises spiritual questions otherwise unaddressed in a secular environment.

[New York] Post columnist Andrea Peyser's book "Mother Love, Deadly Love: The Susan Smith Murders," broached the issue in the plainest language: "Why would a mother kill her own children?" In fact, of journalism's famous five W's—who, what, when, where, why—the last, taken in its metaphysical sense, might be the tabloid sensibility's deepest expression. The tabloid "why" is inherently unanswerable.—*Steven Cuozzo, Executive Editor of The New York Post, in "It's Alive! How America's Oldest Newspaper Cheated Death and Why It Matters."* *Times Books.*

# A Primer on Covering Victims

BY FRANK OCHBERG

Whenever a reporter meets a survivor of traumatic events there is a chance that the journalist will witness—and may even precipitate—posttraumatic stress disorder. Therefore it is important that working journalists (including grizzled veterans) anticipate PTSD, recognize it and report it, while earning the respect of the public and those interviewed. The recognition of PTSD and related conditions enhances not only a reporter's professionalism, but also the reporter's humanitarianism.

PTSD is three reactions at one time, all caused by an event that terrifies, horrifies or renders one helpless. The triad of disabling responses is:

1. Recurring intrusive recollections.
2. Emotional numbing and constriction of life activity.
3. A physiological shift in the fear threshold, affecting sleep, concentration and sense of security.

This syndrome must last at least a month before PTSD can be diagnosed. Furthermore, a severe trauma must be evident and causally related to the cluster of symptoms. There are people who are fearful, withdrawn and plagued by episodes of vague, troubling sensations, but they cannot identify a specific traumatic precipitant.

PTSD should only be diagnosed when an event of major dimension—a searing, stunning, haunting event—has clearly occurred and is relived, despite strenuous attempts to avoid the memory.

## 1. Intrusive Recollections

The core feature of PTSD, distinguishing the condition from anxiety or depression, is the unavoidable echo of the event, often vivid, occasionally so

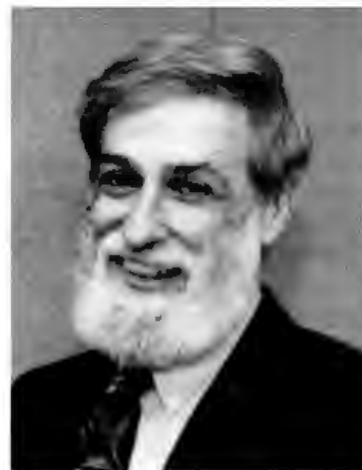
real that it is called a flashback or hallucination. The survivor of a plane crash feels a falling sensation, re-visualizes the moment of impact, then fears going crazy because his or her mind and body return uncontrollably to that harrowing scene. A victim of the "cooler bandit," whose modus operandi was to rob urban convenience stores at gunpoint and force the clerks into refrigerated storage rooms, had nightmares for more than a year.

There are important distinctions among traumatic memories. Some are clearly memories. The beholder knows this is a recollection, painful but not terrifying. Through time and (often) through telling and re-telling of the trauma story, the memory is muted, modulated and mastered. It no longer has a powerful, disruptive presence. It is a piece of personal history. On the other hand, that personal history may burst forth into awareness and a trauma survivor may feel and act as though bombs are falling, a rapist is ready to strike or the death of a loved one is witnessed again. (The loss of a loved one and the consequent bereavement is not, by definition, a source of PTSD, unless the death evoked images of terror or horror. Tragic loss is often an aspect of PTSD, but shocking imagery is not usually part of natural death.)

Some repetitive recollections include regrettable acts by the person with PTSD. A patient of mine killed a boy in Vietnam. It was self-defense, in combat, but indelible and inexcusable in my patient's overactive conscience. Guilt—crushing guilt—was a major component of his intrusive recollection.

## 2. Emotional Anesthesia Constricting Life Activity

The numbing may protect a person from overwhelming distress between memories, but it also robs a person of joy and love and hope. While participating in a national PTSD research effort, I interviewed dozens of soldiers, decades after their service in Vietnam. To these veterans, "survivor" meant being no more than a survivor and considerably less than a fully functioning human being. Painful memories



*Dr. Frank Ochberg is a pioneer in the study of victims of violence. A psychiatrist, Ochberg has worked with and studied victims of war, terrorism, domestic violence, rape, incest and natural disaster in many countries. When American hostages were released from 444 days of captivity in Teheran, he was the expert commentator for ABC, "Nightline" and "Good Morning America." When human shields were held by Saddam Hussein, he helped organize a rescue mission by hostage wives. He holds adjunct professorships in psychiatry, criminal justice and journalism at Michigan State University.*

might have subsided. Anxiety attacks were tolerable. But the capacity for feeling pleasure was gone.

These victims were not necessarily sad or morose, just incapable of delight. Why bowl or ride horses or climb mountains when the feeling of fun is gone? Some marriages survived, dutiful contracts of cohabitation, but devoid of intimacy and without the shared pride of watching children flourish—even when the children were flourishing.

Numbing and avoidance are less prominent, less visible and less frequent than the more dramatic memories and anxieties. Early on, most survivors of trauma will consciously avoid reminders and change familiar patterns to prevent an unwanted recollection. For example, some ex-hostages from a notorious train hijacking in the north of Holland avoided all trains for weeks. Some avoided only the particular train on which the hostage incident had occurred. Others took that train, but changed to a bus for the few miles near the site of the trauma.

Numbing and avoidance are adaptive to a point, then become a serious impediment to recovery. They can also mislead an interviewer of a survivor into seriously underestimating the severity of a traumatic event. There is a popular belief that victims of rape, kidnapping and other violent crimes should be full of feeling, tearful, shuddering, even hysterical, after the assault leaves. When feelings are muted, frozen or numb, the survivor may not be believed. When testimony in court is mechanical and unembroidered, jurors may assume that damages were minimal or never inflicted. I have testified as an expert for the prosecution (and for the plaintiff in a civil suit) on several occasions to explain this phenomenon. The victims were numb or withdrawn or both and therefore did not come forward immediately. When they did come forward, they appeared to untrained observers to be indifferent, unconcerned and unharmed, when, in fact, they were in a state of profound posttraumatic stress.

This dimension of PTSD includes psychogenic amnesia. Along with loss of emotional tone and limited life pur-

suits are holes in the fiber of recollection. For example, an opera singer, battered by her husband, could not recall the most serious beatings. She was finally ready to divorce him and she needed to testify in court at a settlement hearing. After several supportive sessions, including hypnosis, she remembered his choking, almost strangling her. Eventually, all of the memories returned, and she could joke, "He not only threatened my life but my livelihood! No wonder I put that out of my mind."

### 3. Lowered Threshold

This is physiological. Unexpected noises cause the person to shudder or jump. The response is automatic and not necessarily related to stimuli associated with the original trauma.

A patient of mine, a bank teller who was robbed, held hostage, then kidnapped, was not exposed to gunfire or loud sounds during her ordeal. But six months later, she was visibly startled and upset by the rumble of a train near my office.

It is as though the alarm mechanism that warns us of danger is on a hair trigger, easily and erroneously set off. A person lives with so many false alarms that he or she cannot concentrate, cannot sleep restfully and becomes irritable or reclusive. A normal sex life is difficult with such apprehension. PTSD therefore impairs the enjoyment of intimacy, and this, in turn, isolates the sufferer from loved ones—the ideal human source of reassurance and respect.

Often, the anxiety takes familiar shape: panic and agoraphobia. Panic is a sudden, intense state of fear, frequently with no obvious trigger, in which the heart beats rapidly, respirations are quick and shallow, and fingertips tingle. There is light-headedness. There may be sensations of choking or smothering, and the person feels he or she is dying or going crazy or both. After a few panic attacks, a person will often suffer agoraphobia, avoiding places such as shopping malls and supermarkets, where an attack would be particularly embarrassing.

### Few Reach This Condition

Thus PTSD has not only a variety of dimensions and components, but vastly different effects and implications. Some trauma survivors are continually reminded of their victimization and experience relief when they tell the details to others. Some survivors are humiliated by their dehumanization or laden with guilt for harming another person. They refuse to discuss details. Some are dazed, moving in and out of trance-like states. Some are full of fear, hypervigilant, easily startled, unable to concentrate, wary of strangers. The syndrome may be evident soon after the trauma or may emerge years later.

### Who Gets PTSD?

Most current research shows that the intensity and duration of traumatic events correlates positively with the occurrence of PTSD. But individuals exposed to the same extreme stress will vary in their responses. Heredity could play an important role. Just as some children are born shy and others exhibit a bolder temperament, some of us are born with the brain pattern that keeps horror alive, while others quickly recover. As a varied, interdependent human species, we benefit from our differences. Those with daring fight the tigers. Those with PTSD preserve the impact of cruelty for the rest of us.

I tell patients that there is nothing abnormal about those who suffer. It is a normal reaction to abnormal events. Anyone could develop PTSD given enough trauma.

### Other Difficulties

Victims of human cruelty (as opposed to victims of natural disasters) experience additional emotional difficulties that are not listed in the official diagnostic manual and are not part of PTSD. Foremost among these is shame. Although violent criminals should feel ashamed, they seldom do. Instead, the victim who has been beaten, robbed or raped is humiliated. This person has been abruptly dominated, subjugated, stripped of dignity, invaded and made, in his or her own mind, into a lower form of life.



Who cannot recall being bullied as a child, forced to admit weakness, mortified by the process? As an adult, this shame quickly becomes self-blame: Why was I there? What could I have done differently? Why did I let it happen?

Self-blame may actually be a good sign, correlating with self-reliance and self-regard. But it may also be hostility turned inward, a relentless self-criticism and downward spiral into profound depression.

Hatred is another human emotional response to trauma with no reference in the diagnostic manual. On the path to recovery and possible forgiveness victims of cruelty are entitled to hate their abusers. But survivors often do less hating than one might expect. Sometimes they are simply grateful to be alive. They may, ironically and paradoxically, love the kidnapper who could have killed them, but instead gave them life. This is called the Stockholm Syndrome, named for the bizarre outcome of a crime in Sweden in 1974 when a hostage-taker and a bank teller fell in love and had sex in the vault during a siege. Like Patty Hearst and countless others, the teller denied that her assailant was a villain, but responded passionately to his power to spare her life.

It is the Mothers Against Drunk Drivers who are MADD. The co-victims, the next of kin of the injured and dead, are more often the ones moved to rage and vengeance, if not hatred. Obsessive hatred is a corrosive condition, seldom the focus of psychiatric treatment, but of major concern to historians and journalists.

### A Guide to Interviewing

An understanding of posttraumatic stress disorder is vital to journalists in their coverage of the way victims experience emotional wounds, particularly wounds that are deliberately and cruelly inflicted.

A relatively recent area of clinical science, traumatic stress studies teaches us that victims of violence have several distinguishable patterns of emotional response. These patterns are easily recognized once their outlines are understood. Seeing the logic in a set of psychological consequences re-humanizes

## Incest a Major Problem

A well-publicized posttraumatic condition different from posttraumatic stress disorder was known until recently as multiple personality disorder (MPD). It is now renamed dissociative identity disorder (DID). More than 90 percent of the sufferers are female and more than 90 percent were abused as children, often father-daughter incest. There are many more cases in treatment in the United States than anywhere else in the world.

I am convinced that incest is a major problem in many countries. Currently, there is a debate raging about false memories, pitting adults who recall childhood sexual abuse decades later against parents who deny being sexual abusers. Hospital records and child protective services document hundreds of thousands of cases of child sexual abuse each year in this country and roughly half involve fathers or stepfa-

thers, so there can be no doubt that incest is occurring.

Both boys and girls are usually abused by men. The children chosen for these deviant acts are quite young, five or six being the preferred age. One way that little girls defend themselves psychologically is by going into a trance. Little Mary says to herself, "Daddy isn't doing this to me, he's doing it to Belinda." Belinda exists, at first, only during abuse episodes. She is an altered state of consciousness, or, in the language of specialists, "an alter." As she matures, her personality develops. She becomes a separate self who may or may not communicate with Mary. If this separation into two personalities is effective, Mary may then generate three or four—or dozens—of alters in response to abuse and other life traumas. ■—*Frank Ochberg.*

and dignifies a person who may feel dehumanized and robbed of dignity. A sensitive explanation of the traumatic stress response aids recovery. When we as a society pay attention to the victim as he or she heals, we are less likely to be consumed by hate and focused on perpetrators, thereby contributing to a contagion of cruelty.

Journalists can report on victims, help victims as multi-dimensional human beings and possibly, just possibly, reduce the impulse toward vengeance in the process.

### Timing

When reporters seek a trauma survivor's comments soon after the event, they have a high likelihood of encountering one or more of the emotional states mentioned above. As time passes, there is a greater possibility of emotional composure. But there is also a possibility of distorted recollection, selective memory and competition from many other interviewers, each with a different agenda, each raising new ques-

tions in the mind of the person interviewed. Therefore, even from a psychiatric point of view, there is no formula for setting the ideal time for a posttraumatic interview.

Assume you have access to a clerk who was robbed at gunpoint an hour ago. She appears uninjured. You might begin, "Have you had a chance to discuss this with anyone else?" This tells you where this interview is in the predictable sequence of police investigations, insurance and management inquiries and conversations with family, friends and others, including other reporters.

It also allows you to follow up with questions about those discussions, if they occurred. An interviewee reveals a lot about conversational preferences, when given the chance. For example, he or she might indicate a desire to talk at length, to be brief and to the point, to learn about the incident from you or to get away from the scene—all in response to an open-ended question such

as, "How was that previous discussion for you?"

Then you can set the stage for your interview, having assessed your subject's attitude and emotional state before he or she regards you as being responsible for his or her feelings. Have your subjects focus on how someone else made them feel.

Consider a very different interview. It is the one-year anniversary of a major catastrophe such as the Oklahoma City bombing and you are assigned to interview a survivor who now lives outside of Oklahoma in your small town. You telephone to arrange a meeting. This story, a year rather than an hour later, will deal with emotions throughout that year and on this anniversary date. The incident is less important than the impact of the incident on one individual through time. The interview may—probably will—cause vivid recollections. Do you mention this over the phone? Or do you assume that a willingness to be interviewed signifies a willingness to revisit painful memories?

The fact that this is a feature rather than a news story gives you more flexibility in arranging the time and place, meeting once or on several occasions. But you the journalist may be the cause of emotional injury, since this person was exposed to major traumatic stress and has reached some new adjustment state that you will disrupt. In a way, this is a more delicate, difficult situation.

### Setting the Stage

Setting the stage is important regardless of the timing of an interview. A trauma survivor should be approached with respect, neither gingerly nor casually. This is a person who has witnessed and lived through a newsworthy event outside normal experience, someone who has something to share with the community and who undertakes some re-exposure to traumatic memories by talking with you. If you convey respect for this situation, then you are off to a good start.

Consider the possibility that a survivor might be more comfortable at home or might want to be out of the family circle. Some might feel more secure

with a friend or relative present.

The clerk robbed at gunpoint would probably be encountered first at the convenience store. But if she had the authority to leave, to be joined by a friend, you might get more details, more spontaneity, than if you stayed at the scene of the crime. Of course, a deadline might preclude taking an extra hour to learn about the emotional impact of the robbery on your witness/victim. Obviously, if you can remove someone to a comfortable, secluded place, the chance of interruption is reduced and concentration is enhanced.

Interviewing people as a Red Cross volunteer at disaster sites is more like the field conditions journalists encounter. When serving in that capacity, I set the stage as best I can, trying to assess quickly whether a person wants privacy or the proximity of others and whether the comfort level is greater with the door open or closed. One woman preferred to sit on the floor, surrounded by her soggy belongings, as she sought help at a shelter after the 1994 Northern California floods. This woman was agoraphobic before the floods, more so afterward, and I earned her trust by bringing social workers and small-business loan specialists to her, rather than having her join the crowd in the busy service center.

To set the stage for an interview, remember that the person may be in a daze, may be numb, may be easily startled, may be hypervigilant, may be confused. But the victim can usually tell you the setting that will suit them best. This may require a companion, an open door and several breaks for self-composure.

### Eliciting Emotion

As an interviewer, you can either elicit or avoid emotion. Do you want to see and hear a person's emotional state? Or do you want the individual to describe his or her feelings without displaying them? A person can tell you, "I was very upset, crying all the time, unable to work..." Or they can sob as they speak.

Most reporters would prefer to have their interviewees describe rather than display strong emotions (TV talk-show

hosts excepted). So would I, in initial interviews with trauma survivors. My ultimate objective is to help them master their uncontrolled feelings. Therefore, I usually say that we can, if possible, defer dealing with the full impact of the event until we know each other better, until some progress has been made.

I explain how, several weeks hence, we will get to the central part of the traumatic experience. But that is done when I am treating PTSD, by definition a persistent problem, at least a month long, with intrusive emotional recollections. At other times, for example, when debriefing Red Cross volunteers, I want to see strong feelings, if they are present, to get them talked out before the volunteer goes home (and to show respect for the person and for his or her emotions). That is the point of the debriefing.

But journalists are not PTSD therapists or after-incident crisis debriefers. You are interviewing a witness who will become the subject of a story.

From an ethical point of view, you should afford your interviewee as much control as possible and as much foreknowledge as possible. You can do this by explaining your journalistic objec-



*This Brooklyn high school student was attacked with razor blades by a gang of girls, leaving her face with scars that look like tribal marks.*

©Eli Rem Murox Photos

tive. For example, you might begin, "I'm really interested in the facts of the robbery. I know this may be upsetting right after it happened, but I won't be reporting on how he made you feel." However, if your intention is otherwise, you could say, "...and I am interested in how he made you feel, then and now. Readers need to know what kind of impact these events have, and I thank you for being willing to describe them."

It is not uncommon for tears to flow during the telling of an emotional event. Therapists offer tissues. I usually say, "I'm accustomed to hearing people while they are crying, so don't worry about me." I neither urge nor discourage someone from continuing to talk, but I do try to normalize the situation. Reporters should bring tissues if a tearful interview is anticipated.

When survivors cry during interviews, they are not necessarily reluctant to continue. They may have difficulty communicating, but they often want to tell their stories. Interrupting them may be experienced as patronizing and as denying an opportunity to testify. Remember, if you terminate an interview unilaterally, because *you* find it upsetting, or you incorrectly assume that your subject wants to stop, you *may* be re-victimizing the victim.

Some people who have suffered greatly—for example, torture victims in Chile—have benefited psychologically from the opportunity to provide testimonials, and the benefits have been substantiated by research.

Members of the Michigan Victim Alliance, who serve as interviewees for the journalism students at Michigan State University, report afterward some PTSD symptoms (anxiety and intrusive recollections for one or two days), and an overall increase in self-esteem, because their stories have been heard. Often, the facts are told with considerable depth of feeling.

So the issue is not really should you, the journalist, attempt to control your subjects' emotions, but rather, how can you best facilitate a factual report, a full report, and give your interviewee a sense of respect throughout.

### Informed Consent

Should journalists offer the equivalent of a Miranda warning? "You have a right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will (especially if it is provocative or embarrassing to somebody important) be used on the front page."

That would not work. But the medical model of informed consent could be adapted for interviews with trauma victims. You might explain: "This procedure—interview and article—has benefits for the community and may benefit you. Remembering, however, may be painful for you. And your name will be used. You might have some unwanted recollections after we talk and after the story appears. In the long run, telling your story to me should be a positive thing. Any questions before we begin?"

### Stages of Response

The first set of responses after shocking events involve the pathways of the autonomic nervous system, connecting the brain, the pituitary gland, the adrenal gland and various organs of the body. Blood is shunted from the gut to the large muscles. The pupils dilate. The pulse accelerates and the stroke volume of the heart increases.

These physiological changes, shared by all mammals, prepare us for fight or flight. We are in a state of readiness for dealing with the threats our ancestors faced on the great plains of Africa: wild beasts, sudden storms, deadly enemies. We are not adapted for fine motor movements, nor for deep conscious thought. The surge of adrenaline and pounding heart we experience when our car skids on an icy highway does not help us maneuver that piece of machinery. Our danger biochemistry is atavistic. We have to fight these bodily changes as we respond to modern mechanical dangers, such as a high-speed skid.

There are perceptual changes as well. Our focus on a source of danger, be it a wild beast or a pistol pointed at us, is intensified. Objects in our peripheral vision begin to blur, a function not only of the organs of perception but the result of how impulses are received, recorded and analyzed in the brain.

Detectives, doctors and journalists all know the implications of this phenomenon: details are notoriously distorted, except for a few central features, when eyewitnesses report from incidents of threat and sudden danger.

Sometimes, a powerful threat is prolonged, as in a hostage incident, a kidnapping, some assaults and rapes. Many natural disasters—a flash flood or hurricane—may place one in mortal danger for hours rather than seconds or minutes. Such short, deadly traumas include gunshots, explosions, earthquakes and fires.

When extreme stress is prolonged (days or weeks), adaptive mechanisms collapse. This is rare. But in animal experiments, mammals suffer hemorrhagic necrosis of the adrenal gland—literally a bloody death of that organ, and, soon after, death of the organism itself.

Far more frequently, humans in states of prolonged catastrophic stress enter a second stage of adaptation. Hans Selye, the physiologist whose stress studies guide the modern era, called this a stage of resistance following a stage of shock. Now the organism is on high gain, accustomed to the increased flow of adrenaline, consciously appraising what has previously been grasped automatically.

At this point, a crime victim knows that he or she is a victim, although the person may be thinking, "This can't be happening to me." At this point, details do become evident, particularly to the trained observer. And, in group hostage situations, there is often a ritual calm, when confusion and feelings of threat diminish. This is the time when negotiations may be successful.

Disaster workers recognize a heroic phase, a second stage after the initial bedlam, when all is shock and confusion. In the second stage, people help one another, lives are saved, lost children are found. Hope and exhilaration coexist with fear and grief.

Eventually, there is a return to some equilibrium in the body, the mind and the community. This may be a time of depression and demoralization: the high-energy condition is gone. There is debris. There is loss. There is pain. Reality sinks in.

This is also the time when the press leaves. A survivor who might have been annoyed by too much attention could feel abandoned and forgotten.

Several authors describe stages of impact and recovery after shocking events or disturbing news. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross defined the denial, fear, anger and eventual acceptance after learning one has a fatal illness. A journalist may want to consider the particular sequence of stages or phases that an interviewee has experienced, where that person is now and how each stage affects the perception of events.

A discussion of stages may help the interview process, without actually "leading the witness." Consider saying, "Sometimes people go through a stage when they act without thinking, when they don't even know what is happening," and you may elicit an interesting narrative. Some people need to be reminded that they acted instinctively. Then they can recall what occurred just before that phase and right afterward.

My patient who was thrown to the floor by the "cooler bandit" recalled months later that she hid her wedding ring under a shelf, as she lay in the fetal position, expecting to be shot. She forgot this particular event during the time that she was experiencing fear and shame and all of the diagnostic PTSD symptoms.

For me, it was of special note—her instinctive protection of a valuable symbol, her refusal to yield that icon to her assailant. This woman was full of self-blame for not sounding the secret alarm, for behaving like a coward. Therapy required a diligent search for evidence to the contrary, proof that would convince her. (I was already certain that she had done what any reasonable person would have done to survive an armed robbery.) She recalled hiding her ring as we talked about the instinctive, automatic things that some people do. And she finally agreed that her instincts were correct.

### The Humanitarian Role Of the Reporter

Journalists and therapists face similar challenges when they realize their

subjects are at risk of further injury. Techniques may differ, but objectives are the same: to inform about sources of help. A therapist is not a lawyer or a security consultant, but a battered woman and an abused child need to know that shelters, restraining orders and a network of advocates are available. Therapy includes such referrals.

The reporter is not responsible for individual referrals, but could include sidebars about community resources when covering individuals who typify the kinds of victims who would benefit from such resources.

Journalists can also mobilize colleagues in the helping professions when they come upon problems that appear neglected. Ed Chen, a reporter for The Los Angeles Times, called me twice in recent years, not just for quotes about PTSD, but for help with neglected problems.

Ed covered the Gulf War. Before becoming the Dhahran Bureau chief, he interviewed wives of prisoners used as human shields. Many of these women were Middle Eastern and were sent to cities in the United States where they had no family, friends or resources. Their mental health needs were considerable and there was no federal agency equipped to respond. Several therapists, inspired in part by Ed's reporting and his requests, established an ad hoc charity, USA Give (Leslie Kern, Ph.D., director). Fifty trauma experts donated free care to 90 individuals.

Ed benefited also. Our network found him a place on the plane when a delegation of "wives of shields" flew to Baghdad to petition Saddam Hussein for the release of their husbands.

### Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder

Journalists are candidates for secondary traumatic stress disorder, an empathic response that affects us, therapists included, when our professional detachment is overwhelmed by certain life events.

Images of dead children leave an indelible mark. Firefighters, who would rather not admit that they have tender feelings, find themselves vulnerable to

the haunting memory of a burnt child or the sight of a tiny form in a body bag.

The sheer numbers of unexpected dead in one place will penetrate the defenses of hardened rescue workers. Plane crashes rank among the most difficult assignments for American Red Cross workers who normally handle floods, earthquakes and fires. At an air disaster, there is a concentration of death images that few doctors, nurses or ambulance drivers have ever seen.

Writing about journalists covering Rwanda, Roger Rosenblatt mused in The New Republic:

"Most journalists react in three stages. In the first stage, when they are young, they respond to atrocities with shock and revulsion and perhaps a twinge of guilty excitement that they are seeing something others will never see: life at its dreadful extremes. In the second stage, the atrocities become familiar and repetitive, and journalists begin to sound like Spiro Agnew: if you have seen one loss of dignity and spirit, you've seen them all. Too many journalists get stuck in this stage. They get bogged down in the routineness of the suffering. Embittered, spiteful and inadequate to their work, they curse out their bosses back home for not according them respect; they hate the people on whom they report. Worst of all, they don't allow themselves to enter the third stage in which everything gets sadder and wiser, worse and strangely better."

In one or two decades, PTSD will be universally recognized, de-stigmatized, and well-treated. To be dazed at first, then haunted by horrible memories and made anxious and avoidant is to be part of the human family. When deliberate criminal cruelty is the cause of PTSD, we often neglect the victim and become captives of collective outrage, focusing attention on crime and criminality and those who are to blame.

By discussing PTSD, we disarm PTSD. We do not prevent it, but we minimize its degrading, diminishing effects. We help victims become survivors. We help survivors regain dignity and respect. ■

## Tips on Interviewing Victims

BY WILLIAM COTÉ  
AND BONNIE BUCQUEROUX

**H**ere are basic tips and techniques that the Michigan State University School of Journalism suggests journalists follow when covering victims of violence:

**Grant the victim a sense of power and control.** Remember that victims of violence and their family and friends are suffering from horrific stress that has robbed them of their sense of mastery. Also remember that they are not experts in journalistic conventions. One small thing to address both concerns: tell people they can take a break from interviews whenever they need to. Instead of discussing the theory of "off the record," empower victims by giving them permission to turn off the tape recorder whenever they want to say something that they do not want used. Tell them to tell you to put down your notebook. Take advantage of opportunities to include them in the decision-making. Are you ready to go on? Is it all right for me to ask a tough question? An excellent way to even the playing field is to give the subjects your business card—tell them that they can call you to discuss the story or just to talk.

**Take care with first impressions.** How you initially approach the victim can set the tone for all succeeding interactions. Body language in particular can be important, and the goal is to exude confidence, poise and caring. Reporters who seem pushy turn victims off. Nothing turns them off faster than feeling that they are being ambushed or railroaded. If you have any doubts about how you are perceived by others, ask for criticism from colleagues and former interviewees.

**Discuss ground rules up front.** Some experts have suggested, only half-jokingly, that reporters should be forced to read a version of the Miranda warning: you have the right to remain silent. Ambush tactics have no place in a victim interview, and experience confirms that discussing issues of privacy and confidentiality at the beginning can pre-

vent misunderstandings and problems later. Discussion of the rules of engagement also can help establish trust. This is the time for you to explain what you need, when the article will appear, whom you want to talk with and for how long. Encourage the victim to ask questions.

**Prepare for the possibility you will be the first to deliver the bad news.** Time and again, reporters have telephoned or appeared on a family's porch looking for quotations about someone who has been killed or maimed, only to find that no one had yet been informed. The time to decide what you would do and say is before you make the call or ring the doorbell. The military always sends two people to deliver a death notice, one of whom is a chaplain, and both receive extensive training in how to deliver the news and provide comfort. The role of the reporter is different, and you do not always have the luxury of a companion, but at least you should organize your thoughts before you act.

**Ask permission.** This is particularly important whenever you approach the victim's physical "zone of intimacy." Even caring gestures can be misinterpreted as threatening or out of bounds. It is best to approach without your notebook in hand. Ask if you can take notes. Ask if you can use a tape recorder. It is better to say, would you like a tissue, than to thrust the box at them.

**Watch what you say.** Devotees of the TV show "NYPD Blue" know that the detectives always say "Sorry for your loss." To our ears, the phrase may begin to sound trite and artificial, but it is far better to use a canned phrase that strikes the right note than wrong words that wound. Martin Symonds, a former NYPD deputy police commissioner who went on to become a therapist, suggests that at least one of the three following sentiments will always be appropriate:

I'm sorry this happened to you.  
I'm glad you weren't killed.  
It's not your fault.

**Avoid the banal.** Never say, "I know how you feel." You don't (even if you think you may have suffered a similar victimization). In an egregious case a reporter approached a man who had just learned that his daughter had been savagely raped and murdered. "I know how you feel, I remember when my dog died," the reporter said. If you find yourself at a loss for words, John Brady, author of "The Craft of Interviewing," suggests asking a "when" question: When did you hear the news? When did the police arrive? Not only are such queries less threatening for reporter and interviewee alike, but they also tend to elicit detailed responses.

**Be accurate above all.** Accuracy is the overarching goal in all reporting, but the stakes are much higher in cases of violence. Keep in mind that errors that make ordinary people angry can become monumental issues for traumatized people looking for a target for their frustration.

**Be especially sensitive to imputations of blame.** Fortunately, we have come a long way since the days that rape reports regularly included mention of what the victim was wearing—but only if it was "scanty." Yet victims often question why certain details are used or how they are handled. If you mention that the victim had been drinking, does it imply that he or she was drunk? Editors should always fix their antennae to spot any inadvertent suggestion that the victim was at fault.

**Be alert to the special impact of photos, graphics and overall presentation.** A picture can also cut a thousand times deeper than words. How much blood do readers need to see? Time and again, a sensitive and respectful story on a difficult issue like domestic violence is undercut by an illustration of a fearful woman, portrayed as cowering and pitiful. Or there is the headline that obliterates all of the nuances crafted into the story. ■

*William Côté is Coordinator and Bonnie Bucqueroux is Assistant Coordinator of the Victims and the Media Program at Michigan State University.*

# Race and Violence

BY LESTER SLOAN

The image was all too familiar: a young black male lying in his blood in an urban street. This scene, projected on a screen, greeted a class of 20 journalists returning from a break at the Poynter Institute in St. Petersburg, Florida. It was as if the spacious, modern lecture hall had suddenly become a mortuary, as we wandered back for an afternoon session of a week-long seminar about ethics in journalism.

"What can you tell us about this picture?" the instructor asked. One of his colleagues, a young, bright African American who had just joined the staff, volunteered an opinion: "A black youth, perhaps a gang member, shot in a possible drive-by or hold-up attempt," was, to the best of my recollection, his assessment.

I remember thinking that his response was a clever and provocative way to draw out the rest of us. But no, he explained later; these were his true feelings.

Given the image of the black urban male projected daily over the airwaves and in print, I suppose it's easy to see how he had come to this conclusion, but it disturbed me that the man in the picture had seemingly been tried by a one-man jury of his peers, no less, and found guilty of a crime that he didn't commit. The fact was the man was an innocent victim, shot dead when he came upon a robbery in progress.

The sad thing about this scenario is that the response is all too often the same in newsrooms. As journalists, many of us, black and white, bring preconceived notions to stories. The myth of objectivity is just that—a myth.

Jack Lyle, a former Professor of Journalism at the University of California, spoke to this issue nearly 30 years ago

in the introduction of a book, "The Black American and the Press."

"...even the trained reporter sees an event from the particular points of view shaped by time, geographic location and psychological filters of past experiences."

The views expressed in the book were the result of a symposium held at the University of California at Los Angeles after the 1965 Watts riot. Some topics explored at this conference: What can be done to develop a rapport between the black community and the press? Does crisis reporting inevitably lead to sensationalize reporting? How should news of the city's racial problems be handled?

Karl Fleming, a former Los Angeles Bureau Chief of Newsweek magazine, had this to say: "...studies have shown that a large number of people, maybe two-thirds, get most or all their news from television. If these people never see anything about Negroes except when they are shown in a bad light, this certainly constitutes biased reporting."

Nearly 30 years later, the image of the black community, according to Fleming, hasn't improved greatly. "In fact, it has gotten worse. Before the 60's, the problem was one of abandonment: the black community was invisible; blacks were ignored, as if they didn't exist. The problem of television and its impact, along with its appetite for violence, exacerbates the problem. A part, if not the total picture, of the minority community is completely negative," says Fleming.

An advisor to "Rebuild L.A.," a non-profit organization of business and community leaders created after the riots following the Rodney King verdict, Fleming believes more greed than racism is at the bottom of the problem, although subtle racism is involved. "To

an inordinate degree, TV news shows are about violence, and show these people [blacks and Chicanos] as violent people who won't work, and only care about booze, sex, violence and fathering illegitimate children."

The police, according to Fleming, have a vested interest in maintaining this image in order to justify their power over the community. "The L.A.P.D. [Los Angeles Police Department] has adroitly positioned itself to support the entertainment shows that support this image. The so-called reality shows are totally negative. The fictional [sitcoms]



Lester Sloan has worked as a journalist for nearly 30 years in television, print and radio. He began his career as a cameraman/reporter for a CBS affiliate in Detroit in 1968. He moved on to Newsweek magazine in 1970, where he was a staff photographer for 25 years. Currently, he is a contract photographer for Newsweek and a regular contributor to National Public Radio's Sunday Edition. Sloan is a graduate of Wayne State University and is a 1976 Nieman Fellow.

are positive. In the fictional, blacks and Chicanos are funny and nice. In the reality, they are hopelessly violent and unredeemably amoral and lazy."

The Center for American Politics and Public Policy at UCLA recently published a paper in the Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics, providing an academic underpinning to many of Fleming's assertions. The center monitored local network affiliate news shows from March 1993 to March 1994. The resulting document, "Crime in Black and White: The Violent, Scary World of Local News," demonstrates that local TV's "preoccupation" with crime is occurring in an environment where crime has decreased in the last two decades.

The center's paper quotes results from a book titled "Is Anyone Responsible?" a 1991 University of Chicago publication that provides a content analysis of national newscasts between 1981 and 1986. It found that ABC, CBS and NBC television networks "broadcast more than 1,100 reports on crime, for an average of more than 15 stories per month. The book, authored by Professor Shanto Iyengar of UCLA, supports other studies showing that crime accounts for an increasingly "heavy share" of broadcast news programming over the last decade.

The study pointed to "two qualitative features of news programming—violence and race," as especially important. "Not only does the news coverage highlight violent crime, it also links the issues of race and crime by over-representing minorities in the role of violent criminals and by according them distinctive forms of coverage. In summary, the typical news story on crime consists of two 'scripts': crime is violent, and criminals are non-white."

There is a second "distortion"—defining crime in racial terms—which "serves to activate widely shared stereotypes about racial minorities."

In addition, the study concluded that there were significant differences in the "pattern of sources" used in the news reports. "When the news story featured a black perpetrator, the reporter relied on sources hostile to the perpetrator nearly 50 percent of the time. Hispanic

perpetrators were accorded similar treatment with 41 percent of their coverage including unsympathetic sources," according to the report. Whites received "most favored perpetrator" treatment, with only 25 percent of the stories dealing with white perpetrators relying on hostile sources.

Lest we think that television is solely responsible for the negative images of minorities in the news, the report found that studies of news magazines yielded similar results, leading to the conclusion that "criminals are conceptualized as black people, and crime as the violence they do to whites."

One highly publicized story that received a great deal of media coverage was a February 16, 1993, page one story in USA Today. The story was a mood piece about Los Angeles prior to the climax of the second Rodney King trial. Illustrating this story was a photo showing a group of young black men holding guns. The picture was obviously staged and all were named. What the caption didn't say was that the young men, although they were gang members, were posing for a picture that would illustrate an article about a "jobs-for-guns" program in the community.

USA Today went to extraordinary lengths to rectify the error, devoting an entire page to the story under the heading "Accuracy and the Press," in which both sides of the controversy were addressed by community activists and a USA Today writer. While USA Today admitted misrepresentation, it did not acknowledge the gang members' effort to reform.

As consumers of media, the public has a responsibility to challenge the veracity of what is presented, both the content and point of view. Like it or not, we must also acknowledge that there is some truth to the charge that mass media reflect and reinforce the status quo. Minorities can ill-afford the luxury of thinking otherwise, given the reality that perceptions, real or manufactured, often translate into public policy. ■



Cynthia Johnson

## David Burnham Not Just the Tabloids

For reasons that are not entirely clear, in the last few years news organizations, even responsible ones like The New York Times and The Washington Post, have been giving the crime issue more and more play even though the best available measures of the overall crime rates are holding steady or declining. This is no longer just a question of the tabloids providing the subway straphangers a sleazy scare. Now it is the serious media talking directly to the career politicians who control Congress, the White House and the governors' mansions. The obsession with crime has been especially noticeable in television, where powerful visual images—the weeping mother, the blood-stained street, the chalked outline of the slain victim—are especially effective in arousing primal emotions and undermining any serious thought.—David Burnham in *Above the Law: Secret Deals, Political Fixes and Other Misadventures of the U.S. Department of Justice*. Scribner, 1996.

# Reporters Are Victims, Too

BY CHAROLETTE AIKEN

**M**y friend Ted's brain ended up splattered across his desk on April 19, 1995. I stood on the sidewalk below and took notes and did my job.

I cover city hall now, but I've been both police and courthouse reporter. I read autopsies every day on those beats. I flipped through them, glanced at the grim details and tossed them aside in search of a news angle on crime and violence. That's how we survive in this business. We find it, read it and report it.

I've always reminded myself that I did not commit the murder, rape, robbery or child abuse. I simply wrote about it. I described the victim, defendant, death site, cops, judges or property owners. Sometimes I wrote about heroes. I informed the public. I moved from one grisly report to another. I kept my sanity.

Ted's body was blown apart in the Murrah Building bombing. When I helped his four children write their eulogy—sitting at the table where Ted once ate—I could not forget the words in that state medical examiners report. My journalist's safety net was gone, the counselor said later.

I also try to remember that we journalists sometimes make our living off misery. But the terrorist attack on the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City was not "just another story."

I felt guilty when I collected my paycheck that week. Ted's death and the gruesome bombing that killed 168 Americans netted me \$500 in overtime pay. It also changed my outlook on life, helped end a three-year personal relationship and pushed me into therapy. I'd gladly give back the extra cash.

I have covered homicides, arson fire, police murders, gone into burning buildings with firefighters and stared down at mutilated bodies alongside detectives. None of that had prepared me for the carnage that morning at the Murrah building.

Gut-wrenching screams pierced the air. Bloodied, hysterical people poured onto the streets. Uniforms were everywhere—police, state troopers, military, ambulance crews. Firefighters in full bunker gear hung onto fully extended ladders as they coaxed the injured to safety. I will never forget the acrid smell of gunpowder. Chalk—once solid concrete walls—floated in the air. Glass shards crackled under my feet and ripped my hosiery. I could hardly breathe. People caked in blood sat on curbs clutching bandages. A deputy, cradling a child, hurried to an ambulance.

A soldier whose dress greens had been ripped from his shoulder brushed away blood pouring down his face. He tried to help a woman desperately fighting to get into the federal building. She was crying out to no one in particular and began hyperventilating. She crashed into me.

"My babies. Oh God, my babies," she cried. I put my arms around her and tried to calm her. I told her she would pass out if she didn't stop screaming and urged her to breathe slowly. The woman collapsed into my arms. The soldier and a trooper led her away.

Then the news-gathering adrenaline kicked in. I grabbed people, asked questions. Kicking glass away from my pumps, I hiked my calf-length dress up to my knees and got to work. I never wore that dress again.

As the sun heated up, I stepped over broken dolls and toys scattered in the

street. I knew what else had been inside—a daycare center. I scribbled notes. The debris led me to search for answers: who, what, when, where, how and above all else, why?

Many hours later our staff filed reports. Editors fed them into compiled stories. No one worried about bylines, credits or beats. The pieces fell together like an interlocking puzzle.



*Charolette Aiken joined The Daily Oklahoman in 1989. She resides in Norman and has two children. A graduate of the University of Oklahoma with a journalism degree, she completed course work for a master's degree concentrating on law enforcement and media relations. Numerous first place awards recognized her investigative reporting on a food basket drive conducted by the Fraternal Order of Police. She was part of an investigative team that won an Associated Press sweepstakes for coverage of a multicounty grand jury probe of an Oklahoma governor.*





Steve Photo Jim Auer/Ocala.com, Putnam Co.

*Floral remembrance at site of bombing of Oklahoma City Federal building.*

Some time after dark my children got through the clogged telephone lines, desperate for word of their mother. This time, I did not say, "Mom's on deadline and will have to get back with you later, sweetheart."

I was plugging quotes from the screaming woman and descriptions of smashed toys into my computer when the phone rang again. It was Laurie, my best friend and Ted's wife. She wondered whether I could find out anything about her missing husband that she could share with their children. Oh my god, I had forgotten about Ted. I burst into tears. City Editor Gene Triplett walked by and asked if I was OK. I nodded, sobbing and finished my report.

The HUD office took the brunt of the blast. There was no way Ted, who

worked there, could have survived. Images of him clowning on the soccer field or at school functions raced through my mind. At 6 feet 6 inches, he always looked silly ducking to get inside my house. My heart filled with dread.

For a week, until all the bodies were recovered, the medical examiner held daily briefings to release victims' names. I was sitting inside a small campus theater chatting with a Texas reporter when I heard Ted's name called. Later, I would read the autopsy report over and over. Laurie told the kids he had died quickly.

Editors in our newsroom established a policy early on not to write gory details. We did not cover funerals. We would humanize the victims and

downplay the grief. I passed on details from Ted's death to the state desk which put together the obituaries.

We struggled with the very definition of sensationalism. Was it fair to report on rescuers who may have pocketed valuables or were we harming our community image? Should we report on the woman who lost her child even though her grief led to marital problems? What was sensitive reporting and what was sensationalism?

Personal lives were at stake here—not only downtown but in our own newsroom. News people are almost as bad as the macho types some of us report on. To admit feelings of depression, fear or anxiety is to admit you can't cover the beat. We mostly keep those feelings buried deep inside ourselves.

In the past year, throughout the newsroom, personal relationships have been shaken or ended. Eating disorders and other emotional problems have developed. Use of sick time has skyrocketed. Management brought in a counselor immediately. The voluntary option was taken up by a few female reporters, but by none of the editors who experienced the same fatigue and tension reporters had.

The counselor told us that our habit of compartmentalizing stress was impractical now. Normal stress such as crime beats, deadlines or family pressures were already stored away separately in our minds. The bombing caused those compartments to overflow. The safety net was gone. It was time to deal with the pain.

Also gone was my sense of security. I resented the national media types who came into our city and made fools of themselves. I resented the federal agents who rank among the most arrogant of law enforcement types. I cried every time I saw a military humvee parked on a street corner on my beat.

I began to dread the endless bombing stories that we wrote everyday for an entire year. Enough was enough. Every time I wrote something, I heard that woman screaming for her dead babies.

Ted's funeral was a news event drawing 1,200 people that I could not write

about. When the eulogy was read, I knew it was among the best writing I had ever done. My writing was my gift to a friend from a skill God had given me.

I hated leaving my children each day. Although they are teen-agers, they were scared of another explosion. They know I never pass up a chance to cover the news. They know I will go wherever the story takes me. Now, they knew I could go to work and die. I hug them now more than before. For a while, I felt guiltier than I had before.

Others were suffering, too. At City Hall, budget woes and squabbles in the administration were related to the April 1995 event. I began to question whether it was fair to report on soaring overtime at police and fire departments. These were the same cops and firefighters who had dug into that rubble until their hands bled.

I wrote my stories more cautiously. I began to bounce ideas off other reporters. When I had a question on whether or not to hammer a point about economic devastation, I'd seek advice.

But not from an editor. None of them went downtown that day. None of them saw what the mayor did on those streets during recovery efforts. None of them cried when they asked a

fireman to explain why Ted's personal belongings were burnt and mangled. None of them were there when cops unashamedly cried together over a charred baby they never knew.

The staff at The Oklahoman changed as we changed the way we did our jobs. We learned how strong our ties were to one another, but we also split into relationships according to whether we could admit our suffering or not. Those who could helped one another cope day by day.

The anniversary memorial service in April 1996 was a turning point for many of us. We had our assignments and most of us dreaded that day. More tears. More anguish. Would it never end? How much more of this stuff could we record? Reporters squabbled over who would get which credentials and who would stand where. The story developed a life of its own and it was a nightmare.

Some reporters who made it through the year didn't make it through that day. Among the most affected were a state reporter who had covered prison executions and who developed the format for the bombing obituaries, and a cop beat reporter. Another cop beat reporter cried at her terminal. Reporters and editors gathered around TV sets and hugged one another when the memorial broadcast was over. We were finally putting it to rest.

At the bombing site during the anniversary events, I watched one of our toughest photographers toss aside his cameras to step inside a perimeter to hug close friends whose daughter had died there.



*Rebecca Denny, 2, who survived the bomb blast at her day care center in the federal building in Oklahoma City, holds hands with her father, Jim Denny, while leaving Southwest Medical Center.*

Staff Photo/Steve Sevier, Oklahoman Publishing Co.



Paul Heister

*Angels on ribbons worn by rescue workers at the Oklahoma Federal Building bombing represent gratitude and hope. They were provided by families of those still missing.*

At the end of that anniversary, we compiled our reports. Like a year before, no one worried about by-lines. We just did our jobs. What we turned out was one of the finest reports ever written. And we did it as a group that had been hurt together, had grown together and had healed together.

We felt invincible after that. None of us ever wants to cover another such event, but now we know we can. It's a fact. It's recorded. We still suffer from insecurities, grief and stress. But we're putting our doubts behind us and we've become stronger, better reporters because of the confidence we gained.

And I keep in mind my mortality. Like many people who lived in Oklahoma City last year, I never forget I could die tomorrow. I spend more time with my children. I put in a good, hard 10 or 12 hours each day but when I leave the newsroom now, I leave the job at work. There are other things in life even more precious than writing. ■

# Swimming a 'Wild, Raging River'

BY ROGER SIMPSON

Jeanette Marantos had faced every possible news test in 15 years of daily journalism. Yet one day last March she faltered for a moment as she faced an audience and said that work on a small-town daily in central Washington state for the last two years had been like swimming "a wild, raging river" every day.

She was one of a handful of Wenatchee World reporters who had covered an unusual number of emotionally taxing stories—murders, a highway collision that killed nine members of a family and the nation's worst forest fire that year. But the story that consumed Marantos and the newspaper for two years was an adult-child sex-ring case that drew international media in swarms to the farming town 150 miles east of Seattle. Now for the first time she was sharing with outsiders—the Western Conference on Journalism and Trauma at the University of Washington—the pain and anger of those years.

"Everyday I get up and there's this river, this wild, raging river, and I take a deep breath, and I dive in and at the end of the day I claw out, and the next day I jump back in. I don't feel that I ever have time to think about what I'm doing."

In the audience, reporters from other newspapers in the region said they knew about "the raging river." Robin Stanton and Scott North, crime reporters on The Herald in Everett, a city 30 miles north of Seattle, went home from the conference and insisted that a new beat system being forged at the paper assign an extra person to the team that covers death and violence to provide greater support to each team member. At The Seattle Times, reporter burnout and overplaying of crime news were

thrashed out in a workshop put on by the Journalism and Trauma Program, and then reporters and editors voluntarily continued to talk about changing crime reporting in forums that continued into the summer of 1996.

As for Wenatchee, speeches by Marantos, reporter Michael McCluskey and Managing Editor Steve Lachowicz at the March conference were part of that harried staff's efforts to get used to talking candidly about the stress of reporting. Seven months earlier, a team from the Journalism and Trauma program found World reporters haltingly describing difficult stories, while an editor wondered aloud if such talk wasn't getting in the way of doing the job. Today, reporters and that editor are trying to change a newsroom attitude that denigrated talk about reporters' stress. Lachowicz, agreeing the paper did too little to take care of its reporters during the turbulent two years, interviewed his key writers and told the conference what he learned: make time for the staff to talk about traumatic stories, provide counselors, give clear feedback from editors to the staff about how well they are doing their job, give more time off, rotate staff assignments and accept that reporters have limits.

Most newspapers show the strains evident in Wenatchee, Seattle and Everett. The March conference and our outreach efforts revealed how crime reporting had taxed these newspapers. We found newspeople asking how much crime to cover and when to leave victims alone, but we also found editors, reporters and photographers starting to breach unwritten newsroom rules against talking about weariness, frustration and the absence of comfortable

dialogue between those on the firing line.

In Everett, Scott North and Robin Stanton have had a long stint with the "ugly stories" in a market where they are forced by the omnipresent Seattle media to cover every lurid detail. Stanton, who was assigned the crime beat shortly after the deaths of two close family members, asked for help and North joined the team. The pressure has mounted steadily for the pair as they've continued to cover the region's violence and North, in particular, has come under fire from a group called the Patriots, which issued "wanted" posters bearing the reporter's



*Roger Simpson is an Associate Professor in the School of Communications at the University of Washington, where he earned a doctorate. He directs the school's three-year-old Journalism and Trauma Program, sponsor of the March, 1996, conference mentioned in this article. A former newspaper reporter in Chicago, Detroit and Los Angeles, he teaches journalism, ethics and media history and economics.*

picture. Stanton and North attended the conference, then asked their editors to invite a team from the program for an in-house workshop.

Meanwhile, Herald reporters and editors were redesigning their beat structure with the encouragement of Executive Editor Stan Strick. After the new scheme has its shakeout during the fall, Strick and Kathy Anderson, Director of Local News, expect staff sessions to focus on the level of crime that should be reported. Meanwhile, North and Stanton have pushed discussion about trauma issues repeatedly in the newsroom, and Anderson has urged weary reporters to take time off. Management has made counseling available to reporters under stress, seemingly a good sign. But Stanton points to the factor that undermines even these well-intended gestures: "It is still difficult to admit you're having trouble; it's shooting your career in the foot."

At The Seattle Times, staff members have continued to talk about crime coverage since 60 or so were challenged at a March workshop by Dr. Frank Ochberg, a Michigan psychiatrist, to understand the toll of being exposed to too much death and violence. When Ochberg finished, Peyton Whitely, a

Times reporter, said he had tallied his work in one recent 11-month period—216 stories, all on deaths and killings.

The workshop apparently touched a nerve at the paper, which, according to Executive Editor Michael Fancher, had been reassessing its crime coverage for some time. Editors and reporters held three more meetings on crime coverage during the spring and by mid-summer a draft "statement of philosophy" was circulating for staff reactions, according to Local Editor Arlene Bryant.

The Wenatchee World wears its independent ownership and national journalistic reputation proudly and its reporters call it a caring newspaper. In March, Marantos mentioned some ways the struggle against the raging river had been eased—more dialogue with editors and other reporters and the chance to do worthwhile stories thoroughly. But that didn't compensate for the daily barrage on her morale as she covered the two-year-long child sex-abuse case. She and others were attacked in the community as well as by the national media. She avoided television news, justifiably expecting to see the story routinely butchered, and avoided contacts with others. "I didn't want to hear anyone else telling me I was screwing up again."

Yet, she had to buy groceries, and there she'd meet her critics, and a certain mother and child, knowing the little girl's allegations against adults played a key role in the prosecutions. "I wrote 392 stories in 1995," she said, "and 118 of them referred to this girl. I knew that every time I wrote a story about her, I was hurting a little girl who might be a terrible liar or a terrible victim."

Marantos concluded: "One of the biggest frustrations of my job is the pretense that you can do a good job and still work normal hours and live a normal life. Steve, my editor and friend, says you have to set limits, but where do you set those limits with stories like these, without compromising your job as a journalist?" ■



©Steve Norman

## David Lamb Fears Awash In U.S.

“‘Meanness in the land.’ I had never heard that phrase to express the fears awash in America. Violence. Drugs. Gangs. Those were the operative words. But *meanness* implied something had gone awry in the national character. It referred to attitude as much as to behavior. The notion that a basic change had taken hold in the United States was an unsettling one—and one I heard uttered over and over in back-road towns from Virginia to California. People worried they were no longer immune from the ills of our cities. They worried that their insular communities were easy prey for strangers in an increasingly mobile society. They worried about the randomness of violence, and the more they worried, the less safe they felt. No one in the diner could remember the last time Bean Station had had a robbery or a serious crime. (“Miss Anita’s lawn mower was stole last summer, but I guess that don’t count,” one man said.) Still, the perception of violence was all about them. They saw it on television every night, they read about it in city newspapers. They probably knew a local boy who had gotten in trouble with the law. This was not the world they had grown into a generation or two before, when strangers helped strangers and went on their way with a tip of the hat. *Meanness* might have been used in those days to describe the temperament of the town bully, but not the disposition of a nation.—David Lamb on a conversation he had with people in a diner in Bean Station, Tennessee. “*Over the Hills*,” Random House/Times Books.

## The American Way of Death

“Who killed him?” asked the four-year-old girl when her parents told her of the death of her playmate’s father. The parents were prepared to discuss the many concerns that a child might have about the death of a parent, but not the question that she asked. After explaining that her playmate’s father had died of a disease, they asked why she thought someone had killed him. “Isn’t that the way people die?” the girl asked. “That’s the way people die on TV.”—Ronald G. Slaby, senior scientist at the Education Development Center, Newton, Mass., in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 5, 1994.

# Why I Turned Down Oprah Winfrey

BY MIGAEL SCHERER

“We’re putting together a program about couples dealing with rape,” the producer—I’ll call her Linda—said over the phone. She had introduced herself quickly, almost breathlessly. “We’re looking for an expert on the subject, and saw an article about your book in *The New York Times*.”

My first response was exhilaration. An appearance on the “Oprah Winfrey Show” is an author’s dream, an opportunity for extraordinary exposure.

Linda plunged in with her questions. How long have I been married? Did the rape cause problems between us? How had we handled them? When did the rape occur? (The answer to this one—six years ago—caused her to falter a moment; “Oh,” she murmured, “that’s an old one.”) I explained that mine is not a typical case, that most women never tell their partners, that most marriages fall apart within five years after a rape. I reminded her that most often the rapist is someone known to the victim and may be known to her husband as well—his boss or brother or friend. I gave examples of how partners blame victims: “I told you not to go jogging alone.” “Why were you walking on that side of the road?” “What did you do to lead him on?”

I should have saved my breath. Linda wasn’t interested in learning about sexual assault. She had a show to put together. “We’re taping this Tuesday,” she said, never asking if the time would work for me. She assumed I was interested.

She was right. I was eager to be her “expert,” a woman who had recovered from rape with an intact marriage and had written about it. But that wasn’t all Linda wanted. She wanted my husband

on the show with me. No husband, no show.

“I’m afraid that’s out of the question,” I said, trying not to sound as invaded as I instantly felt. “He’s very supportive of my book and the publicity around it, but he doesn’t want to be public himself.” I didn’t explain that if we *were* going to open up together about our marriage, it certainly wouldn’t be in the free-for-all of talk TV. I offered a compromise: I could elaborate on the marital adjustments described in my book as well as generalize on the subject from my rape crisis training. The show would get an “expert” and my husband would remain private.

The word “private” didn’t make an impact on Linda. “It would be so good for so many couples if the two of you would appear,” she persisted, in a voice that was suddenly soothing and warm. I could feel myself bristling. Hadn’t she heard me? “Maybe I could explain better. Why don’t you give me his work number and I’ll call him direct?”

The thought of my husband taking a call from the Oprah Winfrey Show in his office, architectural drawings and specifications piled high on his desk, amused me, but only briefly. “That wouldn’t be wise,” I said. “I’ll call him myself.” And as soon as I hung up I realized that I had offered to do something I had not wanted to do. I felt a little sheepish as I explained it all to my husband, going over a decision we’d already made. Such is the power of television, I consoled myself. It can make you stupid.

Linda didn’t take it personally when I turned her down. She went on to call the local rape crisis center for a “couple in crisis,” as if such understaffed agencies are in the business of brokering those who rely on their confidentiality. She even called me later that evening,

still trying to find another couple, wondering if I knew any. “I know quite a few,” I said, “but every one of them has approached me in confidence, and”—anticipating her next question—“I won’t breach that confidence by asking them for you.”

As producers for such shows go, Linda wasn’t unusually pushy or insensitive. She was just doing her job. In order to keep ratings high, new angles must be continually tried, boundaries tested. On the subject of rape, I’ve experienced this TV approach any num-



Tom O'Rourke/Alan Brantner

*Migael Scherer is the author of "Still Loved by the Sun: A Rape Survivor's Journal" (Simon & Schuster 1992), which won a Pacific Northwest Booksellers Association Award and a PEN/Albrand Citation for distinguished nonfiction, and "A Cruising Guide to Puget Sound" (McGraw-Hill 1995). In addition to her writing, she works as a guest speaker and educational consultant for the Journalism and Trauma Program at the University of Washington in Seattle. She and her husband live on a sailboat in Seattle.*

ber of times. The producer for "The Home Show" initially wanted me to appear with my therapist in order to give the audience an "inside view" of my recovery. I pointed out as gently as I could that what she was asking was a little like asking a journalist to publicly reveal her sources; she found a local crisis counselor instead who could speak in general terms about recovery from sexual assault—a good balance. Another producer discarded me after a brief conversation because, as she put it, I was a writer and wouldn't be "raw" enough. Another wanted me to appear with my husband and describe details about our sex life since the rape; that conversation left me feeling like a side-show freak.

Talk shows have been described as the modern equivalent of over-the-fence gossip. Despite their topics, they aren't meant to go deep. The format guarantees it. A typical example is "The Sally Jessie Raphael Show" I was on (Title: "Victims Who Helped Catch Their Rapists"). During the first two segments (about 10 minutes each, separated by a cluster of ads), Ms. Raphael sat on stage next to the guests, two women who had been raped by strangers in separate incidents and whose pluck and powers of observation had given police enough information to make arrests. She drew them out, shook her head slowly in sympathy, opened her mouth in amazement. Then I was brought out for the third and fourth segments. Everything sped up, and the ads increased dramatically. Ms. Raphael now stood with the audience, sending a clear signal that she was with *them*, taking their questions. During the frequent breaks for ads, the producer rushed over to coach us: "Show the way you feel." "Interrupt each other." "Be lively."

Under conditions like these—this was considered a thoughtful show—it's impossible to explain anything complex. The best you can do is "tell your story" (three minutes or less please) and add a cliché ("It takes time to heal"). You've rehearsed with the producer already, but the host often diverges from the prepared script. Questions from the audience—some of them have been planted and rehearsed as well—must be answered quickly, in palatable

bites. Tension builds as the "discussion" is volleyed from audience to host to guests. The producer is alert for the moment you can be interrupted for ads without losing viewers. Confrontations may surface; there may be an outburst of anger, or real tears.

After the show, the host disappears, or moves to the next topic as you are moved off-camera. There is no debriefing. You are left alone with all the stirred-up memories and emotions; if the topic is your own victimization, you are probably re-traumatized—so much for the "recovery" aspects.

The "Oprah Show" I turned down was taped and aired on schedule. The producer had found two couples, one "in crisis." I never tuned in. Knowing what I knew, I would have felt like a voyeur. Friends who saw the show described it as "interesting," "OK," "a circus." Typical, in other words.

Many serious journalists would probably laugh at me for complaining about talk shows. They are entertainment, after all, at best "infotainment." Besides, many people who appear on these shows feel the effort was worthwhile—I among them, and not because of book sales. Public awareness can grow, a sense of justice can emerge—for a moment. Tomorrow there is always another show, with more revelations, more shock.

The mainstream press contends it holds a higher standard. Unfortunately, as a victim of rape, I have seen television news cover traumatic events with as much thoughtlessness as talk TV. Intrusion without apology seems the rule. Over the Associated Press wire comes the latest survey results on the rates of sexual assault, and reporters are on the phones to rape crisis agencies, asking for a victim to interview.

## For Victims Who Go Public

**1. Set limits.** What do you *not* want to talk about? What *won't* you do (e.g. filming in your home, appearing with partner or children, appearing with an offender, etc.)? How much time are you willing to spend? Don't be afraid to communicate these limits before the interview or appearance.

**2. Ask about format.** Is the article a lengthy feature or a short news piece? A two-minute spot or a half-hour interview? Live or taped? Call-in? If a panel, when do you come on, how are you introduced, who else is on the panel, and who is in the audience?

**3. Ask about the focus.** What point is being made? How does your participation help make this point?

**4. Don't overlook the commercial aspect.** Is a product being promoted? If so, what is it?

**5. Be extra careful if a case is in progress.** Anything you say to media can be used against you in trial. It's a good idea to check with an advocate, prosecutor or detective first.

**6. Guard against "off the record" statements.** Assume that reporters are

always listening and taking notes, and that microphones and video recorders are always turned on.

**7. Have an advocate or buddy present.** The stress of going public is considerably reduced when you can share observations. In addition, your "media escort" can take care of transportation details and—if necessary—terminate the interview for you.

**8. Always debrief within the week.** Plan for this. Debriefing can take many forms: a phone call, a walk, talking over coffee or a drink.

**9. Beware of talk shows and town meetings.** These are considered entertainment, not journalism. The host is a "star" whose livelihood is closely tied to ratings. Viewers are accustomed to tuning in to see conflict, not to be educated. The adversarial tone and dizzying pace can be overwhelming.

**10. Be ready for disclosures.** Journalists and photographers are people. They have their own histories; some have stories that will be triggered by yours. You may be the first person they have ever told. ■—*Miguel Scherer.*

Few seem aware of how hurtful it is to ask a survivor—especially one in crisis—to go public. It's getting so that I jokingly advise agencies to tell media who are trolling for rape victims to ask around in their own newsrooms. Of course the interview or taping must be done today in order to make the evening news deadlines, preferably in your home. "How about your place?" I suggested to one reporter after I explained that I didn't want my home on camera. Gately, she agreed, and later confided that she'd gotten up at 5 that morning to clean house. "I never realized what people went through for us," she said. Exactly.

As with any talk show, interviews take time away from your life and work, but with news the hour or two spent is likely to be condensed to a few lines of type or a few minutes of air time. The best advice I received on this issue came from a woman whose daughter had been murdered in a high-profile case in Seattle: "Never give a reporter more than 30 minutes. All they want is a quote anyway."

With breaking news, mainstream media, like TV talk shows, seem driven to follow a formula. Especially in cases of sexual assault, reporters often present morality tales about "good" and "bad" victim behavior. Trials are usually covered like sporting events, with blow-by-blow descriptions of offensive and defensive strategies. If the accused is an athlete, the trial probably *will* be on the sports page, but unlike sports reporters, court reporters are usually uninformed about sexual assault or the effects of trauma. It shows.

Through it all the victim is beside the point unless she is exceptionally virtuous or wicked. Forever after she is referred to by a news "handle" that can be as diminishing as the on-screen label that floats beneath your chin in TV talk shows. In my case, my entire testimony was reduced to a mistake in eye color, as if that were the only descriptive detail I'd given police. The final lead all but chided jurors who "were not bothered by a sexual-assault victim's repeated erroneous statements about [the assailant's] eye color and speedily convicted him." Not only did this hurt me

personally, but more important, such unnecessary skepticism discourages other victims from reporting to police. Where's the "public good" in that?

On-going cases provide opportunities for in-depth stories, but there is rarely a glimmer of what talk shows at least make a pretense at doing: enlightening viewers about the issue in general, including experts in victimization, offering crisis-line numbers. Following a televised panel I was on to "analyze" the verdict in the William Kennedy Smith trial, I asked the reporter to please show the phone numbers of local rape crisis centers. She countered that doing so wouldn't be "fair." Fair to whom?

At least talk shows warn of their approach, a consideration survivors of violence don't always get from "real" reporters. There's the TV van parked across the street from your home. (One enterprising family placed a large sign reading "FUCK TV NEWS" in the window next to the front door; unwilling to film *that*, the cameras left). There's the microphone shoved in your face as you emerge from the courtroom, the reporter calling on a cellular phone from your driveway.

So in the end, the reasons I turned down Oprah Winfrey were the same reasons I've turned down some news reporters: an intrusion that went too far, a line of questioning that told me the reporter knows little about sexual assault beyond the myths and doesn't want to learn, a sense that the story had already been written.

The causes and the effects of violence are complex. But until journalists educate themselves about trauma and put that learning into practice, interviews will continue to be clumsy, news stories formulaic—not always, of course, but often enough. Journalists must change the way traumatic incidents are covered. The motive for change is more than avoiding harm to victims. Finally, the real motive must be to avoid harming the public. We are not served by reporting that merely causes us to recoil in horror. We need reporting that enlightens, that moves us to put down the paper, turn off the television and take action. ■



## Geoffrey Canada 'War Never Ending'

What if I were to tell you that we are approaching one of the most dangerous periods in our history since the Civil War? Rising unemployment, shifting economic priorities, hundreds of thousands of people growing up poor and with no chance of employment, never having held a legal job. A whole generation who serve no useful role in America now and see no hope of a future role for themselves. A new generation, the handgun generation. Growing up under the conditions of war. War as a child, war as an adolescent, war as an adult. War never ending...

For the handgun generation there is no posttraumatic stress syndrome because there is no "post."—Geoffrey Canada, *President and CEO of the Harlem-based Rheedlen Centers for Children and Families in "Fist Stick Knife Gun," Beacon Press, 1995.*

# Cops on the Edge

BY HUBERT WILLIAMS

**P**olice are the guardians of a community's peace and safety. They do their job at great risk to their lives, going from one unpredictable situation to another. But who guards the guardians who work under such stressful conditions? Who makes sure that those officers who begin to show signs of succumbing to stress are helped? When police officers crack, they may take it upon themselves to dispense "street justice" as they see fit, exercising excessive force against the people they are sworn to serve.

When a rogue cop brings attention to himself through a public, and perhaps extreme, act of abuse, newspaper pages and television screens carry his picture and some of his personal history. They also provide a forum for protests from the community and assurances from the police department that a full investigation is under way. If the officer is put on trial, local media outlets may cover it. Their attention may last till the verdict is read. If civil disturbance follows on the heels of the verdict, that is big news. The media send out helicopters and give a blow-by-blow account, sometimes contributing to the size of the disturbance by pinpointing the flashpoints' exact locations.

But does the public gain any insight into the making of an abusive cop or the steps that a police department must take to identify and curb officers like him? For the public to be informed on these important workings of their police department, journalists would first have to educate themselves on them. Yet reporters seldom seem interested in the preventive work that police agencies must do. Their attention is glued to

the big story, to the explosion rather than to all the effort that must be exerted and the obstacles that must be overcome in order to prevent the big story from ever occurring in the first place.

One question pursued by many reporters after an incident of alleged police excess is whether there is a national standard for policies and procedures covering police use of force and how well the agency in question's own policies may accord with those purported standards. At the Police Foundation we get many such inquiries. Yet the real story is more complex and therefore harder to investigate.

Studies have shown that the mere existence of departmental policies and procedures limiting the use of force are not sufficient to curtail it. Policies must be backed by managerial supervision and enforcement. The ultimate supervisory responsibility rests with the police chief or director.

The police executive is, or should be, the community's trustee, just as the chief executive officer of a corporation is the stockholders's. He has the fiduciary responsibility to provide the municipality with the most effective and humane police services possible at the greatest cost efficiency. This efficient use of resources is driven not only by moral responsibility, but also by the current realities of public funding. Federal and state funding of local services has been severely reduced in the past two decades. Moreover, citizens have grown weary of being asked to pay higher and higher taxes without evidence that service providers are managing available resources prudently and well. When these public service agencies are made to pay out large sums of the community's tax money in damage

awards because of the actions of some of their employees, people's confidence and support erodes. A Police Foundation study, "Police Use of Force: Official Reports, Citizen Complaints, and Legal Consequences," found that in a one-year period, 72 city police departments paid almost \$45 million in 79 civil suits.

In order to manage effectively and efficiently, a police chief must be able to exercise his executive authority over all departmental resources, especially its personnel. However, like other government agencies, police departments have multilayered bureaucracies. Information is scattered throughout the



©Tony Lewis Photo 1988

*Hubert Williams is President of the Police Foundation, a private, nonprofit research and technical assistance organization in Washington, D.C. He has been a leading advocate for higher professional standards and uniform practices in policing and has presided over the design and implementation of scientific field experiments that are on the leading edge of the development of modern police policy and procedure.*



divisions of the agency, each of which may function as a fiefdom, guarding its information from the rest. Citizen complaints are kept in internal affairs and illness records in medical services, for instance. A police chief seeking agency information through established channels can unwittingly send signals about his own leanings regarding upcoming policy changes or program initiatives. If these in any way affect the vital interests of persons within the bureaucracy, then resistance can build to undermine departmental plans before they have been developed. This is particularly problematic with respect to issues of corruption or abusive practices. Premature access to this type of information can jeopardize the department's ability to maintain the integrity of the force.

A chief should have the means of retrieving sufficient significant information about his officers so as to track troubling signs that may be ignored by sergeants and other supervisors too close to the officer. This information must be readily available and reliable. Obviously, it is vitally important to have an early warning system for possibly troubled behavior that is linked to an intervention strategy. Yet in most departments, this process is not systematized. In a study by Ellen M. Scrivner for the National Institute of Justice and published in 1994, 65 police psychologists were interviewed. The study found that "psychologists were more involved with counseling and evaluating functions than with training and monitoring of police officer behavior, and counseling was more likely to take place as a response to excessive-force incidents than as a means of prevention."

The cop who uses excessive force seldom gets to that point without prior behavior that could have put supervisors on notice. If the officer is in at-fault traffic accidents, for instance, he may be overly aggressive. If he is racking up many days of sick leave, he may have personal problems that could explode in the streets. A young cop who has not been adequately trained may discharge his weapon more often than circumstances warrant. In a well-designed centralized information system, these and other significant traits could be flagged to alert those in command.

Moreover, such an information system would provide valuable statistical information to the central office about situations that are problematic for officers in that particular agency. Training could then be tailored to enable officers to deal more constructively with them. For example, if an unusually high number of incidents occur at night, the department may choose to provide training under nighttime conditions. If domestic disturbance calls are resulting in a disproportionately high number of citizen complaints, an agency may wish to re-train its officers.

There has been some very bad news about cops recently. Sworn officers of the law have been shown to have planted evidence, extorted drug money, participated in armed robbery, acted as hit men, and engaged in sundry other acts that are supposed to be prosecuted rather than committed by them. We have even heard on national television the hate-filled ramblings of a racist cop. It would be a mistake to cease coverage there. A story of long-term consequences is waiting to be told. When the reputation of the police becomes tainted and relations with the community strained, the credibility of a police agency can become the central issue at trial, resulting in jury nullification and the release back to the street of criminals whose guilt is well established. The resulting diminution in the public's respect for the criminal justice system and support for the police creates conditions that are optimal for crime and fear to flourish. This not only undermines public safety but diminishes the quality of our democracy as well.

Police departments that have become concerned about these issues have sought to strengthen their internal affairs units and adopt standards and practices consistent with the philosophy and goals of community-oriented policing, a concept with which the press has become familiar in general terms if not always in its particulars. The community-oriented approach has the potential for turning divisiveness and distrust into partnership and is therefore an important and popular strategy among police agencies. But it lacks a strategic focus for addressing issues

associated with the problem officer and therefore leaves cities vulnerable to the spark that so often ignites urban unrest: abusive behavior and excessive force by the police.

Enlightened leadership within the police community has long recognized this problem but has lacked the capacity to address it effectively. With the advent of new technology and the commitment to community-oriented policing, there is a window of opportunity for addressing this complex and difficult problem—a problem that has undermined the public trust in law enforcement and cost taxpayers millions of dollars.

The Police Foundation hopes through the RAMS (Risk Analysis Management System) to help law enforcement agencies around the country improve their management capabilities, protect their communities, and identify and assist troubled officers. The system combines, in a centralized database, information on such critical areas as use of force, vehicular accidents, sick leave and injury records, and citizen complaints. The database, which fits in the hard disk of a laptop computer, easily provides the police executive with the concrete feedback necessary to evaluate how well the department's policies and other restraint-of-force messages are being applied in the field. The system can be programmed to issue yellow or red flags that alert administrators when an officer's behavior has reached an undesirable or unacceptable level, thus prompting supervisory intervention before a serious incident can occur.

As we head toward the 21st Century, we witness almost daily advances in technology. We find that we must adopt attitudes of openness in order to adapt to the rapid changes that surround us. We realize that we have the opportunity to apply our ingenuity to analyze problems in fresh ways and to create innovative solutions to old problems. This is as true in the criminal justice system as it is in news dissemination. With today's tools—and a lot of dedication and heart—we can take significant steps toward protecting the future from the abuses of the past. ■

## Until the End, a Working Reporter

BY JON MARGOLIS

Having read the schedule for Dan Quayle's long, hard campaign day, I was looking out the airplane window wondering whether I was too old for this stuff, when a familiar voice spoke from the aisle:

"Pardon me, sir. But is this seat available for a working reporter?"

Standing there looking like a happy owl was John Chancellor, 14 years my senior and acting on no one's assignment but his own.

"It is," I said. "But what on earth are you doing here?"

"What am I doing here? Listen, you young fellas may not know it, but this is

where the story is."

So it was, and where the story was, there Jack would be. He was rich, famous, and his only job was to do some TV commentary. But he was covering the news.

By the last stop in Indianapolis, I was tired and Jack was pale with exhaustion. But we found a good restaurant, and midway through the second martini, he revived. When the coffee came he said, "This is what I call a pretty good day—a good story, a good meal, a couple of good martinis. I could get used to this."

Last April, at his home in Princeton,

the jolly owl look was gone. His face was thin and his gait a touch awkward.

But it was the same voice: "Would you like a drink before lunch?"

We sat next to a coffee table piled with magazines and books—Jim Fallows on the press, Stephen Ambrose on the Lewis and Clark expedition, Alfred Kazin on literature.

"I'm trying to read them, but I get tired so easily," he said. "The Ambrose is really good, but I haven't gotten very far into it."

Lunch was at the Institute for Advanced Studies cafeteria. The drink and the food perked him up, and the talk came easily—about the silliness of Whitewater, about Bosnia and the Middle East. Then he mentioned something about what his sources in Moscow had been telling him about Yeltsin, and I remembered what he'd called himself that day in 1988. A working reporter. Now John Chancellor was dying, and he knew it. But he was still working the phones.

"They're going to try something new," he said, referring to his doctors, on the way back to his house. "Maybe it will work and maybe it won't." But he didn't sound gloomy, and when he got out of the car, he turned back as he closed the door, smiled, and said "Meanwhile I can still have gin before lunch."

I drove away subdued, but informed. In this age of excessive self-analysis can there be a more valuable lesson than the one which tells you to do your work, enjoy life and not complain?

Work the phones, everyone, and once in a while, have a martini before lunch. ■

*Jon Margolis was the National Political Correspondent for The Chicago Tribune from 1973 through 1988, and later a columnist for The Tribune. He now lives in and (when not standing in one of several trout streams) writes from northeastern Vermont.*



© RAYMOND HANCOCK

*John Chancellor in his study at home in Princeton, New Jersey. He died on July 12, 1996.*

# A Shaman Looks at Campaign '96

BY ROBERT D. DEUTSCH

As an anthropologist who has traded backpack and quinine tablets for a Hartmann three-suit and Dramamine, I thought it my obligation to return to the jungles I once worked in so that I might help solve a present-day political conundrum. I went to describe to the shaman of a preliterate tribe the recent stirrings in postmodern America about networks giving presidential contenders free and free-ranging air time during campaign '96. He was a leader without media. He should know how best to solve our problem.

I had to start from the basics. He asked me what networks were.

I was undaunted. Many good-intentioned people from the First World have risked life and limb to save Neolithic society from extinction. I thought the least my shaman friend could do is return the favor and give me his reading on an observation attributed to Larry Grossman, the former President of NBC News. Grossman said, "Television has a kind of primordial power." We in America need to know the meaning of that statement before we proceed.

To the jungle I brought with me (along with the traditional survival gear) several battery packs and a portable VCR from which to show the shaman examples of political commercials and other specimens from media archives of a number of past presidential campaigns. I also showed him print copies of presidential poses from Washington to Dole. Often, my shaman friend pointed quizzically at what I was presenting him and laughed. At other times he scratched his head. Once, a tear came to his eye.

He started a long discourse with me by saying:

1. The choice of a leader is the grand-

est ritual in the natural world. You must keep it sacred.

2. The choice of a leader is an act of hope. It is related to the future, not the past. What matters is that the people see themselves in you and at the same time see what they aspire to be.

3. A leader shouldn't be perfect. People can't identify with perfection. You must have a forgivable flaw. (He smiled as he said this, then added: "That's easy for me.")

4. The choice of a leader is a ritual working-out of a tribe's self-definition.

I asked him (rhetorically) when last he had been in D.C.

We talked for many hours. We shared food and walked together under the intense heat of the jungle canopy. I slept restfully in a hammock.

Over the next days, here is what he said about television:

1. In interpreting the world, we reduce complexity to sensibility. Mean-



*Robert Deutsch is a cognitive anthropologist. He directs the Communications Planning & Evaluation Laboratory (COMPEL) at EBR Consulting, Inc. in Vienna, Virginia. Bob has observed "leading men" in chimpanzee groups, preliterate tribes and post-modern politics. Starting life three months premature and living in an incubator, Bob early-on was cast (and cast himself) in the role of observer. He still likes to watch the human animal worm its way around.*

ing is extracted selectively from only a small portion of what is actually observable. We take those things that stand out and make them fit with what we already know and expect. (Mind you, we do not think our way through this; we just do it.) Using this abbreviated list of personally meaningful attributes, we assume consistency with what might yet come, fill in any blanks and concoct an image with an emotional bottom-line: positive or negative. Through this reduction process we are taking something from the outside and making it our own. This is what people do. Whether it's your world or mine, it doesn't make a difference. We are all image-gatherers.

2. Your TV makes everything into a ritual. Everything on it seems to be already in a compressed and exaggerated form. The rough edges, false starts, and open-endedness of everyday life are smoothed-out and prettied-up in such a way that people can easily read into it what they want. Here, in the jungle, we have ritual, too. But we see everything. Here, there is nothing inside the box. (He pointed to the box that was the VCR and then asked, "Do your people know their leaders outside the box?")

3. Your TV is like chimpanzee behavior with words. Your leaders in a box, all they do is talk. But all they seem to be doing is hitting out at the other guy, running away or presenting their rump.

4. Your TV is so small and so fast that if you show me real life on it I would probably feel uncomfortable. It would be like staring at something I am not supposed to look at.

He soon extended his talk on the dimension and pace of TV by saying:

5. Your TV is of such a small scale that when I watch it, my experience of time speeds up. And the pictures fly by at such a rapid pace. I can only understand what is already familiar.

In response, I gave him the following analysis of America:

In American society with its preponderance of mediated experiences, an authentic sense of familiarity is hard to come by. So we go for its prefabricated look-alike. In America, images operate in a unique environment. America is a performance culture.

## Power of Repetition

Some consultants don't care what reporters say about political ads. Do ad watches, call them misleading, it doesn't have any effect. They figure commercials run 50 or 100 times for every time a [critical] story runs.—*Brooks Jackson, CNN correspondent and ad watcher on television program "Media Today."*

Americans like to think that they are free: free to be who they want and free to wipe the slate clean and start anew any time they desire. There is no one standing between an idea and its realization. Social structures—societal, familial, occupational—are much less circumscribed than in most other cultures. Relatively little is proscribed. Almost nothing is cut and dried. In America, change is ever present. The future is now. To stand in place you have to run. No behavior, no feeling, no aesthetic is allowed the time to mature—to become routinely complex. Instead, most everything is "plucked" while still green and hard.

America is a creative idea, but to be cut loose as free individuals—to have no ready-made and permanent niche to relax in—is not easy. This inherent freedom and the pace of change it sets in motion create certain desires: convenience, instant decodability of the social environment and the avoidance of struggle. Fast food, fast talk, "fast forward" on our VCR have all become part of a common American ethos.

Not only free but created equal by political doctrine, Americans seek to make themselves different. Americans can tell themselves "belonging" is a "want," not a "must." With status not legally conferred, Americans are compelled to make something different out of equality. Performance is their means.

He looked at me pensively. I concluded by saying that in America the performance of power was always equated with power.

He sat silently for a while. I did not interrupt his quiet. Then he moved a bit closer to me, still sitting in his characteristic squat. He told me this: "The leader must ride the cusp between appeasement and power. All people are primed to orient to such a performance. We feel it without logical processing and respond to it as inherently compelling. We absorb such a presentation without any conscious and objective analysis—it's bred in the bone."

Then the shaman concluded: "The leader must seem to know the way but never lose the feel or smell of the people. And there must be a fit between the leader's intent and gesture. This is what we have a nose and a belly for. To sniff out the inauthentic. Your people can lose that if they only see the leader in that box of yours (again, he pointed to the VCR). If you lose your nose you can lose your culture."

These are the words from the primeval forest, age-old and ageless.

Grossman was on to something. His intuition was keen. So was Tom Wicker's when he said: "Television has worked enormous changes, in politics, and in the governing of the country, as in life generally. Those changes have been so great that we don't yet fully realize exactly what they are; until we do, we're not really going to know how to cope."

So let's not kid ourselves. It's not the cynicism or venality of media advisers nor the supposed liberal bias of journalists that the American people are up against when trying to make an informed decision about who will lead them. And the recent genre of the "Media Watch" columns that analyze a candidate's message for truthfulness and relevance is not a panacea for what ails us. The dichotomy between substance and image is a red herring. What we are dealing with is the nature of a medium—television—that so permeates our lives that it tacitly but tenaciously influences how we know and what we know.

Twisters are fine for the big screen, but for campaign 1996 on TV, let's at least get the spin right. ■

# Travails of a Textbook Author

By MELVIN MENCHER

As I prepare the next edition of one of my reporting and writing textbooks my eye wanders to an evaluation of the current edition sent to me by the publisher's New England sales representative. The form was filled out by a journalism instructor who has been using the book. Never again, she writes.

She objects to a series I quote from *The Toledo Blade*, which she finds is "skewed anti-feminist," and also cites a photograph I reproduce from *The Contra Costa Times* as evidence of my "bias." She finds the reasons I give for using this material to be "excuses that are reprehensible."

I have been told that my books—"Basic Media Writing" and "News Reporting and Writing"—are too detailed, too long; that the design is dull, the photos too graphic; that I am mystifying students with references to Watergate, the Vietnam War and such ancient history as World War II. I am accused of racism, homophobia and sensationalism—and now I am guilty of antifeminism.

When you come down to it, journalism textbook publishing may not be much different from the practice of journalism. Take a stand on controversial issues, challenge readers, avoid a value-neutral position and the critics are at you, both public and in-house no-sayers. I could take a safer route in my books, as I believe too many newspapers have. Despite the complaints, though, my books do well, as I believe journalism will, too, if it re-examines its assumptions about the profitability of a reader-friendly, entertainment-focused catering to markets.

For what it's worth, then, herewith a

journey into the business of writing journalism textbooks.

The *Blade* series that the Massachusetts college teacher found anti-feminist challenges assumptions about rape-victimization data, which range from *Ms Magazine's* one woman in two to one in five or six used by feminine groups on campuses in a campaign known as "Take Back the Night." The *Blade* reporters found the figures to be vastly inflated, that there was no factual support for them; and they contend that funds for rape counseling and education are misdirected to areas like campuses that are far less affected than minority communities where the rates are inordinately high.

I use *The Contra Costa Times* photo to illustrate decision-making under deadline pressure. The photo shows a girl racing across a field toward a police officer. She has just been released by her kidnapper. A close examination of the tiny figure in the photo reveals that she is covering her bare breast.

The California newspaper decided to go with the dramatic shot, and I present the editor's reasons for doing so as well as some of the objections, including a furious letter to the editor after publication.

I think these are good examples of enterprise reporting and of the troublesome moral issues confronting journalists. Neither was an easy out for the newspapers, and that nags at me as I weigh the instructor's objections to my using the material. Should I retain it in the next edition?

I did eliminate in the current edition of "News Reporting and Writing" a description of Milton Coleman's decision to use Jesse Jackson's reference to New York City as "Hymietown" in Coleman's *Washington Post* interview. That sec-



Melvin Mencher, Nieman Fellow 1953, worked for *The United Press* (before the *International* was added) and newspapers in New Mexico and California before leaving the newsroom for the classroom. He has taught at the University of Kansas, Humboldt State University and Columbia University, where he is Professor Emeritus at the Graduate School of Journalism. He is a frequent contributor to a number of publications and is the author of "News Reporting and Writing," the seventh edition of which has just been published, and "Basic Media Writing," now in its fifth edition.

tion drew from an instructor the comment: "I have black students in class who were offended by the material."

You may recall Jackson's objection, that when he said to Coleman, "Let's talk black talk," he presumed Coleman would understand he was going off the record. In his explanation for using the quote many considered offensive, Coleman said that since Jackson was a candidate for president people were entitled to hear it.

That was a while back and I have more current examples that illustrate the problems of on/off-the-record ma-

terial. And yet I am not sure that is my reason for dropping the Jackson incident.

My editors try to anticipate objections. My copyeditor is especially vigilant about the slightest hint of anti-feminist language. She diligently changes every "he" to "she" when, tired of the awkward "he or she" construction, I write: "The journalist...he...." Or: "When she writes a lead, the city hall reporter...."

The first reporter undergoes a sex change whereas the second reporter remains female.

"Chairman" is always replaced by that abomination "chair," even when I am describing a man who holds the position.

"Journalism is the art of the specific," I tell the copyeditor. "Chairman" says more than "chair." But she is wise in the ways of textbook adopters, and I go along on this.

I also concede her substitution of "gay" for "homosexual," which she seems to think is taboo in the gay community.

But when the book editor refused to run a photograph that had become the basis of a lawsuit, I balked.

The photo, which had appeared in a university yearbook, showed a student couple naked from the waist up. On the yearbook's publication, the university president fired the student editor. With the help of an ACLU lawyer, the student successfully sued the university for violating his First Amendment rights. He was awarded \$10,000, and the university was ordered to buy space in newspapers around the state to declare its respect for the constitutional rights of its students.

Not a bad example, it seemed to me, of the various concepts of what constitutes good taste. As a judge remarked in a similar case, "One man's lyric is another's obscenity." The student editor found it an apt illustration for his piece about love on the campus, and the president saw it as a lewd photo. Also, it would show journalism students, many of whom work on student publications, that they have the same First Amendment protection as journalists who work for commercial publications.

No photo, my editor ruled. Why? "We could be sued for sexual harassment," he answered. I told him this was the nuttiest idea I'd heard in a long time. He countered by saying he had floated the photo to some journalism instructors, and they felt it could be so offensive to some women they would sue.

Book contracts give the publisher the last word on content. I decided to make the incident public. I have written about the silence of biology textbook authors who made Charles Darwin a non-person and barely mentioned his theory of evolution in response to demands by fundamentalists. So I wrote a piece about the photo censorship for the journal of a textbook writers organization. The Washington Journalism Review picked up the incident and ran a piece scoffing at the overprotection of college youth by the publisher. A journalism instructor in New Jersey who was using one of my books saw the article and informed the publisher she supported my position: she dropped my book in protest.

Back to the present. The manuscript in front of me contains this sentence:

"The feature writer knows that great writers inspire us to see ourselves in Tolstoy's *Natasha*, Fitzgerald's *Nick Carraway* and Melville's *Captain Vere*."

And on another page, there is advice of Gilbert Millstein, a print journalist turned network television news writer. He recommends that journalists read Hawthorne, Melville and Nathaniel West. Of West's work, he writes:

"For example, any television news writer who reads 'Miss Lonelyhearts' or 'The Day of the Locust' would find in them an economy and a vividness that would surprise the life out of him. I would offer the two books as models for any person who wants to write factual news. The economy of 'Miss Lonelyhearts' is unbelievable...."

Should these authors remain in the seventh edition of "News Reporting and Writing?" Given the erosion of reading in favor of life on the Internet, perhaps not. Another question: I am now collecting material for the sixth edition of "Basic Media Writing," and I have come across the acceptance speech Murray

Kempton gave on receiving the Elijah Lovejoy Award at Colby College. I like this:

"Our trade remains for me the story you cover, the bumps you take, the people you meet and the struggle to make sense of it all in the only way we can ever hope to make sense, which is by seeing, touching and smelling. All else is commentary."

I want to quote Kempton's homage to Ernie Pyle who, Kempton says, "stands above the rest because he most fully incarnated what a reporter ought to be. Pyle went again and again wherever the worst extremes waited, the unscripted man bound by conscience to the comradeship of the conscripted and enduring by free will what they were compelled to endure by necessity."

What an eloquent tribute to a great reporter and to our trade, reporting. I want to use this despite the advice of some of my adopters who tell me I need less about reporting and more about kickers, nut graphs and the other wonders of the writing craft.

But do these names—Lovejoy, Kempton, Pyle—mean anything to college students? Well, they should. They should know Lovejoy died defending his abolitionist press, that Pyle was killed by a sniper on the front, where he felt he belonged, with Bill Maudlin's GI Joe.

To show students that the world they are setting out to describe is as dramatic as the most fervid construction of the novelist or poet I want to quote Philip Roth: "The actuality is continually outdoing our talents." That would go alongside Wallace Stevens's: "In the presence of extraordinary actuality, consciousness takes the place of imagination."

Will students know these authors? Will some of my faculty colleagues only see this as grandstanding?

If I delete or do not add such material, what then will I do with this cry from Charles Dickens:

"Breathe the polluted air. And then, calling up some ghastly child, with stunted form and wicked face, hold forth on its unnatural sinfulness, and lament its being, so early, far away from

Heaven—but think a little of its being conceived, and born, and bred, in Hell.”

I want to keep this in the chapter “The Morality of Journalism” to show students the persistence of the “dreadful enclosures” that breed and destroy children, and to show them the responsibility of the journalist to speak up. But can I assume they know Dickens? A Massachusetts school board dropped the works of Dickens, Twain and Steinbeck because it felt they would bore students.

If journalism is part of the world of letters, then why not retain all of this and continue to add to it?

My editor isn't so sure. Use more contemporary cultural icons, he suggests. I tried. In the chapter “The Writer's Art,” I wrote that all creative people—and journalists are such—try to put their stamp on their work, an individual style that is identifiable and as different from others as Hemingway is from Faulkner and Judy Garland from Whitney Austin.

“Austin?” my editor queried. “You mean Houston.”

He recommended I stay in touch by reading *People* magazine.

What of our own voices from the past, the journalists whose courage and independence should be enduring reminders to students that journalism is never value-free? Do I call up the names of Ida B. Wells and Hazel Brannon Smith? Paul Y. Anderson, O.K. Bovard, Lincoln Steffens, Joseph Pulitzer?

Wells's valor in confronting the lynch mentality of her community and Smith's refusal to bow to the White Citizens Councils say more about women in journalism than changing every “he” to “she” in the manuscript.

I must show these journalists at work, not mention them in some list. The strength of my books lies in showing, not telling, allowing the student to draw concepts and principles from watching journalists as they shape their experiences into stories that have some impact in their communities.

This presents problems. The comments of some faculty members attest to that. Sometimes my publisher would prefer less action, fewer incidents and

examples that might offend.

A colleague who has written a reporting and writing textbook has this succinct advice for textbook authors:

“Sadly, you may want to avoid anything controversial: anything likely to offend even a few students or faculty members. Faculty members angered by a single illustration or paragraph in a 500-page book are unlikely to adopt it.”

What, then, am I to do with the work of the muckrakers whose journalism I consider one of the supreme achievements of our trade but who are described by a pillar of the journalism education establishment as irresponsible? Cater to that opinion and drop Ida Tarbell, Steffens and the others whose work I quote?

The second problem my publisher faces from my piling up of incidents, illustrations and the names of journalists, novelists and poets is that the books bulk up. The bigger the book, the more costly, and the more costly the more likely students are to use library copies or to redeem their investment by selling their textbooks to the campus bookstore at the end of the semester. Neither I nor my publisher make a nickel from the transaction in used books.

Then there are the compassionate instructors who will photocopy material for their students. I can understand the economics involved. When “News Reporting and Writing” was published in 1977, I asked my publisher to make the price as low as possible. To do so, the textbook and accompanying workbook were published in soft cover, the first reporting and writing textbooks to be published that way. The price: \$9.95 for the textbook, \$4.95 for the workbook; total, \$14.90. Today, the two volumes sell for about \$50. A used textbook and workbook will run about \$40.

One instructor wrote that after using several editions of one of my books he was giving up. Students can't afford them, he told me. I snapped.

“Why not ask them how much they spent on CD's and their cars last month?” I asked. A mistake. Never argue with Samaritans about their good works.

Aware of the sharp decline in sales

the longer a textbook is on the market, publishers urge their authors to work on new editions. I don't know how chemistry textbook writers bring this off, but it's not difficult for me as I can discard yesterday's headline copy for today's news. I can, for example, illustrate court coverage with the O.J. Simpson trial, and I can show the rigors of wire service writing with the flow of the AP leads on the Oklahoma City courthouse bombing.

But some old stories must remain. What better example of enterprising journalism than the Watergate coverage? That means Richard Nixon remains. Well, that seems acceptable to users. But what do I do with Gerald Ford, barely recognizable even during his presidency? I have been using him to illustrate the thinking process of a headline writer on deadline. The labors of good journalists and their journalism should make up part of our myth, the tradition we hand down to young journalists. Gerald Ford a figure in a journalistic epic? Do I use him again in the next edition?

It was Gerald Ford who rebuffed New York's plea for federal assistance as the city hovered near bankruptcy some 20 years ago. Ford was unmoved, said it was the city's profligacy and its incompetent leadership that had landed it in trouble and that it should cope with the consequences. A big story, clearly Page One for The Daily News of New York. How to fit all that into two lines of 11 units each of railroad type?

How can I resist describing what went through William Brink's mind as he tried to find the words to match the event?

FORD REFUSES

AID TO CITY

Dull. Anyway, the top line was half a unit too long.

FORD SAYS NO

TO CITY AID

It fit, but the head was as dull as the one that did not fit.

“Ford hadn't just declined to help us,” Brink recalls thinking. “He had, in effect, consigned us to the scrap heap.” And then it came to him, the ultimate

insult known to every New Yorker. The classic head emerged:

FORD TO CITY:  
DROP DEAD

No, I can't resist. It stays. The incident also shows how often journalists rely on sudden insights, but that they don't come from a blank tablet, that these insights, the reporter's hunches and intuitions, are solidly based on experience and knowledge. Brink knew the two words that are to his readers as insulting as the slap of the glove across the face of an 18th Century courtier.

Then there is the matter of substance v. craft. How much space can I give to the content of journalism at the expense of instruction in the craft of writing? My approach has been that I can teach craft through substance. Nice phrase that, but obstacles abound in its execution. Take the use of mathematics in journalism. How can journalists understand much of what goes on around them without some grounding in handling numbers?

**Families Below  
The Poverty Line**

Black	31.3 %
Hispanic	26.2 %
White	9.4 %

**Murder Victim Rates per  
100,000 in Age Group**

Age	Black	White
14-17	110	15
18-24	200	20

The infant mortality rates in some of our metropolitan areas are as high as those in some Third World countries.

I realize that this is the age of innumeracy, that many students have chosen to major in "communications" because, they say, they prefer writing to juggling equations. I know that too many of my students at Columbia could not calculate a percentage, much less derive a rate, and these were graduate students. Few schools, it seems, require mathematics these days.

But without some idea of how to handle numbers and how to do simple calculations, how can they handle their

beats: the municipal budget, the property tax, death and disease rates, crime rates, student-teacher ratios, the education budget and, of course, local business and home finances? The list is endless. It may be time for colleges to add to their bulletins Plato's inscription over the entrance to his Academy: "Let no one ignorant of mathematics enter here."

Here, for example, is an example of how simple long division can make data into a readable story: you are told that 50 million Americans smoke 600 billion cigarettes a year. That's 12,000 cigarettes each year, or a little more than 30 a day, which leads to this lead:

"The average smoker goes through a pack and a half of cigarettes a day, recent figures on..."

It seems to me that such examples demonstrate the validity of the underlying concept of my textbooks that the best way to teach craft is through substance. But some don't buy this. One reviewer of journalism textbooks took me to task for failing to spend space on "story endings."

I've given up arguing with the writing cadre that journalists don't write writing, they write reporting. The advocates of writing reform have the zeal of the true believer, and their followers are legion—witness the space given over in our journalism publications to columns on writing tips.

Still, I must be realistic about the capabilities of college students. Journalism instructors tell me that their first reporting and writing courses are given over to instruction in basic English. Their students, many of whom have passed freshman composition courses, cannot handle the fundamentals of English.

My reply is that journalism programs should not admit these students, which, a friend told me, is a useless argument as enrollment would sink to a fraction of its current low state. Deans and directors have to keep enrollment high to justify their budgets.

I could, of course, cut back on my emphasis on the content of journalism. But when I start to do this, the voice of a CBS network news executive rings out. He remarked on a program de-

voted to the utility of a journalism education that he had reporters (journalism school graduates all) covering the O.J. Simpson trial who didn't know the difference between a preliminary hearing and an arraignment.

To show students that journalism is more than the stenographic coverage of speeches and press releases, I use Sydney Schanberg's enterprise in finding out for himself the damage U.S. bombers had accidentally inflicted on a Cambodian village during the Vietnam War. The government had said the damage was minimal, and most reporters dutifully relayed the press release. Schanberg managed to find a boat and crossed into Neak Luong where he saw extensive damage.

In his story, Schanberg juxtaposes the air attaché's statement, "It was no great disaster," against his own observations: "Everyone has lost either relatives or friends; in some cases entire large families were wiped out." He quotes a soldier "sobbing uncontrollably on the riverbank. 'All my family is dead. Take my picture, take my picture. Let the Americans see.'" He goes on:

"A woman's scalp sways on a clump of tall grass. A bloody pillow here, a shred of a sarong caught on a barbed wire there. A large bloodstain on the brown earth. A pair of infant's rubber sandals among some unexploded military shells."

This section brought forth a complaint from a Midwestern user. Too graphic, she wrote. What am I trying to do, turn students away from journalism?

Strangely, in view of the objections to material elsewhere in "News Reporting and Writing," the chapter on taste—which includes some rough stuff—raises no one's ire. Those who dislike the frank language and the photographs of drowned children, the Pacifica Radio's Filthy Words case before the FCC and other material either do not adopt the book or do not assign the chapter.

But my publisher worries. In one edition I carried a layout from Editor & Publisher that showed how several newspapers had sanitized an ad for a James Bond movie. The original ad



showed a woman in tight shorts. Very tight shorts. Some newspapers bulked up the pants; some managed to cut the woman off at her belt. The censorship reflected community mores, I pointed out. The more conservative the city, the less flesh. The point I make is that taste reflects place as well as times and context.

I also had in early editions a photo that a college newspaper ran of the poet Allen Ginsberg naked from head to halfway between his belly button and groin. The college administration "went ballistic," as the editor told me.

Time marches on and both photos would hardly perturb the most sedate reader today. Yet when I wanted to make that point in a later edition, the E&P layout and the Ginsberg photo had somehow disappeared from the publisher's photo files.

Early on in my textbook writing career I learned to read everything the publisher sends out over my name. Everything. For the first edition of "NRW," the publisher drew up a fancy three-color brochure. A good sign of the publisher's commitment to the book, I thought, when I glanced at the first of 3,000 copies that were printed. Several days later, I read through the copy. No, no. Yes, yes. There it was: "In his 'Workbook,' Mencher has exercises in spelling, punctuation and grammar."

I called my editor. "Kill the brochures," I shouted. "You've misspelled the word grammar."

"We can't do that," he replied. "We've spent the budget on the brochures. Besides, no one will notice."

"No one will notice," I sputtered. "No one will notice. These journalism instructors are the very people who will notice."

I could see I was making no headway. "Fine," I said. "Tomorrow morning you will have an injunction on your desk prohibiting you from distributing the brochures."

"What?"

"An injunction, a preliminary injunction I'm having a lawyer in Chicago draw up for me."

Silence. Then: "I'll call you back in 15 minutes."

The brochures were dumped.

I told this story to a colleague who had just finished a book on broadcast journalism. He found it hard to believe, he said, that a publisher would hire people who could not spell.

Three weeks later, I had a letter from my colleague. In the envelope was a press release from his publisher, and circled in red was this: "For the beginner, grammar and other fundamentals are...."

For the fifth edition of "Basic," my publisher's advertising copywriter suggested that adopters consider "bundling" the textbook, workbook and a new item I devised, a reporter's checklist and notebook. That way, the copy stated, students could receive a "discount off of the listed price."

Clearly, "off of" was off limits. What about "bundling," the early New England custom of sweethearts sleeping together fully clothed? I liked "bundling" instead of the prosaic "packaging," but I could hear the hooting from some adopters and out it went. As did the copywriter's arithmetic, which made it seem that the 15 percent reduction was cumulative, thus entitling the buyer of all three volumes to 45 percent off.

Why bother, then, if I can look forward to two years of stress and strain as I prepare the sixth edition of "Basic" and then, without a breather, must work on the eighth edition of "NRW?" (To beat the used book market, publishers are pushing their authors to ready a new edition every two to three years instead of three to four years.)

It's the money, stupid, you say? Not exactly.

Textbook authors pay the fees for permission to use photographs and copy, and they must hire an indexer. I have been using a photograph of a homeless man sleeping in front of the White House, but The Boston Globe now wants \$150 for one-time use in the seventh edition. The Santa Rosa, California, newspaper asks for \$250 for a flood rescue shot.

Since I use well over 100 photos in each edition, costs of this size are becoming prohibitive. But I need good art.

I had always thought the fair use doctrine allowed me to copy up to 250

words, but now newspapers want big bucks for a lead, and a Seattle newspaper said not only could I not use a lead but could not paraphrase it without payment.

In other words, costs are high, costs I must bear.

And the market for reporting textbooks is limited. Reporting and writing courses do not have the enrollment of Econ I or Psych I. And there are about 40 textbooks out there competing for a dwindling number of young men and women who want to be journalists. Maybe 30,000 students take the course each year.

Why bother? Because now and then a student will write that she likes the book so much she intends taking it with her to her first job. Or a student will tell me he was thrilled by being able to accompany the police reporter for The Sacramento Bee as she made her rounds.

A former student calls to tell me that her city editor telephoned late one night and told her to cover a fire near her home, that he was short-staffed. "I've been covering housing for years. Never covered a fire. But I grabbed your textbook and was off," she said.

Or an instructor will say she is adopting the book even though she thinks the design is too straight. "It has content no other book does," she writes on an evaluation form.

And maybe the young men and women who use my books will see journalism as an incredible opportunity to do some good while having the time of their lives. ■

## 69 Years Ago

If news is known by the public through radio broadcasts there is no logical incentive to buy a newspaper to get the news.—*An editorial in Editor & Publisher, October 8, 1927.*

## Thoughts About the Internet and Journalism



**John Markoff**  
**Nightmare Scenario**

The nightmare scenario is the end of journalism. Think of the O.J. car chase. Think about the Net allowing all of us to simultaneously rush to every point in the world where something is happening. This portends a world where we will begin to see the displacement of traditional journalism.—*John Markoff, reporter, The New York Times.*

**Denise Caruso**  
**Believing the Net**

I wouldn't believe half of what I read, if not three-quarters or 90 percent of what I read on the Net. The good thing about journalism when practiced well is that you have some small assurance at least that whoever's done the reporting has done some work and has checked with a couple sources. I do not call eyewitness reports journalism and I think this is a big problem that journalism faces as a career, as a vocation, because we have to make people understand that there's a big difference between raw information and people who go check out facts. That said, I think that absolutely there's an enormous opportunity for new journalism on the Net.—*Denise Caruso, Digital Commerce Columnist, The New York Times.*



**Brock N. Meeks**  
**Effect: Zero**

My primary gig at Wired and Hot Wired is covering the '96 election. From the other [World Wide] Web sites that I've seen—by The Washington Post and so forth—they're just repackaging the same old horse-race style of journalism and putting it on an electronic format and all of a sudden that's supposed to be hip. I don't think that that's what the Net community wants to see and it's something that we're trying to do on Netizen, just the exact opposite. What kind of effect that's having [on the political process]? Zero.—*Brock N. Meeks, Chief Washington Correspondent, Wired magazine.*



**Janice Kaplan**  
**Unfiltered Voices**

I think the good news about the World Wide Web is that everybody has a voice and the bad news about the Web is that everybody has a voice. Most of us would not be happy reading Time magazine if they printed every one of the letters to the editor they received. And that has frankly been one of the problems on the Web—endless unfiltered voices don't always hold our interest. There is a role for a good journalist on the Web who can make sense of some of those voices.—*Janice Kaplan, Editor-in-Chief, iGuide.*

*From the Harvard Conference  
 on the Internet and Society,  
 May 29, 1996*

# Technology

## *How To Make On-Line Editions Pay*

BY THOMAS REGAN

**O**f all the decisions a newspaper needs to make about creating an on-line edition, none is more important than deciding how it wants to make the site pay for itself. Currently there are three models: have customers pay for everything; give customers some free content and offer some fee-based content, while selling some advertising, and give customers everything for free and pay for it all with advertising.

While all three models exist on the World Wide Web, the second example will probably be chosen by more newspapers with on-line sites. On the one hand, papers that have experimented with subscription-only sites have quickly changed their minds once they find out that content may be king on the Web, but if you charge too much for it, people don't want it. (The experience of USA Today's on-line site is an example of this.) After all, as Esther Dyson says, content on the Internet is like water in the ocean. What you want to charge for will almost always be free somewhere else on the Web.

The third option, however, is also risky. While some sites look to be doing quite well with advertising-only models, others have found it a perilous path to follow. Web Review, a very good on-line magazine, stopped publishing electronically because it couldn't continue to fund its operations on an advertising-only based model. Currently most papers on the Web are free, but that won't last.

So there are two questions that on-line publishers need to answer: "What do we want to charge for?" and "How will my customers pay for it?"

The answer to the second question is more apparent than the first, especially since Mastercard and Visa signed an agreement earlier this year to use a single on-line standard for electronic payments. This Secure Electronic Transaction (SET) technology opens up a potential market of 700 million people world wide. SET will allow newspapers and their advertisers to calm customers who've been falsely told again and again that giving your credit card number over the Internet is like giving it to the first street person you meet on your way to work this morning. Realistically, the Mastercard-Visa agreement could open up Net commerce in a way that probably only existed previously in Bill Gates's dreams.

Which brings us back to the first question—what do we want to charge for? Answering that question requires a shift in thinking that many newspapers seem to be having trouble making. Newspaper publishers and editors tend to see their

on-line editions as extensions of their daily print product, rather than as a new medium in itself. So it puzzles them that potential customers don't want to "buy" their on-line product in the same whole-hog way they buy the print version.

In order to take advantage of the new income opportunities in cyberspace, newspapers have to stop seeing themselves as, well, newspapers, and see themselves for what they really are—information providers. As an information provider, the print version of the newspaper becomes just one of many ways to get the news to the customers—which is, after all, the ultimate goal of any journalist.

An information provider that digitalizes its database of stories and makes it available on line for a fee has taken a bold step in the direction of making money. (The SET technology also make the option of charging a per story fee much more attractive to both buyer and seller.) So has the information provider who creates an E-mail version of its print edition—especially attractive to customers with slow modems, those who live in remote areas or overseas, or who are just too busy to spend time on line surfing. Not only can the information provider charge a fee for the E-mail service but it can also sell advertising.

Information providers can also use on-line technology to create new services that people will pay for. On-line discussion groups, for instance, where people can read the discussions for free, but have to pay a small fee for the right to join the conversation is just one example. Again, the SET technology makes all these options much more of a probability than a possibility.

The key is finding out what customers need, and how to get that information to them on line in a way that you can't get it to them in the print version. The way for an information provider *not* to succeed on line is for it to do only what makes it happy, and then thinking as long as it is happy, the customers will be happy.

The fault lies not in our printing presses but in ourselves. Making money on line while promoting journalistic excellence can go hand-in-hand. And it will, for those smart enough to seize the opportunity. ■

---

*Tom Regan is the Managing Editor of The Christian Science Monitor's On-line Edition. His homepage is at <http://www1.usa.com/regan/Homelom.html>.*

# Asian Media



*A silent protest in Sri Lanka. The signs say, "We do saryagraba on behalf of media freedom." Saryagraba is the non-violent form of civil resistance started by Mahatma Gandhi.*

With the following articles Nieman Reports rounds out its Asian media coverage. These articles, as well as the first stories in the Winter 1995 edition, were conceived and developed by Peter Eng, former Bangkok Bureau Editor of The Associated Press and a 1995 Nieman Fellow.

# Fear, Journalism and Democracy

BY PETER ENG

On the day I arrived to begin my journalism career in Southeast Asia, Aug. 21, 1983, a life ended and freedom began. In the newsroom, the old Teletype clattered:

BULLETIN

MANILA (AP)—A sister of Philippine opposition leader Benigno Aquino said "shots rang out outside the plane" as he landed here Sunday from three years of U.S. exile, and an NBC reporter aboard the plane said Aquino was dead.

The plotters sought to silence the opposition, but instead outrage built up as the Philippine media increasingly gave exposure to the rivals of President Ferdinand E. Marcos. In 1986, a huge "People Power" revolution drove the dictator into exile and swept Aquino's widow, Corazon Aquino, to power.

After the assassination, one of the alternative publications, Mr and Ms magazine, broke circulation records by printing stories of the public reaction to the killing, which the Marcos-controlled press did not run. Later, the magazine's publisher established The Philippine Daily Inquirer, which closely followed the trial of those accused of the assassination. Today The Inquirer is the biggest and perhaps most influential newspaper in the country.

In 1983, Aquino's murder brought only gloom. Today it can be remembered as the labor pains for the birth of freedom in the Philippines because one man gave his life, and the media and other groups in society made him a symbol for democratic reform.

Democracy demands a special courage of citizens—this was a central lesson during my 11 years as an Associated Press reporter in Southeast Asia. If you're a foreign journalist, that courage is not easy to summon because it is not your country or your future that is at stake. But courage can come if you realize that in confronting the little dangers immediately before you, you

can help make life better not only there but also in places you've never been. And consider: the worst a foreigner usually faces is being expelled from the country. Local journalists are threatened, beaten, jailed and executed. Those who struggle on are blessed with a courage we will never know.

No people have struggled for democracy more poignantly than the Cambodians, victims of the Khmer Rouge genocide and two civil wars since 1970. The Khmer Rouge devastated the news media, and many journalists fled, died or were executed. The next government, also Communist, turned journalists into government propagandists.

It was heartbreaking to meet these journalists in the 1980's. They suffered the pain of Cambodia's history and the pain of not being able to practice their profession. They spoke nervously, in clipped sentences. Seeing them again after the United Nations-organized elec-

tion of May 1993, the change was amazing. They couldn't stop talking about new possibilities and ambitions.

Much of the nourishment came from U.N. peacekeepers who guided Cambodia on the road to freedom. Before they arrived in 1991, Cambodia had four state-controlled newspapers and an official news agency. Today, some 50 privately owned newspapers publish in Phnom Penh.

Cambodia's newspapers are not yet significant players in the struggle for democracy. Many are sex-and-crime tabloids, or libelous mouthpieces for the political group funding the paper. Still, the newspapers now are joining the political fray with loud criticism and new opinions demanding to be heard. Some lambaste government repression and corruption. The authorities, most of whom served in previous autocratic regimes, have responded by jailing reporters and closing newspapers. Three



*Eng in Cambodia with young friends.*

reporters have been murdered; another died mysteriously. I know a reporter of a major daily who sleeps above the newsroom because he is afraid to ride his bicycle home at night.

Despite the fears, I see in him and other Cambodian reporters a strong commitment to forge on. Newspaper editor Thun Bunly, who in May became the fourth journalist to die, once told Amnesty International: "I want to do whatever I can so that Cambodia has democracy in the same way as other people in the world. There is less democracy if we cannot print."

It was never that dangerous to be a foreign reporter in Cambodia unless you intentionally put yourself into risky situations.

In 1992 I rode with two U.N. military observers, Maj. Li Zhijun of China and Capt. Guillaume Ancel of France, who drove up a mountain in southern Cambodia to try to persuade Khmer Rouge guerrillas to lay down their arms. They could have stayed in the safety of town, but they wanted to make a difference. Unarmed, they drove 10 kilometers up the mountain, which was heavily mined and enveloped in bamboo forest.

Li and Ancel had been up the path twice before without seeing any Khmer Rouge soldiers, and this time they were pushing five kilometers farther. Throughout the three-hour trip, Ancel peered into the foliage in case of a surprise attack. Li studied the road for mines hidden by mud or twigs and dirt. The other reporter on the trip, Sheri Prasso, then with Agence France Press, tucked her legs under her, away from the floor of the car. I was almost surprised we didn't hit a mine; perhaps it was because we turned back where the road forked into two paths that appeared not well-trodden.

Later, we retraced our tracks back to town. On their third try, Li and Ancel still had not met the Khmer Rouge, but they made it again known in the mountain that they were peacemakers. Few would have known about their daring mission if reporters had not gone along.

A few months later, this time in Cambodia's northwestern province of Battambang, I rode down a dirt road named Route 10 with Andy Pendleton, who worked for the U.N. High Com-

missioner for Refugees. He had just heard that villagers in one district were fleeing fighting between government and Khmer Rouge forces. Pendleton had tried to persuade refugees returning from Thailand not to resettle there because of mines, fighting and malaria. The refugees went anyway, drawn by the rich soil. Now they were fleeing again. Pendleton jumped into his car.

"We warned them, damn it! We did everything we could, but they still came," Pendleton said, punching the air in frustration as he watched the refugees fleeing by foot and ox-carts packed with children and the new rice harvest. On a mountain behind them, smoke

billowed from a fire. In the distance, heavy shells thudded to earth. Pendleton stopped frequently to ask the refugees what was happening in the areas from which they fled, and whether other refugees were trapped there.

After a few miles, we reached a stretch of road where we saw no one and all was quiet. We knew the dangers: mines, crossfire, errant shells, trigger-happy soldiers. Pendleton stopped the car by a roadside stall where incredibly, someone was still selling drinks. He turned toward me. "I can let you out here and you can wait for me to come back and pick you up if you want," he said.

I visited Pendleton recently in Phnom Penh. "Perhaps it was irresponsible for me to put you in the car that day," he said. "But I wanted you to understand what I had done to try to persuade those people from resettling there, and my frustrations at what happened. I



Capt. Guillaume Ancel, a U.N. military observer, asking the whereabouts of Khmer Rouge.

wanted you to reveal that to others. As we went down the road, I didn't know what to expect. We could have encountered something horrible, but there also could have been people who needed help. I wanted to see. But I felt it was getting more and more dangerous. That's why I gave you the chance to get out. I was apprehensive. I shit in my pants like everyone else. But you know—and I know this sounds self-serving—I wasn't thinking about myself."

Luckily, courage is contagious. For the journalist, it just does not seem right that when people are risking their lives for others, you are not there to record it and to tell the world. Pendleton felt an obligation, as an aid official and as a human being, to see how he could help. I knew that as a journalist and a human being, I also could make a dif-

ference. But I could only do so if I got to where the story was, and the story was down that road. If he knew what lay ahead and didn't get out of the car, how could I?

We drove down Route 10, saw nothing and turned back. But the story I wrote that day of refugees fleeing was truer because I knew no one was trapped. Of course I was scared. Every second on Route 10 and Kamchay Mountain, my legs tingled with fear of being torn from my body. I girded for a blast when the wheels of the car crunched twigs on the road, or slid into the monsoon mud. I pictured a rifle poking out of the foliage, the bullet smashing the windshield and then my skull. I prayed.

My fear was not out of place. Cambodia is one of the most heavily mined countries on earth. Everywhere victims hobble about on crutches, begging. The crippled fill entire hospital wards; relatives fan flies away from their wounds. I never forgot the narrow escape in 1989 of a former AP colleague, Nate Thayer. He was riding with guerrillas in the northwest when the truck hit an anti-tank mine. The driver died after both legs were blown off. Several passengers including Thayer were injured. The truck overturned and burned.

**I**n Thailand, some journalists stood defiant when soldiers attacked pro-democracy demonstrators during four nights of blood and fire in May 1992. Because of them, the media and political culture are very different today.

Hundreds of thousands of people flooded the streets to protest Gen. Suchinda Kraprayoon, who had overthrown a government and become prime minister. The middle class activists and professionals who led the revolt used mobile phones to call friends from the scene. That was the only way that some people found out that soldiers shot dead more than 40 people and injured hundreds. The five television stations, all army or state-owned, either ignored the protests or broadcasted lies. Troops stormed newspaper offices, ordered papers shut, blocked paper delivery routes.

Just before midnight May 17, the

authorities ordered all media not to report anything on the uprising. The editors of the English-language newspaper *The Nation* gathered to discuss how to respond, and decided that "the litmus test of any good newspaper is to report the truth during this kind of crisis," recalls Thepchai Yong, then its news editor. "We didn't know what was going to happen the next day. They might close down all the papers. We thought this may be our last chance to tell the people what was happening."

The next day, *The Nation* published comprehensive, emotive accounts of the violence and a dramatic front-page photo showing three policemen clubbing a young protester already cowering on his knees. The protesters made thousands of photocopies of the page and distributed them all over the city. That brought even more people into the streets and magnified the anger. Within days, Suchinda was forced to resign.

After Suchinda fell, an interim government stripped the military of its traditional means of interfering in politics. Pro-democracy parties won the next election. Reforms included the decision to allow Thailand's first independent television station; Independent Television News, of which Thepchai is news editor, began broadcasting this past July 1. Even government and army television channels are significantly freer now.

Once victims of politicians, the media today shape much of the political agenda and occasionally force officials to resign. Today, any politician who tampers with the press must brace himself for the flood of damaging criticism certain to follow. The media reflect the voices of Thailand's rapidly growing middle class, whose economic and social interests demand the free flow of information. Several Thai newspapers have been keeping the story of May 1992 alive with continuing coverage of the middle class pro-democracy groups formed during the crisis; the campaign to build a monument for the dead; the search for people still missing; and the debate over drafting of a more democratic national constitution. A symbiotic media-middle class partnership, so vital to democracy, is well on the way.

The Thai military also knew how the foreign media threatens its ambitions. Just after his 1991 coup, Suchinda's office called me into military headquarters for an interview with him. He wanted to "correct" the AP's reporting on the coup.

During the 1992 crackdown, police used batons to beat Pornvilai Carr, a photographer working for the AP, then threw a rock that nearly blinded her for life; she has since recovered. An army captain screamed at five foreign photographers while confiscating their film: "If I see you again, you die, you die, you die! You are hurting the image of Thailand."

A policeman who saw soldiers club someone to death told a foreign journalist: "I hope the foreign press tells the world what happened, because the military is trying to close the eyes and ears of the Thai people."

The foreign press did keep eyes and ears open. On satellite television and videocassette tapes, Thais saw uncensorable scenes of soldiers spraying automatic weapons fire and repeatedly kicking protesters kneeling or sprawled on the ground—the truth that domestic television would not broadcast. As News Editor, I told the AP reporters on the streets that I did not expect them to take undue risks. Some did anyway.

**A**cross Asia, local pro-democracy groups entrust their hopes in the American media in particular. They see the United States as the great symbol of democracy and as a superpower capable of promoting it abroad. In authoritarian countries, once people find out you are an American journalist, they come to you with guarded whispers and scribbled notes. And local journalists struggling to tell the truth seek support from American journalists, diplomats and aid workers.

Such an authoritarian country is military-ruled Burma. There, soldiers shot dead hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people to quell huge street protests in 1988. Many demonstrators rallied in front of the U.S. Embassy, believing that would protect them from the security forces and give international exposure to their demands. They listened to

Western radio broadcasts about their activities, and these broadcasts in turn emboldened them further by reassuring them that the world was paying attention.

From the embassy building, U.S. diplomats videotaped the demonstrations. They got the film out to Bangkok offices of the major television networks, which broadcast the scenes around the world.

Before the demonstrations, U.S. Embassy officials regularly had lunch with several Burmese journalists who were considered sort of silent opposition figures. "They sought solidarity with the United States," one of the officials recalled. "They were all men who had suffered a lot, and expected to suffer more."

Burma's pro-democracy leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, knows the power of the foreign media as well as anyone. The military, known as the State Law and Order Restoration Council, put her under house arrest starting in 1989. In 1994, it allowed a U.S. Congressman to visit Mrs. Suu Kyi—the first visit to her by people outside her family. Her condition: an American journalist also must be present. What do you want to tell the world, Mrs. Suu Kyi was asked during the meeting.

"Please keep making demands of the SLORC," she said, using the government's acronym. "International pressure helps a lot. Members of the SLORC are very sensitive about what is said about them in the international press."

Since her release in July 1995, Mrs. Suu Kyi has given many interviews to foreign journalists. She herself is an accomplished writer who knows the power of the medium; "Freedom from Fear" is the title of one of her essays.

Burma has one television station, one radio station and one national newspaper; all state-owned. Many people rely on foreign radio broadcasts. The government routinely mocks the foreign media—proof that it fears their ability to strengthen the political opposition. After Mrs. Suu Kyi's party held a congress that attracted large crowds in June, the government furthered restricted visas for foreign journalists.

From 1989 to 1995, the military silenced Mrs. Suu Kyi through solitary confinement. But foreign journalists continued writing about her, in effect speaking for her. Every story on Burma mentioned her name, even though none carried statements from her or any real news about her. Mrs. Suu Kyi was still confined when she won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991, but as with Nelson Mandela of South Africa, these uninterrupted stories had made her known globally and magnified the power of her name at home.

Burma's generals say they don't care what the world thinks. That's doubtful. Desperately poor, Burma must join transnational trading blocs and borrow from transnational banks. It must respect the rules of the global marketplace, including at least some free flow of information and respect for human rights. The government is pursuing an "open-door" economic policy and has declared 1996 the Year of the Tourist. But these moves open the door wider to foreign influences and demands. Currently the loudest one is to negotiate national reconciliation with Mrs. Suu Kyi. Officials admit that they are having troubles attracting tourists because of the bad press about Burma's political repression. Thus the international media is forcing Rangoon to at least consider the need to liberalize its political policies in tandem with its economic policies.

The open-door policy already has led to an important new type of media—privately owned business magazines that have become popular. The authorities are allowing these magazines to cover a range of economic and social problems once considered too controversial, including AIDS, smuggling and prostitution, according to the the organization Article 19, the International Center Against Censorship. These magazines also publish translations from Western publications such as *Time* and *Fortune*, which are not generally available in Burma.

Experience shows that a press that tests the limits can craft more space for itself and enlarge the sphere of political discourse in society. In Indonesia, the government banned three news magazines in 1994 after they reported on

government scandals. Instead of being cowed, Indonesian journalists have joined together to get around controls. Underground newsmagazines have flourished; journalists say that some generals and members of parliament are among subscribers of the leading alternative publication, *Independen*. This year *Tempo* started publishing on the Internet, alongside alternative news agencies that report on sensitive political issues.

Western media can play direct, key roles in supporting the new ethos struggling to emerge from Southeast Asian journalists. The Indochina Media Memorial Foundation (IMMF), established by Western journalists, recently conducted a course for 15 Indochinese journalists on business reporting—basically, how to cover the free market. Students included journalists from Vietnam's army daily and Laos's national radio, both mouthpieces for the ruling Communist parties. They discovered not only the inverted pyramid, but also what is possible in conditions of journalistic freedom and independence.

On their first trips outside their country, some IMMF students even went to cover an anti-government rally in Bangkok and returned to the classroom at the same time shaken and enthused. And they saw that people around the world increasingly are bound not only by economics and technology, but also social and cultural values.

For centuries in Southeast Asia, certain notions of authority and obedience have been accepted as part of the natural order. Now they are being questioned, sometimes uprooted, because of ideas spread by the media. Beliefs about what is morally permissible are becoming universalized. Human rights situations in one country are instantly compared with those in other countries. The movement in the West to boycott companies doing business in Burma is gathering momentum from the memory of how that strategy helped change South Africa. (In recent months, several American and European multinationals have pulled out of Burma or cancelled investment plans, citing the bad news stories about the country.)



Demonstrators in Bangkok in 1992 spoke of Burma 1988, and the Burmese demonstrators spoke of the Philippines 1986. And all this has created the political and moral context in which change, hopefully in peace, one day will come to other countries.

Confronted with the fax machine, satellite television and now the Internet, governments that prize control now find the old controls don't work. By exposing what dictators try to hide, the media have pummeled the argument that "Western-style human rights" don't suit Asian cultures and circumstances. Asians themselves are jamming the streets to demand these rights. In an age where news fills every corner of the world, media coverage of Rangoon and Bangkok helped fashion a collective outrage without which change is impossible. The fact that everyone knows what happened there pressures governments elsewhere to change.

But journalists should not use their reporting to campaign for pro-democracy activists, no matter how tempting. Some Western journalists have campaigned for Mrs. Suu Kyi because she is so charismatic and her cause so poignant. Consequently, their reports have ignored the fact that the Burmese government is strong, despite all its evils, and have exaggerated Mrs. Suu Kyi's ability to single-handedly change Burma. When I heard the gunshots in Bangkok in May 1992, I was incredulous, angry and near tears. I fought myself to do my job. Unless you stay objective—without in the process becoming unfeeling—you lose your readers' trust. Without that trust, you cannot communicate.

Often foreign correspondents find themselves in what might seem like the middle of nowhere, like Route 10, and we wonder if what little courage we have might not be better saved for another time. That's when it's best to remember that in writing about a small struggle for democracy in one place, we can make an impact that grows in power as it crosses borders and bridges time. ■

## Satellite TV

# Transforming Broadcasting

By WILLIAM ATKINS

When political violence erupted in the Indonesian capital of Jakarta in June, many journalists considered it one of the top regional stories of 1996. The open defiance toward President Suharto's government and the fury unleashed on the streets were highly unusual in modern Jakarta.

Several thousand protesters, adorned in the red of their Indonesia Democratic Party, marched to protest against government interference in party affairs. They clashed with riot police, and it is believed that some protesters died. Some journalists were beaten by police.

Yet Indonesian television showed none of the demonstration. While five of Indonesia's six networks are privately owned, they are closely connected to the government. Two of the networks are controlled by the president's children.

However, Indonesians wealthy enough to own satellite dishes saw the violence on the streets on BBC World, CNN and the international arm of the Australian Broadcasting Corp.—Australia Television.

Getting the scenes on air was not straightforward. In deference to the government, the Indonesian television stations refused to provide the usual satellite uplink facilities for the international agencies, preventing them from beaming footage directly to their newsrooms in Hong Kong, London, Sydney and Atlanta. Instead, correspondents had to fly the videotapes out of Indonesia. The BBC used facilities in Singapore to send footage. "The easiest thing in the world is to shut down a feed point, especially in countries where the infrastructure is limited," says the BBC's Southeast Asia correspondent, Iain

Simpson. "But communications in Southeast Asia is now so good that unless you can stop everyone going out of an airport and check to see if they are carrying a tape, there is no way you can stop pictures getting out because you can fly it to another country and feed it from there."

The episode illustrates the tensions and paradoxes in broadcast journalism that have sprung up in the last few years in Asia. In an age of economic liberalism some authoritarian governments remain determined to limit the flow of news and information. They are alarmed by the potential for domestic crises to fall into a global information feedback



*William Atkins is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Sydney researching the television industry in Southeast Asia. He was a reporter for the Australian Broadcasting Corp., and then a producer for BBC Television news and Independent Television News in London. He is the author of "Satellite Television and the State in Southeast Asia."*

loop, where coverage of opposition activities on international satellite services feeds back into events as they unfold. The anti-government uprisings in Beijing in 1989 and Bangkok in 1992 are celebrated cases. The satellite news services made it possible for local people to instantly see events that were being blocked from domestic television. That emboldened the demonstrators by assuring them that they were receiving international media attention.

Government policies on satellite broadcasting differ significantly across Asia. India, Thailand and the Philippines are liberal. China, Malaysia and Singapore try to restrict reporting about their "internal affairs" and severely limit the ownership of satellite dishes. Many countries are developing their own satellite and cable systems in a bid to head off the international satellite networks. "Governments in this region are very worried about losing control," says Simpson. "Whether that loss of control comes through global satellite broadcasters or the Internet or alternative political parties within their own country, governments want to cling on to power. The idea of single party states and single party rule is not dead in Southeast Asia by any means."

But whether governments are ready or not, since 1990 an array of terrestrial, cable and satellite broadcasters has mushroomed, not just because of the spread of technology but also because of broad economic deregulation. In some cases the new satellite television services were made possible by the existence of government satellite systems. For instance, Indonesia's Palapa system not only allowed a rapid penetration of government-endorsed programming to distant corners of the country, but later was the platform for introducing international services including CNN, Australia Television and ESPN throughout Southeast Asia. With more than one million private satellite dishes in Indonesia, the government



*This front-page photo of police brutality published in the newspaper The Nation prompted public outrage and swelled Thailand's pro-democracy uprising in 1992.*

cannot restrict watching these services, so it officially adopted an "open skies" policy. Other Asian governments have quickly emulated Indonesia by establishing competing national satellite systems. They want not only to take profits from the communications revolution, but also to try to regain some sovereign control over television. In 1989 Palapa was the only system in Asia delivering direct-to-home (DTH) satellite television signals. Today there are nine purpose-built broadcast satellites above the region, and the number will at least double by the end of the century. Increasingly, satellites are being used as only one component in delivering television signals to Asian homes. Terrestrial television, especially cable, has spread dramatically. As well as being more acceptable to governments, cable systems are more cost-effective for reaching audiences in large cities. Satellite-based pay-TV systems require expensive decoders and revenue collection systems. It appears cable will be

the main way of distributing television in Asia for the foreseeable future. Consider the ground-breaking Star TV, the first pan-Asian satellite service. Its satellite footprint covers two-thirds of the world's population, from Beirut to Beijing and south to Indonesia. It started as a satellite-delivered, English-language service aimed at the wealthiest 5 percent of "Asians." Now it is being customized for a range of local languages, predominately Hindi, Mandarin and Indonesian, and will be delivered to homes on a range of cable and satellite systems controlled by local interests. Star TV was established by a Hong Kong tycoon, but since 1993 has been owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp., which sees enormous growth potential in Asian television.

Theoretically the new technology can deliver television pictures anywhere. Thus, at the beginning of the decade many people expected its news programs would spark political liberalization and break down the information barriers of authoritarian states. But such reform has been patchy. The development of television is being mediated by commercial, political and cultural-linguistic forces.

One key development is that Asian states are forming links with accommodating media corporations. Commercial access for television networks is being granted on the basis of political compliance, a trend that could retard the development of more dynamic programming. Witness the success of Hong Kong-based China Entertainment Television—an alliance of Hong Kong, Indonesian and U.S. interests headed by Robert Chua. Its Mandarin-language network is welcomed by authorities in China and Singapore on the basis of its slogan: "No sex, no violence, no news." A range of other Chinese-language satellite channels from Hong Kong and Singapore also focus squarely on movies and light drama. Thus, harmless entertainment and business news are forming the core of Asia's television

services, to the detriment of broader news coverage and political discourse.

Star TV, which is based in Hong Kong, has come under greatest international scrutiny in this regard. In a famous speech in 1993, Murdoch said: "Advances in the technology of telecommunications have proved an unambiguous threat to totalitarian regimes everywhere....Satellite broadcasting makes it possible for information-hungry societies to bypass state-controlled television channels."

Perhaps sensing that such sentiments were not appropriate for a broadcaster on its doorstep, China promptly banned the private ownership of satellite dishes, seriously setting back Star TV's ambitions in the world's biggest television market. A few months later, Star TV dropped BBC World from its Northern Asia service after Beijing had bitterly complained about the BBC's political coverage and an unflattering documentary on Chairman Mao Zedong. BBC World was replaced by a Mandarin-language entertainment channel. Murdoch later admitted that it was done in the hope of soothing bad relations with Beijing. "I was well aware that the freedom fighters of the world would abuse me for it," he said. The separation of BBC World and Star TV was completed this past April when BBC World disappeared from the Southern Asia service, and was replaced by a Hindi movie channel. That banished BBC World to a less accessible satellite system, PanAmSat, which requires an expensive decoder in Southeast Asia. The BBC is now looking to cable redistribution to rebuild its audience.

"We quickly developed a big audience all over Asia, especially in countries like Cambodia and Vietnam where there is very little competition and access to other information," says BBC's Simpson. "So when we were dropped off Star, hundreds of letters poured in from people saying: 'We've bought satellites and want to keep watching the BBC. What can we do about it?'" Plans announced last year by Murdoch for a News Corp. global 24-hour news channel to rival CNN now appear to exclude the Asian sphere.

Another notable attempt by Murdoch to curry favor with governments was in



*A staffer shows the simple state television studio in Battambang, western Cambodia.*

Malaysia. Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said after meeting with Murdoch in 1994 that "he assured me that...if we don't like a particular program, we can switch it off." Mahathir, who argues that many Western influences threaten indigenous cultures and values, had been a leading critic of News Corp.'s move into the region's television industry. Malaysia has been rapidly developing competing systems to block or mediate the penetration of the international services. Its MeaSat satellite, launched this year, will carry government-approved television, possibly including Star TV. Only satellite dishes attuned to MeaSat will be allowed in Malaysia.

Perhaps the most restrictive environment is in Singapore, where private satellite dishes are outlawed. Unlike Malaysia and China, where the bans are occasionally flouted, Singapore's geography, population density and extensive surveillance systems have resulted in total compliance. The government proposes to cable the entire island by the turn of the century. A pay-TV service will be one feature of the plan. Currently the township of Tampines is the only part of Singapore to be connected to the Singapore Cable Vision network. The government would probably like to see what impact the dozens of channels—including BBC World and CNN—

will have on citizens in Tampines before hooking up the rest of the city. The government has a prickly relationship with foreign media, and uses the full force of the law to attack those perceived to be interfering in its internal political affairs. At the other end of the scale is Thailand, whose entrepreneurs are emerging as key providers of satellite infrastructure in Asia. Since 1992, Thailand has allowed ownership of private satellite dishes. ThaicomSat, the Thai satellite system licensed to the powerful Shinawatra group, will widen its coverage to the Middle East, North Asia and Australia with the launch of a third satellite this year. Thai media tycoons are looking overseas for opportunities in satellite television. Sonthi Limthongkul's M Group has joined the government of Laos in the LaoStar satellite project. A subsidiary, the Asian Broadcasting and Communications Network, plans to launch two satellites for Laos over the next two years. The first one will carry 200 channels across 15 countries.

The Asian country with perhaps the most spectacular growth in satellite and cable television is India, the world's second most populous country, with 800 million people. Since China banned satellite dishes, India has become a key television market battleground. For instance, 40 percent of Star TV's revenue comes from India. And India is gaining

a reputation for robust broadcast journalism, much of it home-grown.

It has not always been the case. Despite India's liberal tradition in newspapers and publishing, the state broadcaster, Doordashan, had a reputation as a government propagandist. According to Gordon Taylor, former correspondent for the Australian Broadcasting Corp. based in New Delhi, the arrival of satellites has awakened Doordashan. "Indian television was very staid and unimaginative," he says. Suddenly Doordashan is starting to have much higher production values and even more openness in news and current affairs. [But] there is still government control. There is still censorship."

A four-cornered contest is developing to provide news and current affairs programs to South Asia among Doordashan, BBC World, CNN and a local player, Zee TV, which is 50 percent owned by News Corp. and is part of the Star TV network in South Asia.

BBC World is attempting to build on the reputation of its sister organization, BBC World Service radio, with a comprehensive network of correspondents throughout South Asia. BBC World has begun a daily 30-minute business program, in addition to the daily Asian news hour. The service plays an important agenda-setting role, says Taylor. "The elite watch BBC World," he says.

Commercially, CNN has gained the upper hand by signing an exclusive deal with Doordashan for program exchanges—which ensures CNN is distributed daily to millions of Indian homes that do not have cable or satellite facilities. Experts say it was the first time any broadcaster, foreign or domestic, has been granted access to the Indian government satellite system. "India thought the CNN deal was a great coup in the propaganda war against Pakistan," says Taylor.

But it is the Hindi-language channel Zee TV that has been a runaway success in India. Zee TV employs about 200 journalists for its news and current affairs programming. Many of them have been trained with News Corp.'s BSkyB in London or in Australia and Hong Kong. The network has a daily 30-minute bulletin with both Indian and international news. Taylor says Indian

television must still tow the government line on issues including political disputes with neighboring Pakistan, government corruption and inter-communal conflict. In addition, international journalists must run the gauntlet of Indian government censors when they transmit material overseas by satellite.

A growth area in international broadcasting in East Asia is business television. Asia Business News, based in Singapore, was set up in 1994 by Dow Jones, Tele-Communications Inc. and Television New Zealand. An investment arm of the Singapore government, Singapore International Media, holds 10 percent of ABN. The channel carries reports on global financial markets, interviews with business leaders and soft news. A second satellite-delivered business channel, CNBC, began in 1995. It is an offshoot of the NBC network of the United States. Both ABN and CNBC are predominately English-language, with short business bulletins in Mandarin. According to the BBC's Simpson, the business channels tend to avoid any critical comment on governments.

Asian television has been transformed in the satellite age, with spectacular growth in the amount and type of programming available. It is still mostly the educated and wealthy elite who watch the international services. Thus, these services have limited impact on day-to-day politics in Asia. But they appear to be increasingly influential in setting the agenda for local media and for political and business leaders. And there is strong evidence that a much broader audience watches these services during times of civil crisis. However, they are not yet "mass media"—and with the rapid growth of cable and local language-programming, perhaps they will never be.

The challenge lies with local producers and network operators. As has been shown in India, there is scope for challenging programming to be developed alongside entertainment programming. The existence of hundreds of channels is not enough. The key task is to create and deliver programs that are useful to the developing societies of Asia. ■

## The Internet Screening Out the Flies

BY LARRY CAMPBELL

**I**n the barely three years since the Internet started making its presence felt in Asia, the technology has dramatically increased the flow of information in a region where many governments try to control what their citizens say and read.

As new service providers spring up around Asia almost every week, the Internet is being made available to many people who have had other avenues of communication closed off to them. Political dissidents and human rights groups, either living inside the country or in exile, are using it to get their messages across and try to rattle governments.

The total is unknown, but the number of Asians using the Internet is growing as exponentially as the region's economies. Consider, for example, Hong Kong, the first Asian city connected in a big way. In December 1993, barely 1,000 people there were connected through the two service providers then in operation. Today, 50,000 are connected through more than 60 providers.

According to research on the region by a service provider in Hong Kong, Asia On-Line, there are no service providers in Burma, Laos, North Korea or Cambodia. All these countries are desperately poor, with primitive communications infrastructures. Laos and North Korea are communist, Cambodia is struggling out of communism, and Burma is military-ruled.

The governments of such authoritarian stalwarts as China, Singapore and Vietnam have made no secret of their plans to try to control the Internet and filter what their citizens see. They say pornography is of primary concern, but have also voiced worry about the

Internet being used as a forum for political dissent. And since much of the information on the Internet originates in the West, conservative governments also worry about its possible "corrupting" influence on Asia's youth.

Limiting the Internet by limiting the number of service providers or tightening control over them is a policy of several Asian governments.

This past July, Singapore announced measures to license all service providers and content providers in the island state with the official Singapore Broadcasting Authority. That includes providers to cyber cafes and organizations putting locally produced political and religious information on the World Wide Web. The stated goal: to regulate political, religious and pornographic content on the Internet. Violators could face a stiff, though as yet unspecified, fine.

"We must take a pro-active approach to put some rules in place so that our young children will not be affected by objectionable material," said the broadcasting authority's chief executive officer, Goh Liang Kwang.

The agency said "objectionable" content included materials "which tend to bring the government into hatred or contempt, or which excite disaffection against the government."

While the measures are not as draconian as the government has clamped on other aspects of Singapore life, they constitute a significant first step in controlling the Internet. Other Asian governments are expected to follow suit.

There are some 100,000 Internet users in Singapore, which has three million people. Last year, the government tried to screen out pornography by reading the E-mail on the computers of what was then the biggest Internet provider in Singapore. Following criticism from around the world, the government stopped the practice and apologized.

This past March, the seven members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations said they would establish a regulatory body to cope with the rush of information technology, which they said was bringing pornography and disinformation into the region.

Authoritarian Asian countries seek

to control rather than to altogether ban the Internet because they realize its vital value as a cheap and efficient communications tool, especially for businesses. And much of the information on the Internet is invaluable to businesses and educational institutions in less developed countries such as China.

"One of the main concerns of the Chinese government is to 'protect' the interests of its people from pornography and subversive material on the Internet," says Johnson Cheng, Managing Director of Hong Kong-based WorldLink, a service provider, which for more than a year has been discussing the possibility of doing business in China. In China, any such discussions drag on because of the sensitivity.

In China, commercial Internet accounts became available only in mid-1995. But the fees were so high only the wealthiest people could afford to have accounts, and in any case their distribution was very tightly controlled, says the U.S.-based Human Rights Watch. This past February, the government said existing computer networks must "liquidate" and "re-register," and use only international channels provided by designated state agencies.

Cheng says some Chinese officials view the Internet as a giant window: "If you open the window to let a good breeze in, you have a good time, but if a fly comes in, you shut the window and the fun's over. If you wanted the breeze but not the flies, you need to set up a good fly screen. China is still looking for the right fly screen and in the meantime is being very cautious about how far it opens the window."

To provide their users with access to Internet newsgroups, which cover everything from politics to religion to sexual bondage, service providers must subscribe to them. Governments can order providers to stop subscribing, but a citizen instead can register with a provider overseas and access the newsgroups through a direct dial phone call. Governments can prevent providers from allowing certain groups to post information on the Web, but these groups can instead post through providers overseas. And governments cannot control the information coming in from Web sites overseas short of cut-

ting off access to the entire Web.

As a result, citizens of countries such as China or Vietnam where the local media is strictly controlled can read uncensored news about their own countries through the Web sites of foreign newspapers and news organizations such as CNN, Time and Newsweek. In this way, the Internet has become another powerful force for the border-breaching flow of information, like the short-wave radio, the fax machine, and satellite television.

Activists throughout the region, as well as those living in the United States and other Western countries, are making full use of the Internet to fight the notion espoused by some Asian countries that "Western-style human rights" don't belong in Asia. The Web is filled with postings by groups opposed to the Rangoon, Beijing and Hanoi governments.

An Asian wondering how his government measures up against worldwide standards can access the Human Rights page (<http://www.qmw.ac.uk/~zgap4027/human.html>). It provides a basic definition of the term "human rights" and provides hypertext links to the sites of groups such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the Children's Rights Council.

"The Internet helps to empower us,"



Larry Campbell, a native of Sri Lanka, is Managing Director of AsiaTech Publications, which publishes *The Dataphile*, a magazine covering the Internet technology and culture in Asia. Previously, he was Editor of *Technology Post*, a weekly pull-out section in *The South China Morning Post*, in Hong Kong.

says Paul Harris, chairman of the Asia-based group Human Rights Monitor.

Refugee Concern, a Hong Kong-based group working to improve the plight of Vietnamese refugees, uses Internet E-mail to coordinate efforts by members around the world and to share the huge amount of information it has on refugee issues.

"We have been on the Net for about five months and have linked up with refugee organizations and Vietnamese community groups around the world," says Peter Barnes, a lawyer for Refugee Concern.

Unable to block the flow of criticism on the Internet, some governments are fighting back by playing the game. This year, the Malaysian government set up a site on the World Wide Web (<http://www.jaring.my/>) to give "accurate" information about the country. The Singapore government also has a site (<http://www.gov.sg/>). There's an on-line publication of the Beijing regime, China News Digest (<http://cnd.cnd.org/>). The ironic result of all this jostling is to encourage the free exchange of opinions in cyberspace.

In the past year and a half, news organizations around the region have scrambled to market themselves on the Web, and pumped significant amounts of money into making their content available there.

The Straits Times in Singapore makes its content available on the AsiaOne Web site (<http://www.asaone.com/>), which also carries the content of more than 20 other publications ranging from Asia Inc magazine, which is based in Hong Kong, to the Guang Zhou Ribao (Guang Zhou Daily) newspaper in China.

Smaller newspapers such as The Daily News in Sri Lanka were among the first to put their content on the Web. The Daily News site (<http://lanka.net/lakehouse>) offers everything from the latest coverage of Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict to cricket scores and obituaries. Larger newspapers such as The South China Morning Post in Hong Kong are reluctant to go on the Web in such a comprehensive way because that would mean people read it for free. Still, The Morning Post is working on a

site that will have some content from the daily.

In Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and other places where Internet access is relatively inexpensive, Asian journalists are beginning to see its value for reporting.

"We are taking a little time to come to terms with the amount of information available on the Internet, but we can access information on the Net in a few hours that took us days to get in the past," says Simon Macklin, News Editor of The South China Morning Post. "It's becoming increasingly useful."

A recent example: a story that broke of a ship carrying toxic waste entering Hong Kong waters.

"When we first heard about it, it was too late to reach people by phone, but we got on the Marine Department's page, which lists every ship arriving in Hong Kong, and got a lot of the information we needed from there," Macklin said.

The Morning Post has not given its staff direct access to the Internet via the newspaper's internal networked computers, for fear of exposing the network to viruses spread via the Internet. But it has offered dial-up Internet accounts to editorial staff and placed Internet-connected computers in the newsroom.

Hong Kong is one of the least restrictive countries in the region in terms of Internet content, despite recent attempts by legislators to introduce anti-pornography laws. But the British colony reverts back to Chinese control July 1 next year, and Beijing already has given many indications it will not tolerate the level of freedom of expression now enjoyed in Hong Kong.

"As Hong Kong reaches 1997 and papers get more controlled and circumspect, the voices of the people will still be heard on the Net," says Macklin



*Artist C. Iskra depicts pressure and censorship by Indonesian authorities.*

of The South China Morning Post. "The truth will be told, be it in the papers or the Net. Hong Kong is in a very peculiar situation. There is so much uncertainty about the freedom of the press, but journalists as a whole are optimistic because of the growing power of the Internet.

"We are certainly aware that Chinese authorities are looking to restrict access, but we are confident that technology will move quicker than the Chinese government. I don't believe they have the resources or the knowledge to control what goes on in cyberspace." ■

## South Asia

# Regional Language Press Thriving

BY VIKRAM PAREKH

Despite the varied histories of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and their neighbors, South Asia's media share a common tradition of press freedom and adversarial journalism. In this regard, they differ sharply from the state-controlled media that prevails in much of East Asia.

To a great extent, the Asian media are susceptible to the same forces irrespective of state boundaries: ethnic and sectarian conflicts, pressure from national and regional politicians and dependence on government advertising. These pressures are nowhere more evident than in the case of South Asia's vernacular press. Often overlooked by foreign observers, the dramatic expansion of the vernacular press is perhaps the region's most salient media development of the last decade.

Fueled by increasing literacy and the growth of South Asia's middle class, the vernacular press has experienced enormous gains in readership. Many South Asians are eager for news other than that disseminated by state-controlled broadcast networks. Those not conversant in English now have discretionary income to spend on newspapers printed in their own languages.

Over the last 10 years, as *The Far Eastern Economic Review* recently noted, the circulation of western India's Gujarati-language daily *Sandesh* grew from 172,000 to 439,000, while the Marathi-language newspaper *Navakal* (*New Age*) saw its circulation increase six-fold, from 52,000 to 350,000. By contrast, the circulation of India's English-language newspapers remained essentially stagnant.

Meanwhile, the Urdu-language press commands more than 90 percent of Pakistan's newspaper readership, according to the Pakistan Press Founda-

tion, a Karachi-based advocacy and training group.

The vernacular press embraces a staggering range of publications, from mainstream, mass circulation dailies—some owned by the same firms as the leading English-language newspapers—to fundamentalist mouthpieces such as Bombay's *Samna* and Bangladesh's *Dainik Sangram*. Among the numerous independently owned publications is the oldest newspaper in Asia, the Gujarati-language *Mumbai Samachar* (*Bombay News*), which marks its 175th anniversary this year, and India's largest circulation daily (779,000), *Malayala Manorama*, in the southern state of Kerala.

The resumption of electoral politics in Pakistan in 1988 and Bangladesh in 1991 and the devolution of political power in India from urban, English-speaking élites to the country's disparate regions in recent elections have made the vernacular press far more influential. These developments, unfortunately, have had a predictable corollary. "The [regional] languages press is more important to politicians," says Rahul Dev, Executive Editor of India's respected Hindi daily *Jansatta*, "and therefore there is greater pressure on the language publications."

In June 1995, the government of Sindh province in southern Pakistan shocked the Karachi press community when it abruptly banned six popular Urdu-language evening newspapers for 60 days under the Maintenance of Public Order Act of 1960. The newspapers, some of which editorially supported an outlawed opposition party of Muslim immigrants from India, the *Muhajir Qaumi Movement* (Migrants' National Movement, or MQM), were shut down for publishing allegedly sensationalized

reports about Karachi's ongoing factional and ethnic violence. The measure galvanized Pakistani journalists, whose protests prompted the lifting of the ban five days later.

Powerful political groups have also attacked vernacular dailies without fear of prosecution. Last December, in the northern Indian city of Lucknow, supporters of the *Bahujan Samaj Party* (Majority People's Party, or BSP) besieged the offices of the Hindi daily *Dainik Jagran*, damaging the building's gates, setting fire to a vehicle and attacking other property. The blockade



*Vikram Parekh is Program Coordinator for Asia at the Committee to Protect Journalists in New York. He has visited India, Hong Kong, and Vietnam on behalf of the committee and wrote its special 1995 report on Kashmir. Parekh was previously a Ford Foundation Fellow at the New York-based International Center for Law in Development.*

marked the culmination of a massive BSP rally protesting the publication of an interview in which the party's unmarried general secretary was alleged to have a 12-year-old daughter.

There was a broader context to the BSP's grievance. Dainik Jagran had ridden the crest of a wave that saw many vernacular dailies in northern and western India supporting the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and other newly ascendant forces of Hindu nationalism — whose resolute opposition to affirmative action measures incensed lower-caste parties such as the BSP. At their worst, many vernacular newspapers played a key role in fomenting communal riots, such as those that followed a report in the Hindi daily Aaj that doctors at Aligarh Muslim University were killing Hindu patients.

"Since they are closer to the people, the vernacular publications are more vulnerable to social pressure," says Rahul Dev. "They may find it easier or more expedient to go along with the public mood."

Ethnic and religious parochialism is by no means limited to India's regional language press. Vernacular papers in Pakistan are generally more hawkish than their English-language counterparts, while the Sinhala-language press in Sri Lanka frequently makes overtures to Sinhalese nationalism, as evidenced by much of its strident criticism of President Chandrika Kumaratunga's proposals for regional autonomy.

There are vernacular newspapers throughout South Asia that have stood as brave exponents of pluralism in the face of mounting ethnic and religious extremism.

Withdrawal of advertising by governments and public corporations is a powerful tool of coercion throughout South Asia. Here, too, the vernacular press is more susceptible. According to Indian editors, the majority of national ads purchased by private corporations go to the country's English-language press, despite its smaller readership. "The ad agencies are mostly manned by people with an English-language background," says Rahul Dev. "Their ideals, mores and ways of thinking are Westernized, and they don't see any strength



Indian TV cameramen film evacuation of civilians wounded in Kabul, Afghanistan.

in the [regional] languages press."

But there are other areas where both the vernacular and English-language press encounter interference. Among these is coverage of South Asia's long-running civil wars: northern Sri Lanka, the Indian states of Kashmir and Assam, and Afghanistan. In a dramatic break with her campaign pledge to uphold press freedom, Sri Lankan President Kumaratunga offered perhaps the clearest illustration of government censorship in South Asia. Last September, on the eve of a major military offensive on the Tamil Tiger-held Jaffna peninsula, her government began requiring domestic and foreign media to clear all war stories with the country's Media Ministry. Although the government lifted the clearance requirement for foreign media five days later, following widespread international coverage of the move, the regulations remained in force for the domestic media until December 20.

The censorship did not go without domestic opposition, however; a local press freedom group, the Free Media Movement, condemned the curbs, as did many newspapers and, although unsuccessful, the Sinhala-language tabloid *Jana Jaya* petitioned the Su-

preme Court to have the regulations lifted.

India's self-proclaimed policy of transparency in Kashmir has proved as illusory as Kumaratunga's professed support for press freedom. Foreign and local journalists covering the seven-year separatist war in the Kashmir Valley are routinely denied access to sites of cordon-and-search operations and armed confrontation, such as the Indian army's standoff with militants occupying the Charar-e-Sharif shrine in May 1995 that ended with the shrine's destruction. Local reporters also face intimidation by Indian security forces, separatist groups, and government-backed militias.

An equally serious obstacle to coverage of the Kashmir conflict is self-censorship by the Indian press. With rare exceptions, the Indian media have tended to defer to official accounts of the war's progress. The recent parliamentary elections in Kashmir, described by nearly all foreign reporters as having been carried out under heavy military coercion, were presented in most Indian news periodicals as a legitimate expression of Kashmiri public sentiment. The only notable dissenters in India's English-language press were two



magazines, *Frontline*, which presented two opposing assessments of the elections, and *Outlook*, which unequivocally reported the elections as being neither fair nor free.

The separatist war in India's north-eastern state of Assam has also proved hazardous for the local press. Last May, unidentified gunmen ambushed and shot Parag Kumar Das, Editor-in-Chief of *Asomiya Pratidin*, the largest circulation daily in Assam, and an outspoken proponent of self-rule for the state. Das's colleagues believe his assassination was carried out by former Assamese separatists with links to the previous administration in the state.

Unlike India and Sri Lanka, Afghanistan lacks a functioning independent press. A decade of warfare between mujahideen factions and the Soviet-backed Afghan government and subsequent internecine fighting have had a devastating impact. Newspapers, crippled by chronic shortages of almost all essential supplies, publish only intermittently, while the radio stations operated by various mujahideen factions enjoy little credibility.

Among Afghans, the BBC is perhaps the only widely acknowledged source of non-partisan reporting in the country, and its vernacular broadcasts enjoy

an extensive following. But the BBC, too, has paid a heavy price in the war. In July 1994, Mirwais Jalil, a 25-year old reporter for the Pashto and Persian-language sections of the BBC World Service, was kidnapped and murdered while returning from an interview with the then renegade Prime Minister, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Although neither the BBC nor Jalil's family have laid the blame for the murder on Hekmatyar's doorstep, an Italian reporter who accompanied Jalil to the interview and was with him at the time of his abduction has publicly stated his belief in Hekmatyar's culpability. Following a rapprochement with President Burhanuddin Rabbani, Hekmatyar returned to his offices in Kabul in June.

For the first quarter of 1996, Bangladesh stood poised on the verge of a comparable political breakdown, as strikes and demonstrations called by opposition parties paralyzed the country. The period saw widespread attacks on journalists covering the unrest, a move that threatened to reverse the dramatic gains for press freedom in Bangladesh since the fall of the Ershad dictatorship in 1991. On February 19, police shot and killed Mohammed Quamruzzaman, a reporter for the weekly *Neel Sagar*, while he was cover-

ing a political protest in the northern town of Nilphamari. In a separate case, in March, police arrested Borhan Kabir, a reporter for the daily *Ajker Kagoj*, at his office in Dhaka. Kabir, who had written several articles criticizing the controversial first round of elections, was charged with engaging in anti-state activities. In other cases, journalists and photographers were assaulted by authorities and their equipment destroyed.

The use of defamation statutes by high-ranking government officials has increasingly hampered the press throughout South Asia, affecting the vernacular and English-language media alike. Last year, the government of Pakistan pressed charges against Kamran Khan, the chief correspondent of the daily *Dawn* and a former fellow at the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists. Khan was charged with defamation by Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto for reporting that she had requested the extradition of MQM leader Altaf Hussein in a personal meeting with the British Foreign Secretary.

Other powerful Pakistani politicians, including Member of Parliament Asif Ali Zardari, who is also Bhutto's husband, and Kamaluddin Azfar, the governor of Sindh province, threatened to file defamation suits against four leading Pakistani journalists and their publishers for reporting about political corruption and patronage on their part.

In Sri Lanka, the editors of three prominent newspapers, *The Sunday Leader*, *The Sunday Times*, and the Sinhala-language daily *Lakbima*, currently face criminal defamation charges for reporting on President Kumaratunga's late-night appearance at a birthday party thrown for a member of parliament in a Colombo hotel.

Privilege and immunity laws, a legacy of the subcontinent's colonial heritage, are also periodically employed by government authorities to deter media scrutiny. Under India's privilege law, journalists can be summoned before a special committee of parliament or the state legislative assembly—rather than a court of law—if legislators have accused them of defamation.

South Asian courts themselves have



*A soldier on guard by a corner newsstand in Srinagar, Kashmir.*

tried to raise their decisions above media criticism by invoking contempt of court. The Pakistani Supreme Court last year initiated a contempt of court proceeding against the principal columnist of the daily Dawn, as well as the paper's editor and publisher, for a column questioning the political independence of recent Supreme Court appointments. According to the Pakistani constitution, the court may punish anyone who "does anything which tends to bring the Court or a Judge of the Court into hatred, ridicule, or contempt." Those found to be in contempt of court face imprisonment of up to six months and/or a fine of up to 5,000 rupees.

In March, Seemera Khan, a junior Assistant Editor of The Times of India, was served notice of criminal contempt of court for a column in which she said India's Film Censor Board had cut a scene depicting the rape of a lower-caste woman by upper-caste men in the film "Bandit Queen" for political, rather than moral, reasons. Although The Times of India subsequently published an "unconditional apology" for Khan's "ill-considered views," legal proceedings against Khan continue.

The most widely covered media issues in the South Asian press, however, have less to do with freedom of expression than they do with questions of ownership. Throughout the subcontinent, the broadcast media is largely state-controlled, as is the Lake House publishing group in Sri Lanka, Nepal's two major dailies, and the Bangladeshi dailies Dainik Bangla (Daily Bengal) and Bangladesh Times.

A major element of President Kumaratunga's campaign platform in Sri Lanka was the broad-basing of the Lake House group, a proposal that would have privatized the state-owned newspapers without concentrating the shares in a few hands. A year-and-a-half after her election, however, the Lake House group remains government-controlled and no concrete steps have been taken to privatize it.

In Bangladesh, the government of Sheikh Hasina Wazed—who came to power following a second round of elections in June—has promised to grant autonomy to the broadcast media

and to privatize the two state-owned newspapers.

Meanwhile, the question of the foreign media's entry into India looms large over the heads of local publishers. Politicians from both the left and right have spoken of a threat to India's cultural heritage if a ban on foreign ownership of newspapers that dates back to 1955 is lifted. They have been seconded by a large and influential segment of the Indian press, including Bennet Coleman & Co., which publishes the august Times of India, and N. Ram, the outspoken editor of Frontline magazine.

To an extent, the fear is justified; the widespread availability of satellite television after 1993 spelled the death-knell for video magazines—independently produced, serialized news programs that had offered a home-grown alternative to the state-owned Doordarshan television network and which gained a large subscription audience in the early 1990's. But independent television producers stand to gain a new lease on life following a Supreme Court ruling last year that the government has no constitutional right to monopolize the airwaves. Intriguingly, a number of Indian editors and publishers have argued in favor of rescinding the ban on foreign ownership. Among them are several that are evidently motivated by planned tie-ups with foreign media, such as a prospective collaboration between Calcutta's Ananda Bazar Patrika group and London's Financial Times.

Many of the vernacular publications, however, see themselves as sufficiently advanced technologically and so uniquely tailored to the needs of local markets that they have little to fear from foreign competition. As Ramoji Rao, the Editor of the Telegu-language daily Eenadu, recently wrote in Outlook magazine: "Financial and technical skills are the necessary conditions for the success of any medium. But the more important considerations are relevance, cultural identification and integrity of purpose. All of which are available to the established Indian media in adequate measure." ■

## Foreign TV Covers India Elections Well

India's Chief Election Commissioner, T.N. Seshan, may have robbed the 1996 national elections to Parliament of its customary color but television audiences have never had it better. For the first time, foreign TV networks got into the act with stepped-up coverage of the elections to the 11th Lok Sabha (Lower House). Foreign crews crisscrossed the country, battling with the heat and each other as networks tried to be the first with the news.

CNN International managed a few firsts. Its New Delhi Bureau Chief, Anita Pratap, was granted an interview with the then Prime Minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao, a coveted assignment.

Not that the BBC was idle. The campaign saw such anchors as Daniel Lak, a South Asian expert based in London, and Nik Gowing, an anchor for BBC World, fly to New Delhi to cover the Indian elections. It stepped up election coverage by 19 correspondents.

For CNN, coverage of the Indian election was undertaken on a war footing. It took over practically an entire floor of New Delhi's Taj Mansingh Hotel. Special crews were sent to India from Atlanta, and anchor Riz Khan flew in so that World News Asia, its regular half-hour news program, could be co-anchored live by Khan in New Delhi and by Patricia Chew in Hong Kong.

While CNN and BBC were addressing global audiences, a third foreign network, Asia Business News India, focused on Indian viewers. In addition to providing reports for Asia Business News's South Asia Report, ABNI aired a special half-hour daily program, India Votes. For its special election coverage, 17 ABNI correspondents traveled to more than 40 constituencies throughout the country.

There was tremendous interest globally in the Indian elections. Whether the interest will still be there now that the elections are over remains to be seen.—V.V. Eswaran is a 1960 Nieman Fellow.

## East Asia

# Media Booming but Leashed In Some Areas

BY JOHN SCHIDLOVSKY

East Asia is home to some of the world's fastest-growing economies and also some of the world's most stubbornly authoritarian governments. Fittingly, the East Asian media reflect both the region's economic dynamism and the debate over just how much freedom governments should grant their increasingly prosperous citizens.

On the one hand, the economic growth has helped spark a boom of new, more independent media to fuel the enormous demand for information for Asia's growing middle classes. In some countries, such as South Korea, Taiwan and Thailand, many restrictions on the media imposed by previous regimes have been lifted as part of a decade-long process that has brought political reforms in the wake of economic prosperity.

At the same time, governments in China, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia preside over impressive economic growth while keeping their media on tight leashes and imposing restrictions on foreign media. The Singapore model, in which economic growth goes hand-in-hand with intellectual and political repression, remains a favorite of authoritarian regimes throughout the region. Singapore's senior leader, Lee Kuan Yew, has spearheaded a debate on whether Asian values include a free press—a debate in which he is pitted against many of his fellow Asians who believe press freedom is a universal value. Meanwhile, poor countries such as Vietnam, Laos, North Korea and Burma retain tight controls on the media, without any attempts to lecture the rest of the region.

It's always dangerous to generalize about any region, particularly one with

a combined population of nearly two billion people. A multicultural region, East Asia includes such bastions of press freedom as Japan, Hong Kong and the Philippines. Yet it is also home to four members of the world's tiny family of communist countries—China, Laos, North Korea and Vietnam—where some hard-line ideologues still cling to the Marxist definition of the media as the party's propagandist.

The entire region is being enormously transformed by both internal forces such as the growth of a consumer society and by external pressures, such as the flood of new technologies and seductive cultural influences. Examples of external forces are plentiful. In China alone, access to the Internet is available in more than 700 cities. Hundreds of millions of Asian viewers tune in daily to a variety of television programs provided by a variety of foreign satellite services. Media conglomerates from Europe, North American and Australia offer Asian audiences programs and glossy publications that compete side-by-side with new Asian-owned media. Business opportunities abound for publishers, broadcasters, journalists, advertisers and public relations specialists.

In recent months, the entrepreneurial stampede has continued. Rupert Murdoch, through his Star TV satellite broadcasting system, has launched a new Chinese-language entertainment channel called Phoenix to complement Star's existing channels. Two years ago, Murdoch bowed to Chinese pressure and dropped the BBC World Service from Star, which now offers a popular and politically safe diet of entertainment, sports and music videos. Murdoch has recently announced plans for two new moves into Japan; he is

purchasing a stake in the giant Asahi Broadcasting Corp. and launching a digital satellite television service in Japan. Other high rollers in the media market include Thai magnate Sondhi Limthongkul, who began the year by launching an Asia-wide, English-language daily, Asia Times. The broadsheet is meant to challenge existing regional papers such as The Asian Wall Street Journal and The International Herald Tribune, Western-owned publications whom Sondhi sees as monopolizing Asian regional ventures. In an interview with the Hong Kong-based magazine Asiaweek, Sondhi said:

"If the West thinks this region has the potential and they are willing to invest, why should [Westerners] be the gatekeepers of all information? Basically, this is my turf and I see no reason



*John Schidlovsky is Director of the Freedom Forum Asia Center in Hong Kong. He worked for The Springfield Union in Massachusetts, was The Baltimore Sun's Bureau Chief in New Delhi and in Beijing. Later, he was Coordinator of Journalism Programs and Curator of the Jefferson Fellowships at the East-West Center in Honolulu.*

why I shouldn't get into the race. I am betting on the understanding that as an Asian I will do things better."

Sondhi, who runs the Bangkok-based Manager Media Group, which produces the glossy magazine *Asia Inc.* and other publications, said he is prepared to lose money for years on his new venture if that's what it takes to penetrate the market. Indeed, the newspaper had little advertising in its opening months. It faced competition not just from Western-owned regional publications but also from a variety of business-oriented, English-language publications in local Asian markets, such as *Business World* in the Philippines, *Business Day* in Thailand, *Vietnam Investment Review* in Hanoi, *China Daily's Business Weekly*, and others.

The growth of these publications reflects East Asia's economic dynamism and the heightened interest in the region's business activity. Owners of the new publications include both foreign media groups and Asian media groups, such as Singapore's Press Holdings Group, which helped form a joint venture for the Thai-based *Business Day*.

These publications, along with new newspapers in local languages, appeal to one of Asia's most rapidly growing groups: consumers. In Vietnam, for example, a new Vietnamese-language weekly, *Saigon Thep Thi* (Saigon Marketing), avoids politics altogether and focuses on trends in consumer goods, marketing, entertainment and fashion.

The boom in information sources and the increasingly easy access to information once controlled by secretive governments provides hope for many Asians who have fought government repression. In Hong Kong, which is now on the final countdown to the start of Chinese sovereignty in July, 1997, Jimmy Lai, publisher of the newspaper *Apple Daily*, says: "I don't believe any authoritarians can survive in the information society."

Asian censors won't go down without a fight, however. Authorities in Singapore, China and other countries are trying to find ways to block information on the Internet—not just pornography, but also sensitive political content.



*A son of Cambodian journalist Thun Bunly accompanies his coffin. In May, Thun Bunly became the fourth journalist murdered in Cambodia since the United Nations-run election of 1993.*

Still, Lai may be right. Technology can be used to expand press freedom, which has already come a long way in Asia in the last 10 years. Consider the examples of South Korea and Taiwan. In both places, media liberalization began in 1987, when martial law was lifted in Taiwan and when military-backed rule in Seoul ended. The trend toward greater openness has continued during the past year, with the recently well-covered corruption trials of former South Korean presidents Chun Doo Hwan and Roh Tae Woo illustrating the new aggressiveness and inde-

pendence of the Korean media.

"There are no visible taboos left" for the South Korean media, says Ki Young Sun, Deputy Managing Editor of the independent newspaper *Hankyoreh* (One Nation), which was founded in 1988 by dissident journalists. But not all Koreans have adjusted to living with an aggressive press; *Hankyoreh's* critical coverage of government and business élites has resulted in a rash of libel suits in recent months and withdrawals of advertisements by aggrieved companies.

Ethical issues and raising standards of professionalism remain major chal-

lenges for the South Korean media. And while there may be no taboo subjects about life in South Korea, reporting about North Korea is still restricted by laws that forbid sympathetic coverage of communism or perceived pro-North Korea material.

Despite remarkable gains in press freedom in South Korea and Taiwan, there have been significant setbacks elsewhere in East Asia. In Cambodia, threats and attacks against journalists have continued, and opposition groups say supporters of the government are to blame. In May, Thun Bunly, 39, Editor of the opposition newspaper Odom Katek Khmer (Khmer Ideal), was shot to death in Phnom Penh in broad daylight. He was the fourth Cambodian journalist killed since United Nations-sponsored elections in 1993, which were supposed to bring democracy to Cambodia.

Cambodia's King Norodom Sihanouk intervened last year to obtain the release of another journalist, Chan Rotana, the Editor of the opposition

paper Samleng Yuvachuan Khmer (Voice of Khmer Youth). Chan Rotana was jailed following his conviction last year on charges of defaming the king's son, Prince Norodom Ranariddh, one of the country's co-prime ministers. Editors of opposition newspapers in Phnom Penh are in a high-risk profession: Nuon Chan, who was Chan Rotana's predecessor as the paper's editor, was killed by gunmen in 1994.

Nearly two years after that killing, Pin Samkhon, the President of the Khmer Journalists Association, recalled at a recent journalists' conference: "At four or five o'clock in the evening at the place where he was killed, many policemen, many people [saw] the murder, but the government cannot catch the murderers."

In Vietnam, hopes earlier in the decade of gradual liberalization in the media soured in early 1996 as hardliners in the government mounted campaigns to fight "cultural pollution" in the media and the rest of society. Vietnamese newspapers, while more lively

and occasionally carrying investigative reports on local crime and corruption, are still subject to stringent government controls. In neighboring Laos, the stirrings of free-market reforms have yet to loosen the government's firm hold on the media, which are routinely filled with dreary official pronouncements. Laotian journalists are increasingly going abroad for training and are learning more reader-friendly techniques, such as writing consumer stories and features. But the government allows them little scope to use their new skills.

Setbacks to press freedom continue in Indonesia, where the Supreme Court in June upheld the government's 1994 ban on Tempo, the leading newsweekly, and two other publications. The latest ruling crushed some hopes that had been raised after two lower courts went against the government's original ban.

"Today is a day of mourning for the Indonesian press," said Tempo Editor Goenawan Mohamad, when the court's verdict was announced. Raising a



Indonesia's lively and proliferating alternative media provide points of view the government does not tolerate in the mainstream media.

clenched fist in the air, Goenawan told a crowd of journalists outside the courtroom that the legal battle had been lost, but not the "moral" one and urged journalists to continue to fight for press freedom. *Tempo* had been banned, along with *DeTik* and *Editor*, after government warnings that their reports were threatening the nation's stability.

Indonesian journalists had reacted to the ban by creating the Alliance of Independent Journalists, as an alternative to the government-sanctioned union. When the alliance began publishing its own magazine, violating government rules requiring a license for any publication, authorities last year sentenced three of its members to jail. In March, the Supreme Court upheld the sentences.

Some Indonesian journalists now see political agitation as their only option in trying to ease restrictions on the press. A recent upsurge in political activity, focusing on opposition figure Megawati Sukarnoputri, has heightened the feelings of many Indonesians that political change may be in the offing after more than 30 years of rule by President Suharto. "All the legal ways have ended now," Goenawan said about efforts to re-establish *Tempo* following the high court ruling. "So it's got to be through a political struggle."

Meanwhile, there is no doubt whatsoever that political change is coming to Hong Kong, where 155 years of British colonial rule will end at the stroke of midnight June 30, 1997. Journalists in Hong Kong say they expect to wake up the next morning in an environment far less hospitable to press freedom. A report in June by the Hong Kong Journalists Association cited "alarming developments" on press freedom.

Just before the report was issued, Lu Ping, China's top official for Hong Kong affairs, attempted to reassure journalists that the press would be allowed to report as freely as it does now. However, Lu said the Hong Kong media would be forbidden to "advocate" positions such as the independence of Taiwan or Hong Kong. "It wouldn't be allowed. There are certain national laws which Hong Kong should also abide by," Lu said in an interview with CNN.

He also reminded journalists that the Basic Law, Hong Kong's virtual constitution after July 1, expressly forbids "treason" and "subversion"—which China can define as it chooses.

Hong Kong journalists also are alarmed by statements from Beijing that it wants to use the government-subsidized broadcasting authority, Radio Television Hong Kong, for official announcements. Officials of RTHK say they will resist efforts to turn the service into a political mouthpiece modeled on China's own government-run broadcasters.

Journalists in Hong Kong are reacting in various ways to the dawn of the new era. Self-censorship on stories that might offend China is "the most dangerous threat to freedom of expression in Hong Kong today," the Hong Kong Journalists Association says. Some young journalists are abandoning the profession entirely, while some mid-career and senior journalists have announced plans to emigrate. But most journalists plan to stay on, and a handful of them continue to publicize what they see as threats to press freedom.

The number of daily newspapers in Hong Kong remains at about 20, a healthy figure in a city of 6.2 million. However, one casualty has been the English-language *Eastern Express*, which closed June 29. As the third English-language daily in the city, it never attracted sufficient advertising. Meanwhile, a price war in the Chinese-language press forced several dailies out of business, resulting in the loss of more than 600 jobs. That mirrors the situation in other Asian cities, including Bangkok, where the recent explosion of new publications is nearing a glut that is making things tighter for some media organizations.

Within China, journalists are still operating under tight ideological controls. Elimination of government subsidies has meant that many of China's publications have enlivened their coverage of daily life. Sensationalistic tabloid coverage of entertainment, sex, crimes and fashion is surfacing. Still missing are serious articles on politics, economics, health and environment that may differ from government views.

"The market can create a kind of diversity in the Chinese media, but it does not necessarily add in a meaningful way to public discourse," Orville Schell, Dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California at Berkeley and a noted China scholar, recently said. "The media is robust in its ability to deliver garbage."

Beijing authorities continue efforts to control the dissemination in China of foreign news agencies' reports. The government's Xinhua news agency, which already controls all distribution of foreign news services, has issued new regulations demanding fees from foreign companies providing financial news to Chinese-based firms. The ruling hits hard at news services such as Dow Jones, Reuters, Bloomberg and others that have recently expanded services in China.

Other Asian governments have had their own conflicts with foreign media. Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad has denounced the Western press for "thought colonization" and his government this year threatened (but has not taken) action against *Asiaweek* magazine for a report on a Cabinet reshuffle. Singapore's Lee won another round in his legal action against American academic Christopher Lingle for an article written two years ago that never mentioned Singapore but that Lee maintains was defamatory of Singapore's courts. This past April, a Singapore judge ordered Lingle to pay Lee \$71,000 in damages, on top of the \$214,000 already paid by *The International Herald Tribune*.

Meanwhile, the Singapore government has eased up on the circulation of two other foreign publications, both owned by Dow Jones. The *Asian Wall Street Journal* had its circulation ceiling in Singapore raised from 7,000 to 9,000 and the *Far Eastern Economic Review* from 4,000 to 6,000, according to regulations set by the Ministry of Information and the Arts. In the past, Singapore had set far more drastic circulation limits on these two publications, virtually banning them at times, in response to articles that displeased the authorities. ■

## India

# What's Murdoch Up To?

BY VINOD MEHTA

In June Rupert Murdoch flew to New Delhi on a United Airlines jet, had a 30-minute conversation with Prime Minister Deve Gowda over tea and biscuits and almost immediately left the country. The international "take-over" king attempted to keep the meeting under wraps, but with Murdoch nothing remains unpublicized for long. The next morning Indian papers front-paged the meeting with photographs.

Not surprisingly, there was a furor. Why had Murdoch flown half way around the globe to Delhi? Why was he so keen to keep his meeting with Gowda a secret? What sinister media plans did he have for the country? Which group would he gobble up first? There was frenzied speculation, with Murdoch's boys strenuously denying anything more than a courtesy call to the Prime Minister of a country in which their boss had a business interest. Whatever the truth, one thing Murdoch's 12-hour hush-hush trip did achieve—it catalyzed debate on all the contentious issues confronting the Indian media today.

Denials notwithstanding, Murdoch wanted to explore the possibility of shifting the Asian base of his company, News Corp., from Hong Kong to India. Given the political uncertainty hovering over Hong Kong, Murdoch needs a pullback plan if the Chinese find democratic rules cumbersome in their newly reacquired territory. For the pullback, however, he needs uplinking facilities. (Uplinking allows a broadcaster to beam his signal directly to a satellite. Currently that power in India rests exclusively with the government.) Gene Swinstead, one of Murdoch's aides, claims, "It's clear that uplinking from Indian soil will give India far more control over foreign players. If the government does allow it, there will be a

massive investment." According to Swinstead each player would invest \$100 million. However, public opinion in the country is divided on the issue, with the balance tilted slightly against allowing foreign or private Indian broadcasters such facilities. National security, sensitive political questions (read Pakistan), and alien Western values (read lewd music and obscenity) are cited as the main reasons for denying permission.

Unfortunately, the current 13-party governing coalition, which is painfully aware of its own fragility and which includes coalition partners leading the campaign against uplinking, is caught in an embarrassing dilemma. The New Delhi Supreme Court, in a landmark judgment, recently ruled that the Indian Government had no right to cling to its uplinking monopoly and recommended that a public body, publicly administered, be created to monitor the air-waves, which it declared belonged to the people of India and not to any government. Even more embarrassing for the Deve Gowda coalition is the fact that an all-party parliamentary committee headed by a senior minister of the ruling coalition recommended in March of this year that private TV broadcasters be allowed to uplink from India in the interests of healthy competition.

No early resolution of the debate is expected but the feeling in political circles is that the government is fighting a losing battle on this issue. The compulsions of technology, the logic of the open market, which India has enthusiastically embraced, the demands from the viewing public, will ensure that Murdoch—if that is what he wants—and others get their way on uplinking.

Where they will probably lose is in the print media. In 1955 the Jawharlal Nehru cabinet took a decision prohib-

iting foreigners from owning print publications in India. Equity participation was barred by law. And it has remained so. In the debate over print media the heavyweight owners of the Indian press, who are vehemently opposed to any relaxation or dilution of the existing law, have found in Rupert Murdoch a useful ally. They cite his overseas record as a publisher purveying smut, sleaze and crass commercialism and warn that the integrity and sobriety of the print media would be seriously compromised if Murdoch in particular and foreigners in general were allowed whole or part-ownership of print media. The debate continues fitfully with the potential Indian partners of foreign publications—Living Media (India Today group) and Anand Bazar Patrika group—attempting to drum up support.

That established international players have an eye on India as a publishing center is hardly a secret. The Financial Times of London and Time magazine have detailed, long-standing proposals submitted to the Indian government that involve equity participation. The International Herald Tribune and some European publishers of fashion magazines have also expressed a keen interest. For the present, however, with most of the leading and influential publishing houses lobbying vigorously for the retention of the 1955 Nehru cabinet decision, the odds are stacked against any rethinking on that decision. Ironically, the rank and file of Indian jour-

---

*Vinod Mehta is Editor of Outlook, an investigative English-language weekly newsmagazine based in New Delhi. Previously, he was Editor of the newspapers The Pioneer, The Indian Post, The Sunday Observer and the magazine Debonair.*



COURTESY: PIONEER

*Gautam Roy, left, and Somnath Batabyal, reporters for The Pioneer, published in New Delhi, Lucknow and Kampur, work in the newsroom of their New Delhi office.*

nalists are overwhelmingly in favor of foreign entry since they have a litany of complaints against their proprietors who, it must be said, have traditionally treated journalists with something close to contempt. (The working conditions in the offices of leading, profit-making newspapers are generally appalling.)

Murdoch in a sense symbolizes another problem facing the Indian print media: the diminishing role of journalists in the editorial running of publications. In many newspaper houses there is increased and acrimonious jostling over turf—who runs the publications, the editors or the managers? The managers, of course, have the blessing and sanction of the proprietors in their effort to undermine the authority of editors. It is no coincidence, then, that the concept of the editor-in-chief, one single individual responsible and accountable for editorial performance, is fast disappearing from India. He is truly an endangered species desperately needing protection. Proprietors/managers frequently make editorial appointments and make editorial decisions without even bothering to consult the editor. The editor of a leading daily in Delhi was not pleasantly surprised when he walked into the office and was introduced to his deputy.

Simultaneously, a new culture is in vogue. Publications increasingly are seen as “products” to be sold in the

market place like toothpaste and soap. They are perceived to be part of the FMCG (fast moving consumer goods) market. Thus, the daily press in India is witnessing a vicious price war with hectic merchandising strategies in which only the big boys with deep pockets can survive and prosper. It makes survival extremely difficult for the new entrant. Although Delhi prides itself as being the newspaper capital

of the world—there are over a dozen broadsheet English morning dailies in circulation, not to mention those in Hindi and regional languages—the decline in journalistic quality and standards is marked. Proprietors here frequently assert that their publications are market-driven rather than editorial-driven. Circulation figures bear out their claim but the gains are short-term.

In the past the Indian print media have produced a succession of strong editors who have stood up not only to governments but also to owners. In turn they gave their papers an identity, a sense of purpose, cohesion and an ideology. In the new culture most proprietors prefer docile editors prepared to accept subservient status. From time to time thoughtful and concerned citizens have considered moving the Press Council and other bodies to create an environment in which editors could function independently, free from interference. Various ideas have been offered, but this is such a sensitive issue involving the “sovereignty” of the proprietor that nothing worthwhile has emerged.

While the Indian press is justifiably proud of being one of the freest in the world, India’s electronic media remain firmly in official control. Even though satellite television, through which India is exposed to CNN, BBC, Star, Discovery, etc., is making some inroads and providing badly needed competi-

tion, television and radio function like government departments. News management and censorship of the crudest kind are routine and, ironically, counterproductive: what television apparatchiks blank out is immediately blown-up in the press. State-controlled television, nevertheless, is an extremely powerful monopoly since its footprint covers 92 percent of the country. It is therefore a unique and potent propaganda tool, which governments are reluctant to release. For the last two decades Congress and non-Congress governments alike have promised to “free” television but they have consistently reneged on their commitment.

Currently, a bill to hand over television and radio to an autonomous corporation like the BBC is being put in final form. Hammered out after a lot of dilly-dallying, the bill attracted more than 500 proposed amendments after it was introduced in Parliament. In its election manifesto the ruling United Front promised to get the bill passed in Parliament at the earliest opportunity, but given the past records, media-watchers are understandably skeptical.

Despite turbulence and tension the Indian media scene is generally healthy. Print and television have learned to co-exist and despite alarm about the debilitating impact of television, the latest figures reveal that 62 percent of all advertising expenditure goes to print. Above all, the print media, and particularly daily newspapers, enjoy high credibility (confirmed by opinion polls) in the country. The press (along with the judiciary) is seen as one of the few institutions keeping democracy on an even keel, and in the past few months its role in highlighting corruption at the highest level has been welcomed. One possible reason for the high credibility of the Indian press is the lack of any tabloid culture in India. The Indian press may be solemn, over-politicized, ponderous and long-winded but it is relatively free from triviality, sleaze and celebrity muck-raking. Whatever the reason, it is an asset not to be squandered. ■



## Pakistan

# Transition in Midst of Dramatic Change

BY OWAIS ASLAM ALI

The press in Pakistan is in a transitional phase as it tries to adapt to the rapid changes the country has been undergoing over the past decade. In addition to an increasingly competitive media environment, there is the challenge of working with nascent democratic institutions that have not yet developed the fundamental democratic tenet of tolerance for opposing viewpoints. There are also wide disparities in the level of skills among urban and rural journalists.

The Pakistani media, which evolved in an authoritarian environment, has had many obstacles to overcome and which continue to be at issue despite the emergence of a democratic system. Until recently the government had exclusive control over the electronic media and a significant percentage of the print media, while independent publications had to contend with outright censorship and legally binding "press advice," which gave government officials the power to dictate what could and could not be published.

Although Pakistani journalists struggled for a freer press during this time, decades of working in a controlled environment led to a complacent attitude. Competition was limited because government licensing regulations restricted the number of newspapers and magazines, while government advertising provided the bulk of revenue for most publications. The situation changed abruptly in 1988 with the death of the then military ruler, General Ziaul Haq, in an air crash. Zia had earlier dismissed his hand-picked prime minister and had formed an interim government to conduct elections. The interim government, eager to establish its democratic credentials before the elections, accepted the decades-old demand of journalists to repeal the Press and Publication Ordinance (PPO)

of 1963, the draconian law that governments had used to control the press.

With the repeal of PPO, the procedures for starting new publications has been greatly simplified. The result has been an dramatic increase in the number of publications. Newspapers now find themselves in an very competitive environment, with each of the major cities having two to three English language newspapers and dozens of vernacular dailies. The publications linked to major media groups have responded to increased competition by adding new feature and magazine sections and improving design. More importantly, the quality of news reporting, particularly investigative reporting, has improved dramatically in major publications.

With a literacy rate of less than 35 percent, newspapers are read by a very small percentage of the people. TV and radio are, therefore, very important in the dissemination of news. However, radio and television present an unrealistically positive and sanitized version of reality. Their coverage is filled with achievements of whatever government is in power. Unpleasant realities that would show the government in a bad light are either downplayed or ignored altogether. As a result, TV and radio lack credibility, especially in times of political crises, when people turn to the BBC or Voice of America for objective assessments.

There are three major newspaper groups:

1. The Jang group is the largest press group of Pakistan. The flagship publication of this group is the Urdu daily Jang published from Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi, Quetta and London with a combined circulation of over 600,000. Jang enjoys a virtual monopoly of Urdu readership in Karachi and Rawalpindi and has a major share of the market in Lahore and Quetta.

2. The Herald Group publishes the daily Dawn, which until the early 1990's had a virtual monopoly on the English language readership in Karachi.

3. The Nawa-i-Waqt group publishes Nawa-i-waqt from Lahore, Rawalpindi, Multan and Karachi. The group also publishes the English language daily The Nation from Lahore and Islamabad.

The increase in the number of publications has been so dramatic that trained personnel are sorely lacking. Established publications have met their growing need for staff by drawing from smaller newspapers and magazines. Seasoned journalists now have the added responsibility of training apprentices in increasing numbers. The problem is compounded by the fact that the allowance of competing views, those of government, its detractors, and public-interest groups, requires more incisive



*Owais Aslam Ali is General Manager and Editor of the Pakistan Press International, the country's independent news agency. He also is Secretary-General of the Pakistan Press Foundation, a nonprofit research and training center. He edits a quarterly foundation bulletin that gives prominence to press freedom issues in Pakistan.*

reporting and analytical skills. There is thus an urgent need for training as survival in this competitive environment will require not only greatly improved journalistic skills but also better managerial and marketing capabilities. The Pakistan Press Foundation (PPF) and the Press Institute of Pakistan have played an important role by organizing workshops and seminars, some in collaboration with international organizations such as the Commonwealth Press Union, The Center for Foreign Journalists and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.

Unfortunately, the press continues to function in a difficult political environment despite the emergence of a democratic system. The remark last year by the federal law minister—"If the press adopts a derogatory attitude, then it is the duty of the government to tame it"—is a good example of the prevailing attitude among political, ethnic and religious groups that have on many occasions tried to control the press through threats, intimidation and violence. For example, the government last year banned six newspapers for 60 days and canceled the licenses of 100 others for publishing sensational news. The ban was lifted only after threats of a nationwide strike by workers, editors and owners.

Journalists also find themselves targets of frequent attacks on their integrity by deeply divided political groups. Newspapers that publish statements and accusations by political leaders are criticized by their rivals, who often resort to sensationalism, character-assassination and misinformation. One such example was Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's monolithic dismissal of print media last year at a public rally where she exclaimed, "Newspapers are liars. Do not believe newspaper reports, they indulge in propaganda."

While the situation for urban journalists is far from satisfactory, it is intolerable for their colleagues in rural areas, who have to face unchecked abuses of power from local authorities, feudal lords and politicians, who have the means of delivering brutal private punishments. One recent example of the dangers encountered by journalists is that of Mumtaz Shar, correspondent for the Sindhi language daily *Bathtwar*,

based in the small town of Jhol. Shar reported complaints of residents against a school headmistress, wife of a local feudal lord. In retribution, Shar was kidnapped by the landlord's men, stripped, lashed and sexually assaulted before being released.

Perhaps the only positive aspect is that in most cases, protests from national and international organizations have caused authorities to withdraw their pressure. This is especially true in the cases of attacks on rural journalists where, for the most part, local officials and landlords act without the approval or knowledge of higher authorities. Political leaders are not likely to look kindly on local officials who tarnish their democratic credentials.

While attacks on the media threaten press freedom, equally alarming is the creation of agencies and institutions by political parties to disseminate misinformation, discredit opposing parties and promote their causes. Political groups feed the rumor mills of sensational newspapers through these agencies, which they themselves later condemn.

Both major organizations of editors, the Newspaper Editor Council of Pakistan (NECP) and the Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors (NECP), are trying to evolve a workable code that would discourage unethical practices, improve the standards of journalism and reduce government intervention.

The advent of democracy has also increased the importance of rural centers since nearly two-thirds of Pakistanis live in rural areas. Political, social and economic activities that were once confined to major cities are now slowly reaching smaller towns and villages. Although newspapers have increased the space devoted to rural affairs, news coverage from the hinterlands remains haphazard, sketchy and negative. The reason is that most rural journalists do not have the necessary skills to cover the diverse range of complex issues affecting their communities.

The growth in the number of publications has led to a parallel rise in the number of rural correspondents—most of whom have had no experience in news organization. In the cities, newcomers can learn from senior col-

leagues, but in rural areas, correspondents generally work independently. There is a great need to train rural journalists in the basic skills of news-gathering and news-writing. These journalists must also be introduced to important social and development issues, and to problems of journalistic ethics.

Last year the Pakistan Press Foundation (PPF) launched a program for training rural journalists that has so far given basic training to about 1,000 rural journalists. Besides imparting basic skills to rural journalists, these workshops have also provided a forum for participants to discuss professional problems.

There is also wide disparity between the English language and the vernacular press. This is especially evident in the coverage of social and development issues such as the environment, health and hygiene, human rights, equality of opportunities for women, population and rural development. However, the leading role in the projection of development issues has been played by the English-language publications, while the vernacular press has, with notable exceptions, lagged. This restricts the effectiveness of the press since the vernacular press accounts for the bulk of newspaper circulation.

A major reason for the unsatisfactory coverage of development issues is that the vernacular press suffers from a lack of information resources. International NGOs and development agencies that work in international languages such as English, French and Spanish, have done little to reach the vernacular press. The result is that journalists working for vernacular publications do not have access to the wealth of information that is available in these languages.

Progress on many social issues—such as human rights, the environment, health—will require active popular support. Since the vernacular media are the main source of information for an overwhelming majority of Pakistanis, it is necessary that information on these issues be made available in local languages. Efforts should also be made to raise the awareness of journalists in rural area to enable them to provide the local perspective on issues of national and international concern. ■

## Kashmir

# 'Between the Devil and the Deep Sea'

BY SURINDER SINGH OBEROI

In stark contrast to the freedoms of the rest of India, journalists working for the vernacular press in the northwestern state of Jammu and Kashmir face some of the most dangerous conditions for journalists anywhere in Asia. They walk a tightrope, often targeted by both Indian government troops and guerrilla groups fighting for separatism.

Six journalists were among the more than 25,000 people killed since the long dispute over sovereignty escalated into all-out war in 1989. Journalists say the going is getting increasingly tough.

Indian officials accuse Kashmiri journalists of pandering to the separatist groups or of being directly linked to them. The militant groups accuse the journalists of being Indian agents and of not doing enough to promote the separatist cause. Complicating it all is the multiplicity of demands. In addition to government troops, there are pro-government militias. The dozens of guerrilla groups include Moslem militants and groups seeking a secular state.

"We are caught between the devil and the deep sea," said Noor-ul-Qarain, Editor of an English-language daily, *The Mirror*. "We cannot please everyone, yet everyone expects us to be objective and honest."

Qarain was one of three journalists intercepted in December 1995 near Srinagar, the state summer capital, as they were returning from an interview with a militia group. He and another journalist were beaten; the third was shot and wounded.

A photographer for Agence France-Press in Srinagar, Mushtaq Ali, 32, was killed and two other journalists injured in September 1995 by a powerful par-

cel bomb that a woman in a black veil delivered to the local office of the British Broadcasting Corp. The BBC correspondent was on the phone at the time, so Ali opened the parcel for him. He died three days later of his injuries.

This past April, the body of Ghulam Rasool Sheikh, who edited an Urdu-language daily and an English-language weekly, was found in the Jhelum river on which Srinagar is situated. He had been kidnapped from his house three weeks earlier. Family members blame Indian-backed militia; the police blame the guerrillas.

Both cases remain unsolved.

In July, 19 journalists, including me, were held for several anxious hours by one of the counter-insurgency militia groups. We were traveling together in a bus to a news conference called by a militia group when gunmen of another militia group, the Jammu and Kashmir Ikhwan, intercepted us 35 miles south



*Surinder Singh Oberoi works in Srinagar, Kashmir, for Agence-France Press and German Television (ARD). He has covered the conflict since 1990. Previously he worked for leading English-language newspapers and magazines.*

of Srinagar. The commander said the six journalists in our group who worked for the Kashmiri press would be killed unless the editors of Kashmir's major dailies appeared before him by noon the next day. He was angry that those papers had ignored his order to stop publishing because, he said, they had not given the Ikhwan enough coverage. The Indian army intervened and got all 19 journalists safely released.

The period surrounding the federal Parliamentary elections in May was tense in Kashmir. All the local newspapers decided to shut down for two months, from mid-April to mid-June, in face of threats from all sides. The government threatened criminal charges against newspaper editors who published statements by separatist leaders or material deemed likely to cause religious tensions. The most powerful separatist group, the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, responded by saying they would deal severely with editors who published government statements or advertisements.

Both sides do much more than just issue verbal threats. Militants have flung grenades at the offices and houses of journalists. Since 1989, the government has brought at least 400 sedition charges against Kashmiri newspapers. Indian troops have detained journalists without charge and raided most newspaper offices, including the AFP office, to intimidate them and identify their contacts within militant groups. Editors say the government withholds government advertisements in order to financially choke newspapers it does not like. Newspaper vendors say security forces often harass them. ■

# Hong Kong: Keeping Ideals After '97

Jimmy Lai Chi-ying of Hong Kong is one of Asia's boldest media moguls. In 1990, he used his fortune from the garment industry to start a lively newsmagazine, *Next*. In 1994 he wrote there that Chinese Premier Li Peng was "a turtle's egg with a zero IQ." China retaliated by closing the Beijing outlet of his Giordano clothing chain.

In June of last year Lai launched *Apple Daily* and shook up the Hong Kong media world. Its sensational stories and pictures and low newsstand price sent it soaring to No. 2 in a market that had already appeared saturated. Before, Hong Kong newspapers decided prices in unison. *Apple* busted the cartel by selling for the equivalent of U.S. 26 cents, when all other newspapers were 64 cents. That bold move triggered a price-cutting war that forced three smaller papers to fold. In June, despite a promise to maintain the 26-cent price

until 1997, *Apple Daily*, facing dwindling profits, raised its price to 64 cents.

Lai, 48, was born to a Guangzhou family whose wealth was confiscated by the Communist government. He arrived in Hong Kong in 1961 penniless and unschooled. Now he again faces an uncertain future. On July 1, 1997, the British colony will revert to Chinese rule. Beijing's oppression of its own press and its heavy-handed efforts to control Hong Kong reporters covering China have raised

fears of media restrictions in Hong Kong. Lai, forced recently to sell Giordano because of continuing pressure from China, now plans to invest heavily in the United States technology industry, although he intends to keep his Hong Kong media empire.

Judith Clarke, who teaches journalism at Hong Kong Baptist University, interviewed Lai at his office in Hong Kong.



April Dux

**Q.**—Why did you go into publishing?

**A.**—In 1989 I was tired of retailing. Then the June 4 Tiananmen massacre took place, and it inspired me to go into the media business. By letting people be better informed, I provide them with more choices in life, and the more choices they have, the more freedom they have.

**Q.**—Did the idea include having a platform to criticize the Chinese government?

**A.**—We're not in the business to criticize anybody. We're in the business to be honest. Sometimes being honest means being critical or offending people. In some circumstances, or to some people, honesty hurts, and we can't avoid it.

**Q.**—How have you made your publications so commercially successful when others in Hong Kong have failed?

**A.**—Because I don't have any pre-

conceptions. I always go on the assumption that I don't know anything about the business, so I'm more receptive to learning from mistakes and more keen to try and find solutions through trial and error. Every day at 3 p.m. all 25 senior staff of the newspaper go into one room and criticize the day's paper: the headlines, the photos, the text, or the wrong positioning of the news. We also have weekly meetings to reveal what kind of mistakes we made and to share them and criticize each other. The only thing that can make people improve, and the company improve, is the pressure of criticism. In order to nurture this culture, I always make sure

that whenever I make a mistake, I admit it in front of all my staff and apologize. Recently, we raised the price of the newspaper and broke our promise to maintain the old price until 1997. That was a mistake I made, and I admitted it to all my staff.

**Q.**—How do you rationalize the sensational pictures and stories in your publications?

**A.**—Whatever ideals we have, they cannot be detached from human nature. That's why we have a little bit of sex in our newspaper. In today's media market, people have lots of choices, and a publication has to be more eye-catching to stand out. If our publications are not popular, whatever we believe in as a great ideal will be futile, because nobody will have access to it.

**Q.**—What is your ideal?

**A.**—Freedom of speech. Our ideal is not to promote any particular value,

but the freedom of honestly reporting the variety of values.

**Q.**—Has there been any pressure from China on your publications?

**A.**—Our reporters have been censored from covering China's official functions for a couple of years. We have to send them there as tourists to cover things, and we haven't got into trouble for it—yet. Also, you don't see advertisements from any Chinese-connected companies in our newspaper. But other than that, we don't have a great deal of pressure.

**Q.**—Do you expect more pressure next year?

**A.**—I really don't know, but if I think about it I get scared, and now is not the time to get scared, and that's why I don't think about it. I've got to keep a positive attitude to tackle 1997.

**Q.**—Will you go on criticizing China in your publications if you see fit to do so?

**A.**—Of course. Otherwise we could not be honest. Having said that, we should not be anti-Chinese. It's a reality we have to face in the future—that the less we uphold, the more flexible we'll be able to be. If we only uphold the value of freedom and are flexible on the rest, we have a bigger chance to survive 1997.

**Q.**—Does that mean that you would compromise if pressure were put on you?

**A.**—I don't think we should compromise our insistence on reporting honestly. On June 4, when there was the candlelight gathering to commemorate Tiananmen, some newspapers put the story in the back. We put it on the whole front page, one photo. We can put stories anywhere in the newspaper, and it's in the way we arrange them that we exercise our value systems, rather than in writing editorials to provoke the Chinese. ■

## Taiwan

# Relishing but Abusing Freedoms

BY OSMAN TSENG

**T**aiwan's journalists now enjoy a high degree of freedom thanks to the country's democratic revolution of the past decade. What they most need to improve on now are professional and ethical standards.

In 1988, the government lifted a decades-long ban on the establishment of new newspapers. It allowed new radio stations starting in 1994, and there are now more than 100 local and national broadcasters, three times the 1994 total.

The government legalized cable television in 1993. This country of only 21 million people now has more than 200 cable operators and 70 satellite broadcasters. Last year, a license for a fourth commercial station was given to private investors, primarily from the main opposition party, the Democratic Progressives. That broke the government's long-time monopoly over television. The station is to start broadcasting in mid-1997.

The media were severely restricted before martial law, in place for 38 years, was lifted in 1987. They could not criticize the chief of state, nor promote the movement for the independence of Taiwan from mainland China. Reporting on the mainland was severely curbed.

Now, President Lee Teng-hui is constantly and harshly criticized. During campaigning for the March general election, Lee was assailed as a "traitor" by his critics, and the media quoted them. Stories favoring Taiwan independence are commonplace. Opposition party candidate Peng Ming-min loudly espoused independence as his main campaign issue. And each day all major newspapers have at least one full page of news on mainland China.

Few newspapers have used the increased press freedom to take sides with Beijing outrightly, but there have often been cases where they printed stories or commentaries seen as sympathetic to Beijing's views. For example, during this year's presidential race, some newspapers played up the criticisms that opposing candidates expressed about President Lee's handling of the military crisis in the Taiwan Strait. Instead of condemning Beijing for trying to intimidate Taiwan, two of Lee's challengers kept accusing him of provoking Beijing and placing Taiwan on the brink of war with the mainland. Also, when the United States sent two aircraft carriers to waters near Taiwan to monitor the Chinese missile tests and war games, both challengers criticized the move as foreign interference. These views were not those of the gen-



*Osman Tseng, a journalist with Taiwan's English-language media for 30 years, writes weekly editorials for The China Post and columns for the magazine Business Taiwan. From 1976 to 1982 he was Editor-in-Chief of the Taipei-based China Economic News Services, the largest trade journal publisher in Taiwan.*

eral public, but they received support in commentaries and stories in some newspapers. No longer can the government summarily shut down or suspend a publication, or intervene in the handling of a story.

Despite all this, government control over television remains, notes Lo Ven-hui, Professor of Journalism at National Chengchi University. Because all three commercial stations are owned largely by government institutions, their news coverage mostly favors government candidates during elections, he says.

The two opposition parties, the Democratic Progressive Party and the New Party, constantly complain about this alleged bias. They say that during major elections of recent years the networks have routinely denied their requests for fair access. The Democratic Progressive Party, citing a survey, says the networks gave Lee's presidential campaign twice as much coverage as those of his three challengers.

A recent United Daily News survey found that 49 percent of respondents believed the networks were biased in favor of Lee's campaign. Only 29 percent said the stations were neutral.

Brian Pai, Assistant Manager of the news department at Taiwan Television Enterprise (TTV), the country's largest station, says the networks' coverage of the election was fair and balanced. He says the public still has the same impression of the networks as it had during martial law but, in reality, there's no longer any government control.

"We need not set any political limits to our coverage just because of the fact that our station is primarily owned by the government," Pai says. "We cannot afford to allow our reporting to be politically biased. If we did, we would certainly lose our audience at a time when the TV market is becoming increasingly competitive with liberalization of the industry."

Pai says his station does follow a basic editorial principle—"We must give consideration to political stability and national interest when handling sensitive political news, such as mainland China's intimidating military exercises in the Taiwan Strait late last year and early this year."

Legislation is being proposed to ban the government and political parties from operating commercial and satellite television.

Professor Lo says the government also must strengthen the media by enacting legislation long established in the United States: "sunshine laws" requiring government agencies to open meetings and records to the public and a freedom of information act giving access to government documents.

A China News editorial called for a constitutional amendment declaring the right to freedom of the press. "Our Constitution is vague on this point," it said. "It refers only to the freedom of speech."

The editorial was prompted by two controversial incidents. In the first case, the Defense Ministry accused a reporter of publishing its classified budget sent to the Parliament for screening. The reporter was accused of "leaking national secrets" and was subpoenaed and asked to disclose his source. In the second case, reporters prematurely published a watchdog agency's list of eight officials who were to be penalized for a fire that killed 65 people. Those reporters also were investigated by judicial authorities. Neither case led to indictment of any reporters.

Growing commercialization and market concentration of the media hinder the development of their independence and pluralism, says Su Tzen-ping, Editor-in-Chief of the Independence Morning Newspaper.

Su says that stories and commentaries, especially in smaller papers, often are influenced by advertisers because the competition for advertising is so keen. Increased competition has killed off weaker papers—in mid-1996 there were 32 dailies, 11 fewer than two years ago. The result is that "press opinion [is] being controlled by a few owners of large newspapers," Su wrote in the journal *Mass Communications Research*.

The United Daily News and the China Times are the two largest papers in Taiwan, each with an estimated circulation of more than 1.3 million. Both are read by government policymakers, politicians and business leaders.

Journalists at The Independence

Morning Newspaper's sister publication, the Independence Evening News, last year tried to persuade the newspaper's owners to sign a contract pledging editorial autonomy. But they failed after weeks of negotiations. Soon afterwards, journalists at two newsmagazines tried, also in vain, to win such contracts. But journalists say the concept will receive greater attention in the years ahead as Taiwan's media find the need for more freedom.

For now, many media need to police themselves better, say critics. Inaccuracy and the failure to distinguish fact from opinion are cited as major problems. At a journalism seminar this year, scholars, government officials and journalists described the Taiwanese media's coverage of mainland China as "politicization" and "fake news."

Stories on mainland China received particular attention during the nine months from mid-1995, when Beijing conducted missile tests and war games near Taiwan in retaliation for President Lee's visit to the United States. It was later proved that China used the news media to spread false reports about military actions, and thus enhance the effect of its scare tactics against Taiwan.

Many magazines print sensational stories and pornographic pictures, but only a few small-circulation newspapers do so. It is illegal to publish frontal nudity. Only a few of the cable TV stations broadcast pornographic movies.

The irresponsibility that has accompanied liberalization is especially glaring at many of the radio stations. Some stations consistently broadcast extreme anti-government mudslinging. Some often have urged taxi drivers to stage violent demonstrations and, in several instances, told listeners to surround courtrooms to fight alleged injustice. While continuing to liberalize the market, the government must deal firmly with irresponsible broadcasters. The China Post said in a recent editorial. ■

# The Philippines

## Opinionated, Rambunctious—and Powerful

BY SHEILA S. CORONEL

President Fidel V. Ramos of the Philippines likes to complain about journalists and is never at a loss for metaphors when he rails against them. They emphasize the negative, he says. They focus on the hole, not the doughnut. They prefer to say that the glass of government is half-empty.

Yet Ramos is the most avid reader of newspapers. Aides say he begins his day with a brisk run and a look at thick folders of news clippings, prepared by a staff that works through the night to get them on his desk before daybreak.

Ramos is not alone in being irritated by the media, and at the same time, needing to follow what they say. Everywhere, officials and politicians anxious about their careers breakfast on a diet of news and opinion.

After only 10 years of democracy, the Philippine media are extremely powerful and the freest media in Asia. Newspaper exposés catalyze policy reforms and abort political careers. Ramos writes angry memos to his officials on the margins of newspaper clippings. Journalistic inquisition makes politicians quake.

For 14 years during the reign of Ferdinand E. Marcos, the media were lapdogs of the dictator and his wife, although some journalists strained at the leash. After Marcos fell in a popular uprising in 1986, the elaborate system of press controls was dismantled overnight and scores of newspapers and radio stations burst on the scene. Today 30 dailies publish out of Manila; over 200 more publish in the provinces. There are some 250 AM stations and over 150 local and national television stations.

The Philippine media love controversy. Except for government-owned broadcast agencies and one govern-

ment-run newspaper chain, the media today are hard-hitting and critical of authority. Newspapers regularly expose official corruption and abuse; their commentaries are often strident and unrestrained. Most journalists take seriously their role as watchdog of government. Philippine society is dissenting, not consensual. Philippine democracy is noisy and rambunctious. And the media reflect all this.

Without doubt, the press has enriched Philippine democracy by keeping people informed and by encouraging debate. But it has also been criticized for a tendency toward sensationalism. Tabloids, which sell briskly in Manila and surpass the circulation of the broadsheets, offer a menu of crime and sex. The broadsheets are more sober, but their criticism can sometimes get out of hand.

Much of the reporting focuses on day-to-day events and lacks substantial analysis and context. Sometimes rumors are passed off as news. The Philippine press is "given to overstatement and hyperbole, its verve and its nerve overtaking the substance of its endeavor," says Melinda de Jesus, director of the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility. Complaints of corruption—what Filipinos call "envelopmental journalism"—are also rife. Reporters say that envelopes of money are discreetly tucked under their plates during press lunches or surreptitiously distributed by political aides during news conferences.

These faults are partly rooted in the competitiveness and sheer number of media outlets. The competition is especially harsh in television, where reporters race for the juiciest showbiz gossip or the goriest images of crimes to raise their ratings. Unorthodox methods in-

clude tripping the power lines of competitors.

As the number of media agencies multiplied overnight, not enough trained journalists could be found to staff them. Fresh university graduates were assigned to cover prime beats like foreign affairs and the presidential palace, even though they did not know how to write a lead or what "off the record" meant.



*Sheila S. Coronel has worked as a magazine writer, political writer and columnist for The Manila Chronicle and as a stringer for The New York Times and The Guardian of London and Manchester. In 1989, she co-founded the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, an independent agency specializing in investigative reporting. She has published "Coups, Cults and Cannibals," an anthology of her reporting.*

Still, there is strong support for press freedom among a broad cross-section of Filipinos. In the last years of Marcos, business professionals boycotted the government-controlled press. Today, citizens' groups noisily protest any attempt to muzzle the press.

The media demonstrated their clout in 1992, when Filipinos held their first democratic elections in 20 years. The press played a key role in shaping public perceptions of candidates. Through the media, candidates with only skeletal political organizations got their messages across to vast numbers of people. Manila's political class now realizes that as society becomes increasingly urbanized, citizens increasingly turn to the media to make up their minds on crucial issues.

Political fortunes have become increasingly dependent on the English-language Manila press, which caters to the politically influential middle class. They include The Philippine Daily Inquirer and The Philippine Star. Last March, Health Secretary Hilarion Ramos was forced to resign after newspaper exposés that said he had taken bribes. In 1995, media criticism of the government's handling of the execution in Singapore of a Filipina maid was one reason why Ramos fired two of his most senior Cabinet secretaries. High-profile reporting on environmental issues, especially logging, has pressured the government into reforms.

In this highly opinionated society, columnists are particularly influential. Any self-respecting newspaper has a stable of at least 15 column writers who pontificate on just about every issue. Columnists are avidly read, and some newspapers sell on the basis of their opinion pages. One of Manila's newest papers is *Isyu* (Issues), a tabloid with nothing but opinion columns. *Isyu's* 80-some columnists write about sports, science, entertainment, basically everything. One of its more popular columns, written by a radio broadcaster, follows the sexual adventures of the high and mighty. *Isyu* sells better than most of the more serious broadsheets.

While columnists and talk show hosts are celebrities and the darlings of Manila's coffee shops and salons, me-



MELINDA DE JESUS: *Critical of Philippine press "overstatement and hyperbole."*

dia bosses have tremendous clout, which they sometimes use to enhance other interests.

Except for a few papers owned by journalists, the Manila dailies are owned by large business houses representing a wide range of interlocking corporate interests, including banking, manufacturing, telecommunications, real estate. Nearly all the country's wealthiest tycoons own a newspaper or a broadcast agency. This has meant, in some cases, a tendency not to rock the boat on issues involving government officials who regulate business. In other cases, publishers have used their newspapers to ax enemies in corporate battles or to promote political allies.

Most of the dozen Manila broadsheets lose money, but proprietors still bankroll them because owning a newspaper brings political and social prestige and access to the powerful. A newspaper, says former Ramos press secretary Rod Reyes, is like "a gun in holster," to be used by its owner when the need for a weapon arises.

"I never realized the power of a newspaper until after we bought one," admits the owner of a Manila daily. "The power is not exaggerated. When you are mad at someone, you feel so good when you can attack him."

At The Manila Bulletin, the paper's owner, banker and shipping magnate, Emilio Yap, occasionally writes headlines or chooses the main story. But Yap is more the exception than the rule. At many newspapers, editors successfully resist any attempts by owners to intervene in news matters.

In the provinces, journalists face more fundamental problems. They are harassed by local warlords, politicians and military officers who, despite 10 years of democracy, have not learned to tolerate a free press. Since 1986, 27 journalists have been killed in the provinces.

One recent casualty was 33-year-old Ferdinand Reyes, the crusading editor of Press Freedom, a small newspaper on the southern island of Mindanao. Reyes criticized everyone: government officials, businessmen, the military. One morning this past February, unknown assailants casually walked into his office and shot him. Despite a high-profile investigation, his killers still are on the loose.

Other journalists in the provinces have received threats. One editor was forced at gunpoint by an official to eat his newspaper. Many have been slapped with expensive harassment suits. Still, many of these journalists boldly continue to expose corruption, abuse of power and destruction of the environment.

Radio, which reaches nearly 90 percent of Philippine households, is the medium with the widest reach. The ownership of radio stations is more diverse than that of other media. All over the country, the airwaves echo with radio commentators railing against real or imagined wrongdoing. These programs are immensely popular, and in many places where government is inept and the courts are slow or corrupt, citizens seek redress for their grievances on the air. One daily television program which enjoys high ratings features ordinary people complaining about potholes and leaking water pipes and links them up on the air with chastised government workers. ■



## Malaysia

# Media Tightly Prescribed

By ERIC LOO

**J**une 1996: The Malaysian government orders the media not to publicize a Singaporean singer, apparently because he made a flippant remark about Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad. March 1994: Malaysian editors jointly denounce the British press for alleging corruption in a government contract granted to a British firm for a dam project. They say they "make no apology for being supportive of the government elected by the people—a position we have adopted at our own free will."

Respect for the prime minister and the government are central to the role that Malaysian authorities have prescribed for journalists. Other sensitivities journalists must respect, under the Sedition Act, are the special rights of Malays, language policy and privileges of the royalty. Another reporting guideline is the Rukunegara, a national ideology to promote "a united nation and democratic, just, liberal and progressive society, through belief in God, loyalty to king and country, upholding the constitution, the rules of law, good behavior and morality."

Since the May 1969 race riots, in which more than 900 civilians were killed, the government has expected the media to help maintain political stability in the multiracial society. It asserts that impassioned reporting on racial issues could easily reignite acrimony. More than 60 percent of Malaysia's 20 million people are Malays; 32 per cent are Chinese; the rest are Indians and other ethnic groups. The editor of the national news agency Bernama, Azman Ujang, says the journalist's task is to explain government policies and report responsibly on essential but "safe" social and economic issues.

Mahathir, in power since 1981, once

said the press "cannot be allowed to do exactly as they please." The press can threaten democracy, so it must practice self-restraint, he said. "When the press obviously abuses its rights, then democratic governments have a duty to put it right."

Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim has a different view and journalists expect controls to be relaxed if and when he takes over as prime minister. At an Asian journalists' meeting this past March, Anwar said journalists should serve as a "vehicle for the contest of ideas and cultivate good taste. Asian societies are at a state of development where they are in greater need for a vigorous journalism. We still have to root out corruption and abuses of power." He recently told *Time* magazine: "I have a minority view here. My principle is an informed citizenry, is a responsible citizenry. We want a responsible citizenry, so there must be respect for the freedom of the press." Anwar has implicitly criticized the notion of "Asian values" (such as the stress on "the collective good" instead of individual freedom), which Singapore's Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew has used to justify curbs on the media. As a student leader, Anwar was detained for 22 months in the 1970's for protesting government corruption and abuse of power.

Until his views become reality, many Malaysians must rely on foreign publications, and now the Internet, for alter-



*Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad and Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim at the 50th anniversary, in May, of their political party.*

native information. An example is the failure of Perwaja Steel, a Japanese-Malaysian venture Mahathir established in 1985 as part of his "Look East" industrialization plan. Last year it reported an accumulated operating loss of more than U.S. \$2 billion.

But the media did not dig into the company's operations because it is state-owned and the Official Secrets Act blocks access to documentation. Effectively all government activities are considered secret under the Act.

*Eric Loo, an Australian of Chinese-Malaysian descent, is Senior Lecturer at the Graduate School of Journalism, University of Wollongong in Australia. He has more than 14 years of experience as a journalist and educator in Australia, the Philippines and Malaysia.*

The Act also blocked local scrutiny of the multimillion-dollar loan scandal at Bumiputra Malaysia Finance in the 1970's; the story was broken by *The Asian Wall Street Journal*. The Journal and two other Hong Kong-based publications—*The Far Eastern Economic Review* and *Asiaweek*—all have at one time or another been banned in Malaysia for critical reports based on "unauthorized" information.

Another factor generating self-censorship is the Printing Presses and Publications Act, which empowers the government to revoke a license if a press prints anything "prejudicial to public order, morality, security, public interest or national interest." Penalties range from a one-year jail sentence up to a fine equivalent to U.S. \$10,000 and a three-year jail sentence. When publications approach the date for renewing their licenses, their reporters are particularly cautious in what they write.

In 1987, three national newspapers—the English-language *The Star*; the Chinese-language *Sin Chew Jit Poh*, and the Malay-language *Watan*—were closed under the Internal Security Act and the Sedition Act for reporting on racial aspects of a political conflict between two government parties. They were allowed to reopen in 1988 after changes in editorial management.

Thus, while the government does not censor the news before publication or broadcast, journalists know what can await them if they stray. Veteran journalist Samad Ismail says journalists today are not as ready to test the limits as they were during the fervor of the 1960's and 1970's. Samad was detained for criticizing the government when he edited *The New Straits Times* in the 1970's.

In broadcasting, only the information minister can decide who can own a station and what kind of broadcasting suits the people. The number of choices has multiplied thanks to deregulation since the mid-80's. Malaysia's first cable station, Mega TV, started up in November 1995. The first satellite television service, Measat TV, has started up and will beam 20 channels. Bot Zaharom Naim, a professor of communications, says that "the supposed liberalization



*Despite the many publications at newsstands, Malaysians don't get a diversity of views because the media is controlled by a government-aligned minority.*

has not really resulted in a loosening of government control over television, contrary to the initial beliefs of many. The reverse in fact has happened. Over the last decade, the main forms of control over the media—legal, political and economic—have certainly been tightened."

A government-appointed council is drafting a national communication policy in response to the deregulation of the media and the impact of digital information technology. The draft—its contents haven't been revealed—is to go to the Parliament this year.

The economic ties between the government and the media are clear. The Ministry of Finance owns 30 percent of the consortium that operates Mega TV. Sri Utara, a subsidiary of the investment arm of the Malaysian Indian Congress, a party in the coalition government, owns 5 percent.

Political parties, through their investment companies, control the major newspapers. The Utusan Melayu Group, which publishes three Malay-language dailies, is affiliated with Mahathir's party.

*The Star* is owned by the Malaysian Chinese Association, a party in the ruling coalition. Tamil newspapers are controlled by private interests aligned with the Malaysian Indian Congress. The Fleet Communication Group, an investment arm of Mahathir's party, has controlling interests in TV3 and *New Straits Times*.

The result: clear biases in the media. The social reform movement Aliran said that during the 1995 general elections, mainstream dailies carried government advertisements in full, but accepted only partial advertisements from the opposition parties. Hamdan Adnan, president of the Federation of Malaysian Consumers Association, says while the media ownership pattern is "not proper," the real issue is whether the owners act for their own interests or for the public good. That may be true, but ways to enable new players to enter the industry and nurture what Anwar called an "informed citizenry through a contest of ideas" remain as elusive as ever.

## Thailand

# New Setbacks

BY PAISAL SRICHARATCHANYA

Press freedom in Thailand has been pushed back a few steps since Prime Minister Banharn Silapa-archa came to power after the July 1995 general election. The government has banned a number of critical talk shows on television and radio and has increased pressures on newspapers through libel litigation.

The government drew public criticism from the start because many Cabinet ministers were considered unqualified or were of questionable reputation. The disappointment of the electorate, particularly members of the vocal middle class in Bangkok and provincial towns, has been reflected loud and clear in the Thai press.

In February, the government banned a popular current affairs talk show on a state television network, Channel 11, under the pretext of revamping the network's overall programming. The move sparked a chorus of condemnation by intellectuals.

For several years, the "Mong Tang Moom" ("Different Perspectives") program had provided a forum where members of the audience often criticized the policies and conduct of government ministers. Banharn's predecessor, Chuan Leekpai, took no action against the program. Its cancellation showed the present leadership's insecurity.

Following the same trend, a number of radio talk shows critical of government authorities also have been taken off the air during the past year. Unlike newspapers, which are privately owned, Thailand's radio and television networks are more vulnerable to censorship because almost all of them belong to state civilian or military agencies.

The government probably would have silenced its critics in the print media if had been able to do so. But because it cannot simply close down

newspapers, it has resorted to hitting publishers and editors with a spate of defamation lawsuits.

Banharn and his Chart Thai (Thai Nation) Party last December filed libel action against Siam Post, a Thai-language daily, for publishing a translation of an Agence France-Press story. The story quoted a Swedish newspaper article alleging irregularities in the Thai government procurement of Swedish submarines.

Other Thai newspapers also carried the story but only Siam Post was sued, apparently because of its aggressive and often critical coverage of the government. During its four years of existence, Siam Post has been hit with 15 defamation lawsuits—nearly half of them filed by ministers and senior officials of the current government.

Defamation is a criminal offense punishable by jail terms. (However, convicted editors normally are not jailed but instead put on probation.) Plaintiffs also can file for damages in the Civil Court.

The first finance minister of the Banharn administration, Surakiat Sathienthai, sued Siam Post for defamation and demanded 100 million baht (\$4 million) in damages. Surakiat was dismissed by the prime minister in May, but the libel case remains pending.

The Thai press has not been cowed. In fact, the threats of legal action have been blessings in disguise. They have forced editors to be more cautious and adhere more strictly to professional standards.

Standards have slipped somewhat in the last few years as competition has heated up in Thailand's mass media industry. A proliferation of newspapers and other periodicals, a boom in radio news programming and greater emphasis on news in commercial and cable

television have severely drained the pool of experienced reporters. As a result, there have been instances of unbalanced and sensational reporting. The pressure is on publishers and broadcasters to plow more profits back into training in the newsrooms.

Not all the news is bad, by any means. Independent Television, the country's first independent television station, began broadcasting July 1 with promises of broad, aggressive news coverage. The idea of a politically neutral television station was an outgrowth of a mass pro-democracy uprising that toppled a military junta in 1992.

Press freedom in Thailand has not been achieved overnight. Generations of journalists fought oppressive regimes in the past and brought the press to its prominent position in Thai society today. The press now faces stepped-up pressures from the government, but once this period of adjustment is over, it should emerge with greater confidence and professionalism. ■



*Paisal Sricharatchanya has extensive experience covering Thai politics and business. He was a correspondent, then Bangkok Bureau Chief for The Far Eastern Economic Review from 1982 to 1988. He was Editor-in-Chief of The Bangkok Post from 1989 to 1994.*

# Teaching Western Journalism

By GEOFF MURRAY

A reporter from an Asian country where the press loyally supports an authoritarian government accompanied his prime minister on a European tour some years ago. On the final day, he was invited by the prime minister for an "exclusive interview," which turned out to be full of news and good quotes. At the end of the interview, the reporter expressed his profuse thanks and was about to leave when the prime minister called out: "Oh, by the way, everything I've said is off the record." Exit one thoroughly deflated journalist.

The reporter related the experience in one of my journalism classes where I had said reporters should make every effort to get the information on the record. If the person insists on going off the record, I said, negotiate to minimize the damage to your good quotes. Fine, said the reporter, but how should I have coped with the prime minister's last-minute imposition of new rules? Given the combative nature of the politician concerned, I had to admit that absolutely nothing could have been done.

It was a lesson in how, when coming to Asia, the Western journalism teacher has to appreciate that what works in Dayton or Darlington does not necessarily work in countries where journalists can easily end up in jail for simply carrying out the basics of their craft.

In recent years, governments in countries with little or no tradition of press freedom have been remarkably open in accepting Western trainers. Perhaps they recognize that a better educated press has an important role to play in national development, especially in propagating the messages that governments want to reach the grass roots.

But a teacher should carefully consider certain questions before stepping before a class. Why am I here? To inculcate Western values of democracy and freedom of the press? Or merely to offer help to become a better writer or editor? And what does that mean, "better?"

The trainer has to understand he is no longer on home territory. It's not very sensible to urge students to emulate the British press in exposing the personal peccadilloes of government officials when some of the journalists have just come out of jail for doing exactly that. I've had students who received frequent death threats or who had been jailed and tortured by a previous regime. A trainer who pontificates about the way the press should operate based on conditions "back home" will lose his audience very quickly.

My training experience in Asia began in Singapore at The Straits Times School of Journalism, from 1986 to 1988. I then did training, mostly as a consultant, for the Thomson Foundation in Cambodia, China, India, Laos, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam.

The foundation is a British charity set up by the late Lord Thomson of Fleet (who published *The London Times*) more than 30 years ago to train members of the media in developing countries. Its workload has never been heavier, with requests flooding in from all quarters of the globe.

The foundation does not preach Western journalistic values, and avoids a Eurocentric approach to training. I use samples of writing from the local media for my classroom exercises rather than from Western sources. I cite not *The Liverpool Daily Post* but *The Malay Mail* or *The China Daily*. Rarely would I use a story from a Western newspaper, and then mainly because it was an ex-

ceptionally fine piece of writing that *might* be worth emulating.

One of the foundation's most important programs is a close collaboration with China's state-run Xinhua News Agency. In 1986, an "international journalism training center" was established at Xinhua's Beijing headquarters; several hundred journalists have passed through its doors. The emphasis has been on training young reporters for overseas assignments in one of the bureaus Xinhua maintains in more than 100 countries.

A few Western critics have said all the foundation is doing is to help the Chinese government produce better propaganda. Well, if there *has* to be propaganda, I'd rather have it well written. And you could argue that someone



*Geoff Murray, a Briton, worked for Reuters and other organizations as a correspondent in Asia for 30 years. From 1980 to 1984, he covered Japan and Korea for *The Christian Science Monitor*. He has been teaching journalists for 10 years, runs a business consultancy and has written several books on business in Asia.*

who has been trained to produce "well-written propaganda" might also develop some ability to recognize the weakness of that propaganda and perhaps in some small way seek to make it more creditable.

Any Xinhua student attending the course was, immediately afterwards, required by the local party branch to attend a refresher course on Marxism to balance the Western ideas that might have been imbibed. It was a reminder for the teacher to rein in his more passionate orations on the role of a free press.

In my courses, I emphasize that freedom comes attached with certain responsibilities, particularly in the political climate in many parts of the developing world.

In Britain, journalists tend to believe they aren't doing their job if they're not abrasively confrontational. That doesn't work in Asia. The Asian press may support a government in the interest of national development, while still retaining credibility by speaking for the people. All I, as an outsider, can say is that it is up to the individual editor to decide how far to go in raising issues that the government might not want raised.

It's easy to get passionate on this subject, but I am inevitably brought down to earth by a student saying: "We agree with you entirely, but it is simply not possible for us to practice what you preach."

The task then is to analyze what is considered impossible, and why it is impossible. If nothing else, it may help people narrow the list of taboo areas.

What often gets inexperienced journalists in trouble is their lack of understanding of the difference between fact and opinion. I tell them: let's stick with facts and present them in a way that lets readers judge for themselves. Balanced presentation of both sides of the story is the best way to stay out of trouble. That should be the essence of basic journalism training.

Many Asian media exercise self-censorship, enabling governments to say, "There's no censorship. The press is free to write what it likes." Because often there is no clearly defined line

beyond which the press strays at its peril, reporters tend to stay completely out of the surrounding gray area. I encourage them to edge forward gingerly, test the boundaries and try to sense the moment when they are about to stub their toe. On occasions in Singapore, the press has exercised self-restraint on stories where, it turned out, the government actually wanted some publicity.

So I tell my students: You may have more freedom than you imagine. And you may be able to enlarge the area if you demonstrate a sense of responsibility and win the trust of those in power.

While offering inspiration, one should also clearly tell students that their profession is never an easy one, and that they will create change by chipping away at the monolith rather than charging full tilt at windmills like Don Quixote.

I've emphasized this more in recent years after having seen my own passion for the profession light the fire of idealistic young people, only to have it extinguished by "the system." One result is that I seem to have unwittingly trained almost the entire hotel public relations sector in Singapore.

Another important issue is the reluctance to ask questions. A joke in The Bangkok Post newsroom said the "Five W's" stand for "who, who, who, who and who." One day in 1995, when I was teaching at The Post, two whole pages of domestic news began with the same format: "The minister for X said yesterday," etc. It took a while to convince journalists that there's more to reporting than transcribing verbatim what an official says.

It's hard to overcome the belief that only important people say things worth reporting, and to get across the idea that the man in the street also deserves a prominent place in the news columns. Asia's education system exacerbates this. Students sit quietly taking notes as the lecturer mumbles away, and would never dream of challenging him or seeking clarification. On the first morning of a course, I tell the class I am not a professor but a journalist, and I expect them to do as much talking as I

do, if not more.

The reluctance to ask questions is due not only to the political climates, but also to a respect for one's elders that plays easily into the hands of politicians. Young Asian journalists fear offending the important person being interviewed. And many government officials tell reporters: "There's no need to ask questions. Just write down what I tell you."

Western teachers who try to overcome this often meet with resistance. Essentially, we're asking Asian journalists to be assertive when their culture tells them this is bad.

Still, it's possible for Asian journalists to do a good job without fighting their culture. I tell students: be well-read and well-prepared, force the interviewee to take you seriously by demonstrating a good command of the subject and asking good questions. The secret of asking tough questions is all in presentation, the right words and tone of voice. Persuade the interviewee that it's in his interests to answer your questions, so you can write a better story with greater impact on readers. You can be deferential to the minister while still doing a good job as a journalist.

It is important to the students that I spent many years reporting in Asia. I interviewed many difficult-to-interview people, and always got my story. I worked under the scrutiny of dictatorships but told the truth and stayed out of trouble. I share these experiences with my students to show them I really do understand their difficulties.

Young journalists in Asia today are better educated than their predecessors. What they lack are basic newsgathering and writing skills, and this is what trainers should give them first and foremost. We may discuss the role of the press in Western society, but the appropriateness of that model in Asian society, the issues of a free press, and the claimed right to challenge authority—these matters have to be left to the students to work out in their own way, within their own heritage. The Western press should not be seen as the model to be followed at all costs. ■

# BOOKS

## The Old Glamour Boys of Broadcast News

### The Murrow Boys:

#### Pioneers on the Front Lines of Broadcast Journalism

Stanley Cloud & Lynne Olson

Houghton Mifflin. 445 Pages. \$27.95.

### Events Leading Up to My Death:

#### The Life of a Twentieth Century Reporter

Howard K. Smith

St. Martin's Press. 419 Pages. \$24.95.

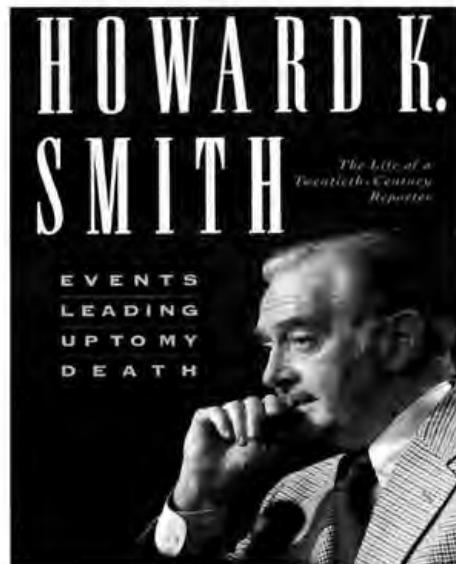
BY RAYMOND A. SCHROTH

Every retired journalist, at the memoir stage of his or her career, must have, looking back, one moment, one great escapade, which, if Hollywood were to make an epic based on his life, sums it all up, shows the star at his best.

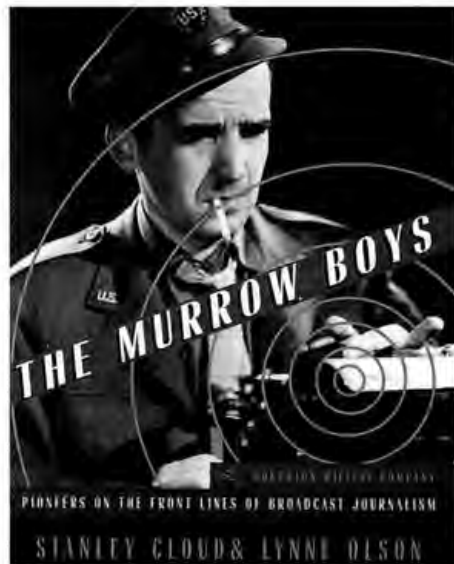
Often it's the fateful coincidence of cunning and chance: The Chicago Tribune's Floyd Gibbons, in 1917, booked passage on the Laconia hoping the Huns would torpedo it; and, sure enough, they did, he survived, and got one of the great war stories of the century.

The great moment can also be one clouded with some ambiguity—a personal or moral rather than an unalloyed public or political triumph. Edward R. Murrow's famous "See It Now" documentary on Senator Joseph R. McCarthy in 1954 has become a textbook example of moral courage. Yet some of his colleagues, like Martin Agronsky and Eric Sevareid, who had borne the heat of the McCarthyism battle, had grown restless waiting for the Oracle to take a stand. Having stood up, Murrow himself began a long fall out of CBS chief Bill Paley's favor and, by 1961, out of radio and TV news, for which, more than any 20th Century man, he had set the standards.

Howard K. Smith's great moment was certainly Birmingham, Alabama,



1961, filling in for the departed Murrow on a CBS Reports documentary on that city's racial violence. Raised in New Orleans, a Tulane track star and Rhodes Scholar who had witnessed the rise of Nazism in Germany, when Smith saw Klan bullies pound black and white Freedom Riders with lead pipes and brass knuckles, he told his radio audience that the Birmingham brutes were like Nazi thugs and he tried to end his TV report with the Edmund Burke quote, "The only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing." The CBS brass, long fed up with Smith's "editorializing," nixed Burke, and Smith soon got the message that his career at CBS—where he had



reigned since World War II as one of the glamorous "Murrow Boys"—was finished.

Because I had interviewed Smith and his wife, Bennie, in their Washington home while he was working on his memoirs, as well as Murrow protégés Larry LeSueur and Mary Marvin Breckinridge Patterson, and gotten to know Stanley Cloud and Lynne Olson while researching my own biography of Eric Sevareid, I have looked forward to these two books for three years.

Typing away in his towering study, framed by his shelves of leather-bound books, Smith described his memoirs to Olson and Cloud as a "history of the 20th Century." With equal modesty, William L. Shirer called his memoirs

"Twentieth Century Journey." There's a clue here as to how the Boys came to see their roles as they strode across history's stage. They lived their times so furiously that they embodied an age as well as chronicled it.

But Smith's oddly titled "Events Leading Up to My Death" is more successful when he writes about himself—his Louisiana upbringing, his absorption in the political turmoil of a young person's Oxford and Germany between 1937 and 1941—than when he tries to summarize world events, salted with famous people encounters: "The boy's name was John Kennedy."

As one who has just completed 10 years in New Orleans, I understand him when he says, "New Orleans was a hard city to feel negative about." But he gave it a good try. He skewers the fundamental corruption of Mardi Gras: "Some people's whole year was made or ruined depending on invitations to the lavish balls." Setting their values on this structure, they lost their capacity to deal with the real world. For a few years a Tulane track star, he played the fraternity game—until his fraternity turned down both a Jew he had sponsored and a working man's son. Himself the son of an unemployed working man, Howard had had enough.

Stanley Cloud, a Time editor, and his spouse, Lynne Olson, an Associated Press and Baltimore Sun correspondent, have had both the foresight and the luck to begin their project while enough of the Murrow Boys and their colleagues—like Smith, Larry LeSueur, Shirer, Richard C. Hottelet, Mary Marvin Breckinridge Patterson (the pioneering female "Boy"), Janet Murrow, and broadcasting historian Ed Bliss were still on hand. They have not just read archives and scripts but also listened to rare recordings of original broadcasts wherever they have survived. As they point out, some of the most eloquent reports—of D-Day, the Russian front, Eric Sevareid in China—never got through.

Reporting World War II was a battle not just for democracy's survival but against censorship, against the home office's narrow definition of "objectivity," and ultimately against the limitations of a primitive technology that had

never before been asked to throw so many human voices so often across the world. In 1943, when Sevareid emerged from the Burma jungle, three weeks after a plane crash into headhunter territory that became one of the psychological turning points of his life, he delivered a breathless account of his ordeal, only to conclude, "Now I am so tired cranking this machine [his radio] that I can send no more."

As almost everyone who remembers broadcasting history or the "old CBS" mythology knows, the Morrow Boys were the "band of brothers" recruited by the young CBS London representative Edward R. Murrow in the first days of World War II. They created the first morning news round-up of live reports from various capitals, risked their lives broadcasting the London Blitz from rooftops and landing or jumping with troops at Algiers, Anzio, and the Rhine. Most important, they were not hired for their good looks or voices—though several were dazzlingly handsome—but for their brains, their mastery of the language and powers of analysis. After the war and all the way through Vietnam and Watergate, thanks to the second generation which included Walter Cronkite and Marvin Kalb, their prestige made CBS News, in radio and TV, the standard bearer of the profession.

They were, by Cloud-Olson's count, 11: William L. Shirer, Eric Sevareid, Thomas Grandin, Larry LeSueur, Cecil Brown, Charles Collingwood, Mary Marvin Breckinridge, Howard K. Smith, Richard C. Hottelet, Winston Burdett, Bill Downs. Alas, they acquired the status of a mystical clique, and several great correspondents hired by Murrow, like David Schoenbrun and Daniel Schorr, don't make the cut because they weren't part of the club from the beginning.

Aside from an occasional colloquialism or cliché, like Brooklyn Eagle staffers "covered the waterfront like a blanket," Cloud and Olson have told their story brilliantly, weaving together dozens of lives in a tapestry of political and journalism history. Stories already told by their participants—like Smith's last train from Berlin, Brown's survival when the Japanese sank the British cruiser

Repulse in 1941 off Singapore, and Sevareid's Burma ordeal—they retell with freshness and verve. They record too, though without an excess of delectatio morosa, the Boys' sexual escapades. Many were adulterers, not just in the we-might-be-killed-tonight moral anarchy of the Blitz survivors but in a life-long inability to be faithful to one person and make a marriage work.

Murrow is central to the story without overpowering it, just as he did not overpower his recruits but rather asserted his leadership by nurturing each one's talent, while they adored him, like fatherless boys, the authors suggest, competing for his love. The authors' favorites, the reader suspects, are the glamorous Collingwood—"a beautiful young man with golden curls," Sevareid called him—and LeSueur, who endured the unglamorous assignments, like the isolation of the Russian winter, sustaining his boss by his good humor and loyalty.

Cast aside. Indeed, that's how most of the Murrow Boys ended up feeling about themselves; about CBS; about Bill Paley, their patron turned money-power grubber; about television—a medium to which they could not adapt and refused to adapt to them; and, to some degree, about one another. Collingwood and LeSueur remained rivals to the end. Murrow resented Shirer for leaving the war zone early to cash in on his celebrity. Shirer never forgave Murrow for not backing him when his sponsor dropped him for being too liberal. Sevareid never forgave Shirer for not forgiving Murrow. Smith never forgave CBS for letting him go and ABC for shunting him aside.

If it's any consolation to them, wherever they are, their stories have become gospels. True, the original Gospels get air time only around Christmas and Easter, but every once in a while a young journalist hears their stories and thinks differently about his or her work. ■

*Raymond A. Schroth, S.J., author of "The American Journey of Eric Sevareid" (Steerforth Press) and "The Eagle and Brooklyn" (Greenwood Press), is Assistant Dean of Fordham College.*

## A Classic Portrait of Southern Politics

### The Secrets of the Hopewell Box

Stolen Elections, Southern Politics, and a City's Coming of Age

James D. Squires

Times Books. 309 Pages. \$25.

BY WAYNE GREENHAW

James D. Squires, the journalist and political adviser, has first of all written a major classic portrait of the Southern political frontier, right down to the first-person descriptions of "blue-steel automatics and nickel-plated revolvers, some stuck handle-up in belt holsters and others hung upside down under their arms in shoulder harnesses."

At first I thought I was reading a descriptive account of Pancho Villa's makeshift troops from a child's viewpoint, but I was brought home to the environs of Nashville quickly as the author poured a solid foundation around the Phillips-Robinson Funeral Home, which became the centerpiece of political control for Garner Robinson and the rock-hard machine he built and operated for about three decades after World War II. Although Garner Robinson was the best friend of James D. Squires's granddaddy and the grandfather, Dave White, was involved up to his own underarm holster, the author manages to give not only an insider's look at one of the most corrupt political machines that operated successfully for such a long while, but also a strong objective account of the day-to-day workings of such hard-fisted, smooth-talking, sleight-of-hand operators as:

- Garner Robinson, who became sheriff.

- Jake Sheridan, "who was a man of neither intellectual mission nor passionate political conviction. A true Scotch-Irishman, Jake saw politics as the road to wealth and respectability. Government jobs were a currency in which to traffic."

- Elkin Garfinkle, "a little gem of a man, with an elfish presence and a courtly manner. He had prominent,

bushy eyebrows, twinkling eyes, and the habit of wearing his top coat thrown around his shoulders like a cape, as if it had been placed there by his sister Frances on the way out the door, which it often had been. Never married, he lived with one or more of his eight sisters all his life." Garfinkle was the Jewish lawyer who, like Jake, would never run for office but who familiarized himself thoroughly with election law and the workings of both the city and the county. "Like [Boss] Crump [of Memphis], being an anonymous, behind-the-scenes political influence appealed to him."

With remarkable detail, Squires shows the intricate maneuvering of the three wheeler-dealers. Not unlike the late Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill's proclamation that "all politics is local," for courthouse politician Jake Sheridan "politics was a matter of personal friendship."

"The Secrets of the Hopewell Box" is in itself a minuscule history of the American South. Having been beaten to its knees in the Civil War and punished severely during Reconstruction, the South suffered setback after setback in the Great Depression, before finally being given equal opportunity following World War II.

For Dave White, what his family managed to gain during World War I had been wiped out in the Depression. After he was drafted at age 37 in World War II, he came out to the best job he had ever had: state trooper with "a shiny black Sam Browne belt with a swivel holster and in it the polished blue-steel walnut-handled .38-caliber revolver that was standard issue from his employer, Governor Jim Nance

### THE SECRETS OF THE HOPEWELL BOX



*Stolen Elections, Southern Politics, and a City's Coming of Age*

JAMES D. SQUIRES

McCord. On his chest and above the glistening black bill of his olive green gabardine hat were twin gold shields that authorized him to enforce the laws of Tennessee." Armed with such lawman-style accouterments, White, when he was called on during the election in November of 1945, almost single-handedly made sure the votes in the Hopewell ballot box in Davidson County went strong enough for Garner Robinson that he could not help but win the strongly challenged sheriff's election. In fact, it was pointed out by *The Nashville Tennessean* that more people voted in the tiny hamlet of Hopewell than actually lived there. All day long, it was reported, a lone state highway patrolman brought carload after carload of voters to the ballot box to cast their votes. The final tabulation at Hopewell showed 4 votes for one challenger, 18 for another, and 304 for Garner Robinson.



Although the losers petitioned the election board, asking that the Hopewell box be thrown out, the board ignored the request. Garner Robinson was declared winner. Squires writes, "To American politicians of the forties, cheating in elections was like cheating on your wife. Not everybody did it, but those who did viewed it as perfectly okay as long as you didn't get caught. Unlike adultery there wasn't even an applicable commandment. Politicians were more likely to spend a sleepless night over having lost an election than for having stolen one."

It is with this kind of off-handed political corruption that Sheridan, Garfinkle, and Robinson operated the government. When it became necessary they drove the 200 miles to Memphis to consult with the master, Boss Crump, as they did in the early 1950's when they all joined hands to elect Crump's "gorgeous little stooge," Frank Goad Clement, a 32-year-old former FBI agent and a lawyer with "an actor's face, a big booming voice and the brashness of a daylight burglar," governor of Tennessee.

Throughout their heydays of power, the trio controlled the election process and the vast system of payoffs with jobs and positions and contracts. Penetrating several layers of government, they ultimately ran the organized criminal underworld: whiskey, gambling and prostitution.

Exiled in the late 1950's but still managing to pull strings here and there to hold on to a small semblance of power, after they had also squirreled away considerable wealth, Garner Robinson walked out of his funeral parlor in 1961 and ran for the Tennessee General Assembly. Robinson replaced his son Gale, who had been elected in 1957 but decided after his second term to return to his law practice.

Through the maneuvering Squires tells his personal story of going to work for The Tennessean and seeing the civil rights reporting of a young New York journalist named David Halberstam and the emergence as editor of John Seigenthaler, who had spent a year at Harvard as a Nieman Fellow. The Ten-

nessean waged war on the machine. "Crouched in principle, defined by the searing issue of race, and fought by some of the most prominent and colorful characters on the national scene, the war wrecked lives, ruined reputations and left political carnage piled high in its wake. And never did the vanquished go down more stubbornly or count up more quickly than in 1962," Squires telegraphs his reader as he bores straight into the combat. From exposing the tax system put in place through the years by the machine's leaders to uncovering the bootlegging and anti-black shenanigans of the organization to showing exactly how the illegal elections had been going on through the years, The Tennessean did its job with exuberance.

On the scene emerged a bright and handsome and squeaky-clean candidate for U.S. Congress, State Senator Richard Fulton, backed by The Tennessean "lukewarmly and as much out of dislike for [Mayor] J. Carlton] Loser as anything else." On election night, Fulton had an 80-vote lead with 310 absentee ballots still uncounted—"all from a single ward in the city—the one controlled by old Charlie Riley and Eugene 'Little Evil' Jacobs." The machine was starting its work anew but The Tennessean had already put "a fierce young reporter named Bill Kovach, successor to the feared Halberstam, who had just left for The New York Times" on the story. Jacobs, a down-home good-old-boy of the first order, bragged to Kovach that he had absentee ballots "right here...is what's gonna beat your boy Dickie Fulton." What he actually had were applications for absentee ballots, and Kovach discovered that the number was 218, compared to 194 for the rest of the county. Kovach checked the totals of absentee ballots for the ward from previous elections. Kovach and team questioned numerous persons in the ward who told them that Little Evil came around and "we just signed our names...they did the marking for us." Headlines on the day after election read: "2nd Ward Dead Men Vote." Ultimately, reform broke the machine's back. Fulton was elected. In the 1970's, Fulton, who had been exemplary as a

reform representative and one of two Southern congressmen who voted for the Voting Rights Act and survived reelection, ran for mayor when Mayor Beverly Briley retired. Again, the last essence of the machine ran a candidate against him. Again, they tried to move in on the Old Hickory voting booth. But Fulton impounded the ballots before any of the old shenanigans could once again take place. Again, Fulton won.

For Squires, the years that followed at The Tennessean were Camelot, with John Seigenthaler his King Arthur. "The sense of purpose clings to the young from such high-minded pursuits, and I was covered forever with its residue, as Seigenthaler undoubtedly had been when Kennedy sent him to Alabama to protect the Freedom Riders. For him and the other white Southerners it was the civil war of their time, a mission to free black Americans, the modern American city and the political process itself from the imprisoning inertia of the last hundred years." As one who watched and reported and became a part of my native South from the backyards of Governor George C. Wallace's Alabama, I know that the writer is exactly on target. He reports with vigor and style. As he states himself, his story "is an epic saga of the urban revolution in America and the birth of a two-party South. It is a crucial chapter in the life of a city that became the breeding ground for the civil rights movement and the launching pad for what is perhaps the most significant political development of the century—the equalization of voting rights that shattered tradition and remade the country's political map." ■

*Wayne Greenhaw, a 1973 Nieman Fellow, is the author of seven books and two plays.*

## Reader's Digest, Not Daily Press, Led Fight Against Smoking

**Ashes to Ashes:**

**America's Hundred-Year Cigarette War, the Public Health, and the Unabashed Triumph of Philip Morris**

Richard Kluger

Knopf. 807 Pages. \$35.

BY ROBERT LENZNER

There is some marvelous writing in Richard Kluger's "Ashes to Ashes." Kluger frighteningly describes the act of lighting up a cigarette: "the magical burst of flame, the searing intake to fill the void within, the rasp on the tracheal tissue on the way down, and finally the glorious expulsion of aromatic clouds to fill one's entire immediate surround."

There are also fascinating revelations about the seduction of tobacco that make smokers' suicide pacts with cigarettes personally more understandable. Cigarettes, for example, sustained morale and relieved stress during the two world wars. "You ask me what we need to win this war. I answer tobacco as much as bullets," General John J. Pershing, Commander of the American Expeditionary Forces in World War I exclaimed, when asked for his priorities.

Kluger also explains elements of the inner drive for smoking: tobacco, we have learned, is both a stimulant and a sedative. It speeds up bodily functions, mainly the flow of adrenaline. Smokers are able to endure electric shocks without recognizing the pain because they were tranquilized by the smoking experience.

So much for the benefits of tobacco.

Kluger dishes the dirt in painstaking fashion without raising his voice. The indictment is there. It just runs for 807 pages. There are advantages to this procedure. Decades of obfuscation, propaganda, delay and outright mendacity are not just bludgeoned into you, as on "60 Minutes."

Layers of medical truth unfold from research panels, from congressional hearings and from protracted litigation. A sense of amazement tinged with out-

rage smolders. Kluger is brilliant at weaving the business story together with the health story. This is a process that dignifies his work, and, in the end, it lends "Ashes to Ashes" great moral weight. You realize, with excruciating frustration, that the battle for the truth is still going on—and may always be going on. Only today the battle is going on in courtrooms, where plaintiffs' lawyers are trying to prove fresh claims based on old evidence that nicotine is a drug that addicts smokers. There's also the chance the Food and Drug Administration will obtain jurisdiction over tobacco. It's very much a tale without a neat resolution.

So much has been known for so long. The *New England Journal of Medicine*, for example, published a devastating report on the ravages of cigarette smoke in 1956.

Though it was a private memo, a Philip Morris research director called for development of a "medically acceptable" cigarette in 1961. In other words, the company's most popular consumer product, Marlboro, was known to be not precisely "medically acceptable."

Unfortunately, there weren't whistle blowers 40 years ago. But would *The New York Times* or *The Wall Street Journal* have published the quotation then, if they'd gotten hold of it?

"All too often in the choice between the physical health of consumers and the financial well-being of business, concealment is chosen over disclosure, sales over safety, and money over morality," a federal judge ruled in 1992.

This phrasing could well be the subtitle of Kluger's book because he has portrayed the way dense forces of concealment have delayed the forces of disclosure these many decades. Politi-



America's Hundred-Year Cigarette War,  
the Public Health, and the Unabashed Triumph of Philip Morris

**RICHARD KLUGER**

cal influence, powerful advertising images and varying degrees of deception helped the industry, especially Philip Morris, prosper all this while.

Kluger is brutal about how the power to advertise is the power to misrepresent. For example, in the 1920's, R. J. Reynolds claimed that "each successive Camel you smoke brings a fresh pleasure no matter how constantly you smoke." And Pall Mall asserted that its superlong product "gentles the smoke." Liggett & Myers proclaimed its cigarettes were "just what the doctor ordered."

Just what the doctor ordered? They must have been kidding.

In the beginning it was understandable that the forces of regulation remained quiet. By 1930 there were only 2,357 known cases of lung cancer in the nation. It was different by January 1964

when the Surgeon General stated that "cigarette smoking is a health hazard of sufficient importance in the United States to warrant appropriate remedial action."

Howard Cullman, then Philip Morris president, adamantly responded that "we don't accept the idea that there are harmful agents in tobacco."

The industry's stonewalling worked. It did a great job of slowing down the revelation of truth—that the more you smoke, the greater your chances of dying prematurely.

Some academics sold their souls, too. Carl Coleman Seltzer, a research fellow at Harvard, wrote articles for 30 years arguing that the scientific case against smoking was flawed.

What about the media's role? Kluger credits Reader's Digest for leading the crusade against smoking. He said that The New York Times ignored documents obtained in 1988 during a trial against the tobacco companies.

The battle continues; there are five grand jury investigations of the tobacco industry currently in process. They involve alleged perjury and possible fraud and concealment of documents. To his credit Kluger, author of a highly respected book on The New York Herald Tribune, has delivered a penetrating literary indictment of the crimes of the past. ■

*Robert Lenzner is a Senior Editor of Forbes magazine.*

## On Stereotypes, Including Journalists

### Images That Injure

#### Pictorial Stereotypes in the Media

Paul Martin Lester, Editor

Praeger Publishers. 282 Pages. \$59.95 hc, \$19.95 pb.

This is a handy reference book on how TV and print media, entertainment and advertising images classify and stereotype people. Despite the current distrust of political correctness, it is still crucial to understand how the way people are portrayed or described in public reflects the fairness or lack of fairness of our society.

In brief chapters written mainly by journalism professors from around the country, the book covers ethnic, gender, age, physical, sexual and miscellaneous stereotypes.

Some of the examples used in the essays could be more current. For instance, a 1980 study is used to show that "male college students who watched an episode of 'Charlie's Angels'—which featured three beautiful women—were more critical in their subsequent evaluation of pictures of potential dates than were men who had not watched the show." Would that still be valid today, 16 years later? Also, some writers stop short of a deeper analysis of the causes and problems of stereotyping.

However, there is a more current and thorough chapter on gays and a look at how journalists themselves are treated. They suffer the same fate as everyone else under discussion—faced with stereotypes that lump them together without consideration of diversity or complexity or individuality. They are "the media"—"a singular, monolithic (and distinctly non-pluralistic) institution with a mind and values of its own in which all news employees are grouped together, no matter who they work for or what they do." But unlike the other stereotyped groups who are encouraged by the authors to speak out about their particular situations, journalists are encouraged to ignore their stereotyping and, instead, work at being better journalists.

While much of the information in "Images that Injure" has probably been assimilated by now, the book has added value: useful suggestions on what to be aware of, a good bibliography and extensive footnotes for further reading.

■—Lois Fiore

## About Journalism

**Slick Spins and Fractured Facts: How Cultural Myths Distort the News.** Caryl Rivers. Columbia University Press. 250 Pages. \$24.95.

**It's Alive: How America's Oldest Newspaper Cheated Death and Why It Matters.** Steven Cuozzo. Times Books. 342 Pages. \$25.

**Religion and Mass Media: Audiences and Adaptations.** Daniel A. Stout and Judith M. Buddenbaum. Sage Publications. 294 Pages. \$22.95 (pb).

**Nightline: History in the Making and the Making of History.** Ted Koppel and Kyle Gibson. Times Books. 478 Pages. \$25.

**From Vagabond to Journalist: Edgar Snow in Asia 1928-1941.** Robert M. Farnsworth. University of Missouri Press. 451 Pages. \$39.95.

**The Black Press in the Middle West, 1865-1985.** Henry Lewis Suggs, Ed. Greenwood Press. 416 Pages. \$69.50.

**Media at War: Radio's Challenge to the Newspapers, 1924-1939.** Gwenyth L. Jackaway. Praeger. 184 Pages. \$49.95.

**The Chain Gang: One Newspaper Versus the Gannett Empire.** Richard McCord. University of Missouri Press. 290 Pages. \$24.95.

**Violence as Obscenity: Limiting the Media's First Amendment Protection.** Kevin W. Saunders. Duke University Press. 246 Pages. \$49.95 hc, \$17.95 pb.

**Journalist as Reformer: Henry Demarest Lloyd and Wealth Against Commonwealth.** Richard Digby-Junger. Greenwood Press. 196 Pages. \$57.95.

## Ignoring Good Sources

BY MURRAY SEEGER

Regardless how you frame it, stupid, the economy is always the issue. Unfortunately, reporters miss the integral connection between politics and economics. Like Siamese twins, the two cannot be separated.

There are books around that explore economic issues in detail, but few of them make an impression on journalists unless they carry marquee names. Even some of the better op-ed pieces written by economists are ignored as sources for good quotes or story ideas. Instead, a few tried and true issues are trivialized by excessive exposure or forced into left-right wedges.

Instead of insights, reporters look for quick, sharp quotes even if the source was quoted the day before in five publications. Thus, reporters are saved from exercising judgments.

These sources—overwhelmingly men—are located mostly in Washington or New York. Those most often quoted work for institutes or centers that want their spokesmen quoted to impress financial donors and sponsors. Their names are spelled clearly, but ideological biases are often unidentified.

The overuse of a small cadre of economic wizards deprives readers of new, perhaps unorthodox ideas for dealing with economic growth and unemployment, the federal budget and Medicare and Social Security financing.

One overlooked book, "Fat and Mean" by David M. Gordon, explored a rarely discussed practice of U.S. corporations of employing too many supervisors and paying them well by under-rewarding their work forces. The wave of recent white-collar downsizing was inaccurately reported, Gordon argued, since corporations fired people "in piecemeal and often shotgun fashion, rarely acting upon clear and considered strategies for changing their ways of doing business."

Facts were lost, he wrote, because "the media, and especially business journalists, report *about* and *for* the top strata of the occupational ladder." (Italics in original.) "When business eliminates the jobs of workers on the shop and office floor, it is small news. The media appear to pay disproportionate attention to downsizing toward the top rungs of the occupational hierarchy because these workers are disproportionately their friends and relatives and readers and listeners." Unfortunately, Gordon, who taught at the New School for Social Research, died before he could promote his analysis.

Jeremy Rifkin, president of the Foundation on Economic Trends in Washington, argued in "The End of Work" that new technology is destroying jobs faster than economic growth can create replacements.

"Global unemployment has now reached the highest level since the great depression of the 1930's," Rifkin wrote. "That [800 million] figure is likely to rise sharply between now and

the turn of the century as millions of new entrants into the work force find themselves without jobs, many victims of a technology revolution that is fast replacing human beings with machines in virtually every sector and industry of the global economy."

One can find support for Rifkin's position by visiting the many pockets of excess unemployment in this country and reading of continued unrest in parts of the world like North Africa and the Middle East where millions of young people have no work and turn to political and religious extremism to vent their frustrations.

It is easier to find positions such as those of Susan Lee, an economics journalist who published "Hands Off," contending that the widely-accepted teachings of John Maynard Keynes "are just plain wrong." She wants a minimum of government interference in economic policymaking, a popular view among many contemporary columnists. "Such an environment would include big-ticket items like low marginal tax rates, which strengthen incentives to work, save, and invest; less regulation, which frees up time and money for more productive uses; a sensible and steady monetary policy, which keeps inflation at low, predictable levels; less government spending, which keeps money in the private sector where it can be spent more efficiently; and free trade, which keeps U.S. business competitive and cost-effective and delivers lower prices and more choices to consumers."

In this Reaganite universe, we have to accept "that bad things happen," Lee writes. "They are lamentable. But we should not ask the government to underwrite our mistakes."

Robert J. Samuelson, who writes for Newsweek and The Washington Post, published a book, "The Good Life and Its Discontents," filled with statistics on how much American life has improved over 50 years. Americans, he says, are spoiled and deluded in thinking this progress can continue. He emphasizes the need to take "personal responsibility."

The problem with this debate is these Pollyannish arguments get a mass audience—Newsweek made Samuelson's book a cover story—while disagreeing observers and analysts of equal or superior credentials are limited to smaller audiences. A responsible journalist should never substitute statistical analysis for eyeball observation.

One of the few iconoclastic economists who is widely reported, Paul Krugman of Stanford University, observed: "All of us have our blind spots. But when a commentator as intelligent and influential as Samuelson chooses to avert his eyes from the disturbing trends in our economy and, above all our politics, it may do real harm." ■

*Murray Seeger is a 1962 Nieman Fellow.*

# NIEMAN NOTES

COMPILED BY LOIS FIORE

## *The Reporter Turns Columnist*

BY EILEEN MCNAMARA

One weekend last summer, I dropped off my son at a Cape Cod cottage where he was to spend a few days with one of his second grade pals. Various members of the extended family shouted greetings from the lawn, the dock and the beach as we arrived, but grandfather was nowhere to be seen. He'd driven north over the Bourne Bridge when he heard I was coming.

Cape Cod "isn't big enough for both of us," the Republican stalwart had announced upon learning that his grandson's overnight guest was the son of this liberal Boston Globe columnist.

I am still shaking my head. A year after my transformation from reporter to columnist, I have not adjusted to my public persona or to passions my 800 words twice a week can incite. It's not that I don't take myself seriously. But no matter that The Boston Globe gives me a bigger audience than my father once commanded in our parlor, I consider what I write to be no more or less than one person's opinion.

Strong opinions, admittedly. Strong opinions are in the air around these parts. When I was growing up, kids were either pulled out of school to attend opening day at Fenway Park or parked in front of the television set until past midnight to watch the national political conventions. There were plenty of families addicted to both sports and politics, of course, but those impassioned by neither were likely to have moved to Boston from some other part of the country.

In our house, politics ruled, but opinion didn't count for much. "I don't care what you think," my father used to say. "What do you know? Where are the facts?"

The more psychologically inclined in my family trace my reporting career to that supper table grilling. I didn't leave that training behind when the newspaper gave me a piece of real estate on the front of the Metro section. I fill the space with the facts as I know them and the interpretation I give them. I might pay more attention to public policy issues than most readers but I have no lock on the truth. I look at the column as the start of a conversation, not the end of the discussion.

It's easy enough to wag your finger at the readers—and in my rookie year I have been guilty of that more than once—but how much better to tell them something they might not know—that arsenic is one of the additives in cigarettes, for instance—or to take them somewhere they might not have been—inside a juvenile lockup, maybe.

I learned long ago as a reporter that there is no greater privilege than to have people share their stories with you. I tell those stories now to make a point, my point, but it is a point I'd better be prepared to defend with something more than opinion. Readers are a lot like my father, I've learned. They'll heed or dismiss me, depending on how well I support my case.

It's not enough to demand that more women be appointed to the bench. Better to describe a case in which male

judges ruled that rape does not amount to "serious bodily injury."

It's not enough to decry the lack of insurance coverage for the treatment of depression. Better to recount the experience of a 28-year-widow told by an HMO that she had "recovered" from the accidental death of her husband after only eight weeks.

It's not enough to question whether a state's child protection agency is diligent in its search for suitable foster homes. Better to tell the story of the nurse and the professor rejected for 10 years while vulnerable children were being placed in the homes of ex-convicts.

Tell enough stories, well enough, and a reader might even get the idea that the column isn't about *me*, it's about *her*. Tell enough stories, varied enough, and a reader might decide the columnist he despised last week made sense this week.

An aversion to dogma and a sense of humor, especially the self-effacing sort, have proven the straightest path toward a real dialogue with readers, who rightly protest the moment they detect a tone of preachiness.

Some of their expectations, I'll never meet. I do not share the confessional impulse that so characterizes the age. I balk at first person columns, even though my reminiscences about a downtown department store, the death of my father and a trip to a basketball game with my son generated the most mail from readers hungry to connect with the person behind the column of gray type.

## Gene Roberts, Cub Reporter

The two essential requirements for the job seem to me to be enough confidence to say what you think directly and enough humility to know that what you have to say isn't *the* truth; it's only *your* truth.

To remind myself, I keep this quote from Walter Lippmann above my desk:

"What kills political writing is this absurd pretense that you are delivering a great utterance. You never do. You are just a puzzled man making notes about what you think. You are not building the Pantheon, then why act like a graven image? You are drawing sketches in the sand which the sea will wash away.

"The truth is you're afraid to be wrong. And so you put on these airs and use these established phrases, knowing that they will sound familiar and will be respected. But fear of being wrong is a disease. You cover and qualify and elucidate, you speak vaguely, you mumble because you are afraid of the sound of your own voice. And then you apologize for your timidity by frowning learnedly at anyone who honestly regards thought as an adventure, who strikes ahead and takes his chances. Whatever truth you contribute to this world will be one lucky shot in a thousand misses. You cannot be right by holding your breath and taking precautions."

So far, no one has accused me of timidity. But can I strike ahead and take chances without driving grandfather straight over the Bourne Bridge? I'm still new at this game. Maybe next summer Cape Cod will be big enough for both of us. ■

*Eileen McNamara, a 1988 Nieman Fellow, is a columnist for The Boston Globe.*

—1953—

**Calvin W. Mayne**, 70, died at The Cleveland Clinic Foundation on March 4, nine weeks after extensive surgery to repair two aortic aneurysms.

Mayne spent most of his professional life with the Gannett Co. He was Editor of the Editorial Page of The Rochester Times Union for several years. Following that, he joined the company as Corporate Director of Communica-

**Gene Roberts**, Managing Editor of The New York Times, was awarded the 1996 Columbia Journalism Award, the highest honor given by Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism.

On May 15, Joan Konner, the school's departing Dean, presented the award to Roberts, a 1962 Nieman Fellow, at a ceremony which also conferred master's degrees on 200 students.

Here are excerpts from Roberts's speech:

"My first newspaper job was with The Goldsboro News Argus which, to the underinformed, is the leading newspaper in Wayne County, North Carolina. It then had a circulation of 9,000. I wrote its farm column—'Rambling in Rural Wayne.' I wrote about the first farmer of the season to transplant tobacco plants from the seed bed to the field; about the season's first cotton blossom; of picnic tables sagging at family reunions under the weight of banana sandwiches, banana pudding, chicken pastry, sage sausage, fried chicken and collard greens. I wrote of hail storms and drought. I once wrote about a sweet potato that looked like General DeGaulle.

"The editor of the paper was Henry Belk, then in his sixties and sightless.... He cared passionately about the paper, and it was read to him word for word over the years by a succession of high school students....

"Mr. Belk was nothing if not demanding. Often when he heard my

tions, then eventually moved into the Gannett Foundation (now called The Freedom Forum). He spent 15 years there in grant administration and developed innovative programs for community-based funding. He was Vice President of Grants Administration when he retired in 1990.

Mayne resided in Rochester, N.Y., with Nancy, his wife of 43 years. In



*Gene Roberts at The Press-Enterprise Lecture in California last February.*

footfall in the morning he would summon me to his cubicle and criticize the 'Rambling in Rural Wayne' column I had written the day before. On too many days, alas, my writing was insufficiently descriptive. 'You aren't making me see,' Mr. Belk would say. 'Make me see.' In an effort to force me to be graphic and vivid, he made me end every column with a paragraph labeled, 'Today's Prettiest Sight.' Let me tell you: it's tough to go into a pool room in your hometown for an end-of-the-work-day beer known as the guy who writes 'Today's Prettiest Sight,' but I persevered.

"It took me years to appreciate it, but there is no better admonition to the writer than 'make me see.' There is no truer blueprint for successful writing than making your readers see. It is the essence of great writing." ■

addition to his wife he is survived by three daughters and three grandchildren.

—1977—

**Hennie Van Deventer** writes to announce the publication of his second book, "Flaters en Kraters," which in English is "Blunders and Blunders." Van Deventer says, "As the previ-

ous one, 'Scoops en Skandes' (English: 'Scoops and Shames'), 'Flaters' documents things that can go terribly awry in the daily toils of the poor journalist. Some emanate from my own career—I have to admit blushingly."

Van Deventer is Manager-Newspaper section of *Nasionale Pers* in Cape Town, South Africa.

—1981—

**David Lamb** says that after biking across the country (3,145 miles, described in his book "Over the Hills"), "friends figured I'd retire my bike to the closet and never want to pedal again. Not true. Sandy [his wife, Sandy Northrop] and I just returned from Ireland where we biked for a week with a dozen friends, and I commute to work on my bike daily—10 miles from my home to The Los Angeles Times bureau in Washington. All that said, I should add that I never did become a health nut and have managed to hold on to all my old, bad habits."

—1982—

**Alex Jones** and his wife, Susan Tift, were recently named Eugene C. Patterson Professors of the Practice of Journalism at Duke University in Durham, N.C., to begin in January 1998. Tift and Jones will teach two classes at Duke each semester, commuting from their home in New York. Their interest is in the impact of corporate ownership of the media, new media technologies and the changing demographics of the newsroom.

Jones is host of "On the Media," the award-winning interview and call-in program produced for National Public Radio by WNYC, New York, in association with The Poynter Institute for Media Studies. He is also host and Executive Editor of "Media Matters," funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. From 1983 to 1993 Jones reported on the press for The New York Times. He won a Pulitzer Prize in 1987 for his coverage of the collapse of the Bingham family ownership of The Louisville Courier-Journal and The Louisville Times.

Tift was a staff writer and Associate

Editor for Time magazine from 1982 to 1991, covering politics, economics, foreign affairs and education. She was a Fellow at the Institute of Politics at Harvard University in 1982.

Together, Jones and Tift wrote "The Patriarch: The Rise and Fall of the Bingham Dynasty," published in 1991, and are currently working on a biography of the Ochs and Sulzberger families.

—1984—

**Nina Bernstein**, a reporter for The New York Times, won a George Polk Award for excellence in metropolitan reporting in 1995. She was cited with Lizette Alvarez, Frank Bruni and Joyce Purnick for their coverage of New York City's Child Welfare Administration in its handling of the case of a six-year old child who was beaten to death.

The George Polk Award is given by Long Island University for courage and resourcefulness in gathering information and skill in relating a story.

—1986—

**Roberto Eisenmann**, **Gustavo Gorriti**, and **Bill Kovach** ('89) are members of the Founding Board of the Latin American Journalist Program which will be dedicated to the continuing education of practicing journalists in Latin America. The program will be headquartered in Panama's newly formed City of Knowledge and will start with an endowment of \$500,000 U.S. provided by Latin American Media. The program will inherit the successful Florida International University PROCEPER Program funded by AID. The 26 member board also includes **Eduardo Ulibarri** ('88), Editor-in-Chief of La Nacion.

The program is a first to bring together journalists, media owners and media academics with an educational objective.

—1991—

**Kabral Blay-Amihere** from Ghana was elected President of the new executive body of the West African Journalists

Association at a Conference on the Media and Democracy in West Africa and the Third Congress of the West African Journalists Association, held in Accra in March 1996. At that conference, a statement was made deploring "the poor state of equipment and the lack of training facilities available to media houses" and "the high cost of production material for both print and electronic media."

The conference also made 15 declarations, ranging from a statement on the importance of the media in an emerging democracy, to an appeal to the Government of Nigeria to release imprisoned journalists, to a call for journalists to be "guided by the ethics of the profession and strive for the truth always."

—1992—

**Charles Onyango-Obbo**, Editor of The Monitor in Kampala, Uganda, writes to say that he has just returned from a month in Denmark where, "among other things, I watched many of the events at the giant Images of Africa cultural festival which took place there over a three-week period. I was at Denmark's largest newspaper, where I wrote a couple of well-received columns.

"Finally, I can report that our office building and printing house are complete, and our new press arrived in Kampala over the weekend. Everything plus the darkroom stuff and stand-by power generators cost us \$2 million. It has left us with no change in the pocket, but it makes us feel proud that we have done something useful with our little resources, and we've got a new sense of security."

—1994—

**Christina Lamb** and **Paulo Anunciacao** sent this "Missive from Lisbon":

Bom dia! Just to let you know that Nieman romance lives on and Christina recently left her job as Africa correspondent of The Sunday Times to move in with Paulo, continuing the world's old-

## Letter to the Editor

July 22, 1996

est alliance between Portugal and Britain. We live in a small whitewashed cottage with marigold yellow window shutters on the estate of an aging countess in a village outside of Lisbon. It is a magical place full of Moorish castles, Gothic palaces and parks full of ancient oak trees.

Christina is writing a novel, in between covering Spain and Portugal and bits of Africa for *The Sunday Times*, having failed to entirely escape the clutches of Rupert Murdoch. She was recently sent to Ghana where she caught up with **Kofi Coomson** who she is glad to report was looking fine, despite his recent 10 days in jail. In between watching football, Paulo is writing a weekly column on the fine things of life—oysters, caviar, champagne etc. He is not looking for assistants.

**David Lewis's** wife, Danica Kombol, gave birth to a son, John Kassel, on June 6. The couple have two other children, **Miranda**, 5 and **Thea**, 3. Lewis is a correspondent for CNN.

—1995—

**Barbara Folscher** writes to say that "with great pride and joy I can announce the birth of our son, William Bourne Kingwill, on the 14th of May." Folscher and her husband, Eric, also have a daughter, **Lara**, 3. Folscher is Specialist Producer, TNP, for the South African Broadcasting Corp. in Cape Town, South Africa.

**Andras Vagvolgyi's** wife Aggie Suli, gave birth to Barbara, nicknamed Bori, on February 22. The family includes another daughter, **Sára**, 5. Vagvolgyi is Editor-in-Chief of *Magyar Narancs*, a weekly newspaper in Budapest, Hungary.

—1996—

**Hisa Miyatake** covered the Olympics in Atlanta for his company, Kyodo News, a Tokyo-based wire service. Here are some excerpts from two E-mail messages he sent to his classmates:

"July 31: Here in the Olympics city, I have been in charge of covering the

To the Editor:

"Reporting by American press faulted on 'slump' in Japanese economy"—I was delighted to read this piece in your summer issue simply because your attention was directed to my country. It is hard to believe, however, that the press in your country was so wrong in judgment upon Japan's economic performance as to pronounce a robust national economy as hitting the wall. Macroeconomic indicators of both Japan and the United States are always readily available, and the Tokyo stock market rallies, for instance, upon the news that the U.S. labor statistics index has registered a lower level of unemployment. The aim of this writing is not to criticize your piece on Japan, however. Prof. John Dower of MIT in his book "Japan in War and Peace" (published in 1995 by Harper Collins) stated on page 309 that by the early 1990's, the bursting of Japan's "bubble economy," which rested on wildly inflated stock and property prices, was taken by many observers as confirmation of dark scenarios such as "Dark Clouds over Japan's Economy" (a New York Times headline over an article by Kenichi Ohmae) and "Will Its Success Destroy Japan?" (another attributed to Peter Drucker).

homb explosion which took place Saturday morning [July 27, about 1:25 a.m.].

"After *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* reported that a security guard was the 'focus' of federal investigations with respect to the bomb explosion, many media have followed suit, reporting his real name and his background.

"Today, our two reporters (in charge of non-sports news coverage; they are city reporters in Japan) went to the apartment of the 'possible suspect.' His home is located in northeast Atlanta. My colleagues told us there were over 100 reporters, with over 30 TV cameras, from around the world. Unfortunately, today is a kind of slow day in terms of sports events. So, the 'possible suspect' was a good target of the world's journalists.

"We have NO IDEA if he is really

It seems that the "reporting" by the American press was indeed faulted on slump in the Japanese economy, insofar as the press followed the leads of such commentators as Ohmae and Drucker.

Let me quote again from Prof. Dower's book (page 303): "Clyde Haberman, the able Tokyo correspondent of *The New York Times*, called attention to a growing sense that, deep down, neither side truly understands the other." This remark should be viewed in reference to a 1987 study of the Harvard Business School entitled "America versus Japan" and an Australian banner headline "The Coming Clash of the World's Economic Titans," both quoted in the same page of the book.

Nieman Reports regularly features reviews of journalistic activities and it may be worthwhile indeed to add the angle as to how journalism has contributed to international understanding rather than the angle how journalists are working in different nations or regions. All of us, I believe, are not so much interested in how the clockwork is made to tick as in whether the clock shows accurate time. So, let me applaud your very short piece on Japan, after all, as a step in the right direction.

*Joe Kazuo Kuroda, Nieman Fellow 1957*

responsible for the explosion that left two people dead and over 100 people injured. In Japan, major news organizations make it a rule not to report a person's name so long as there are no supporting factors to name him or her a suspect. If he turns out to be innocent, how can those media that carelessly or bravely reported his name compensate him for his and his family's lost reputation?

"August 1: Atlanta is becoming a stage of terrorism and political asylum. It's becoming more and more international while NBC keeps televising mainly American athletes and sports events that are common in the U.S. Is it technically hard for Americans to watch judo matches rather than beach volleyball games?

"The finale of the Summer Olympics is nearing. I'm happy." ■





*Stan Grossfeld, Associate Editor of The Boston Globe and a 1992 Nieman Fellow, won first place in both the feature writing and multiple-spread photography categories in this year's Sunday Magazine Editors Association competition. The award was announced in May at their annual meeting in Orlando. Grossfeld won for "When Kids Have Kids," an in-depth look at teenage pregnancy. In the above photo Allan Orzechowski, 16, holds his new daughter, Kasondra, as the baby's mother, Christina Nolan, 14, munches M&M's at Goodall Hospital in Sanford, Maine.*

*On Sept. 7, just about the time we're going to press, Grossfeld plans to marry Stacey Kadat on a beach in Nantucket, Mass. Kadat runs a human rights agency in Boston called "Peace at Home." After spending a week in Nantucket, they will leave for a two-month stay in Japan, where Grossfeld will be a Japan Society Fellow.*

### Remembering Nathaniel Nash

BY DAVID L. MARCUS

*New York Times* Correspondent Nathaniel Nash, based in Frankfurt, Germany, died when the plane of Commerce Secretary Ron Brown crashed in Croatia on April 3. Nash, 44, who previously was based in Buenos Aires, was beloved by colleagues.

Whenever I remember Nathaniel Nash, I think about Sundays in South America. That's the day our paths seemed to cross the most. Seeing Nathaniel on Sundays—with terrorists in a prison interview, with a fishing rod in a stream, or with his family at an outdoor market—taught me more about being a foreign correspondent than any journalism program could have.

The first Sunday we spent together was in 1991, at the fetid prison called La Cantuta in the desert hills outside Lima, Peru. It was visitors' day, and we were going to see the women of Shining Path, the guerrilla group that was terrorizing Peru at the time. We trudged single-file through walkways strewn with garbage, then we entered the one clean, well-organized room in the whole complex—the women's unit.

Picture the setting: a dark cell, a picnic table in the middle, banners with revolutionary slogans hanging from the ceiling, murals of Lenin and Mao on the walls, and a dozen tough, gap-toothed women circling the two gringos armed with nothing but notepads and paper bags with French bread and sweets (our offerings). We weren't just any gringos, either; Nathaniel was six-feet-three, blond and baby-faced. He looked like a combination of a Harvard-educated missionary (which he was) and a CIA agent (which the women figured he was).

One comrade after another scrutinized our company ID cards and passports. They grilled us about the name of the contact who had helped us get in. "How do we know you're really journalists?" an aggressive host demanded.

Nathaniel, who had been deferential, started charming them with stories of his trips in the shantytowns, his interviews with President Alberto Fujimori, his reflections on the way women dominated society in Peru. Soon he was asking piercing questions in his trademark gentle way: how could the guerrillas claim to represent the poor while bombing the very electrical stations that the poor needed?

After the tense prelude, we had a lively discussion—a sort of "Crossfire"-goes-to-the-slammer. As we left, to the women's shouts of "Viva Marx!" Nathaniel told me he couldn't believe how interesting his job was. Days later, his feature in *The Times* was just as I'd expected: balanced, with enough color to show his enthusiasm.

Another Sunday, this one in southern Chile. We'd just spent a crazy couple of days driving a rental car through mud to report on a virgin forest devastated by loggers. And more

to the point, Nathaniel had just gotten a call from New York offering him a new beat: European economic reporter, based in Germany.

It was time to celebrate, and that, for Nathaniel, meant going fly fishing. A Manhattan native, I wasn't much of a fisherman. No matter, said Nathaniel. He showed me a duffle bag that happened to contain two pairs of waders, two fishing rods and a dozen lures that he

had made himself. And so began one of the most memorable days of my time in South America—standing in a cold river, with the snow-capped Mount Osorno volcano in the background, as Nathaniel taught me to cast. I watched with envy as he quietly reeled in one big trout after another (always carefully setting them free). I realized he approached fishing the way he approached reporting, as something to master for the sheer pleasure of it.

That night we shared an attic room in a tiny fishing lodge. As rain drummed on the roof, Nathaniel told me about his adventures as a reporter. Chasing the savings and loan story in Washington, playing tennis with Argentine President Carlos Menem, trekking through Bolivia...but he was most enthusiastic when he talked about spending time with his son, Nathaniel Jr., and his twin girls, Margaret and Lisa. Friends tell me it was a typical talk with Nathaniel. He didn't complain about the play of his stories. He didn't gossip about news-room politics. He focused on what he loved.

Another Sunday, a week later: I joined Nathaniel and his wife, Elizabeth, at an outdoor crafts market on a sloping lawn in Buenos Aires. It was their final chance to buy hand-made mementos from Argentina. South America had been wonderful, Nathaniel said, but in Europe the distances between countries were shorter and he could spend more weekends with the family. That's the last time I saw Nathaniel, and as I glanced back he and Elizabeth looked like a newly married couple, bargaining cheerfully with the vendors. ■



*David Marcus, a 1996 Nieman Fellow, is South America Bureau Chief of The Dallas Morning News.*



NIEMAN REPORTS

ONE FRANCIS AVENUE

CAMBRIDGE MASSACHUSETTS 02138