NIEMAN REPORTS

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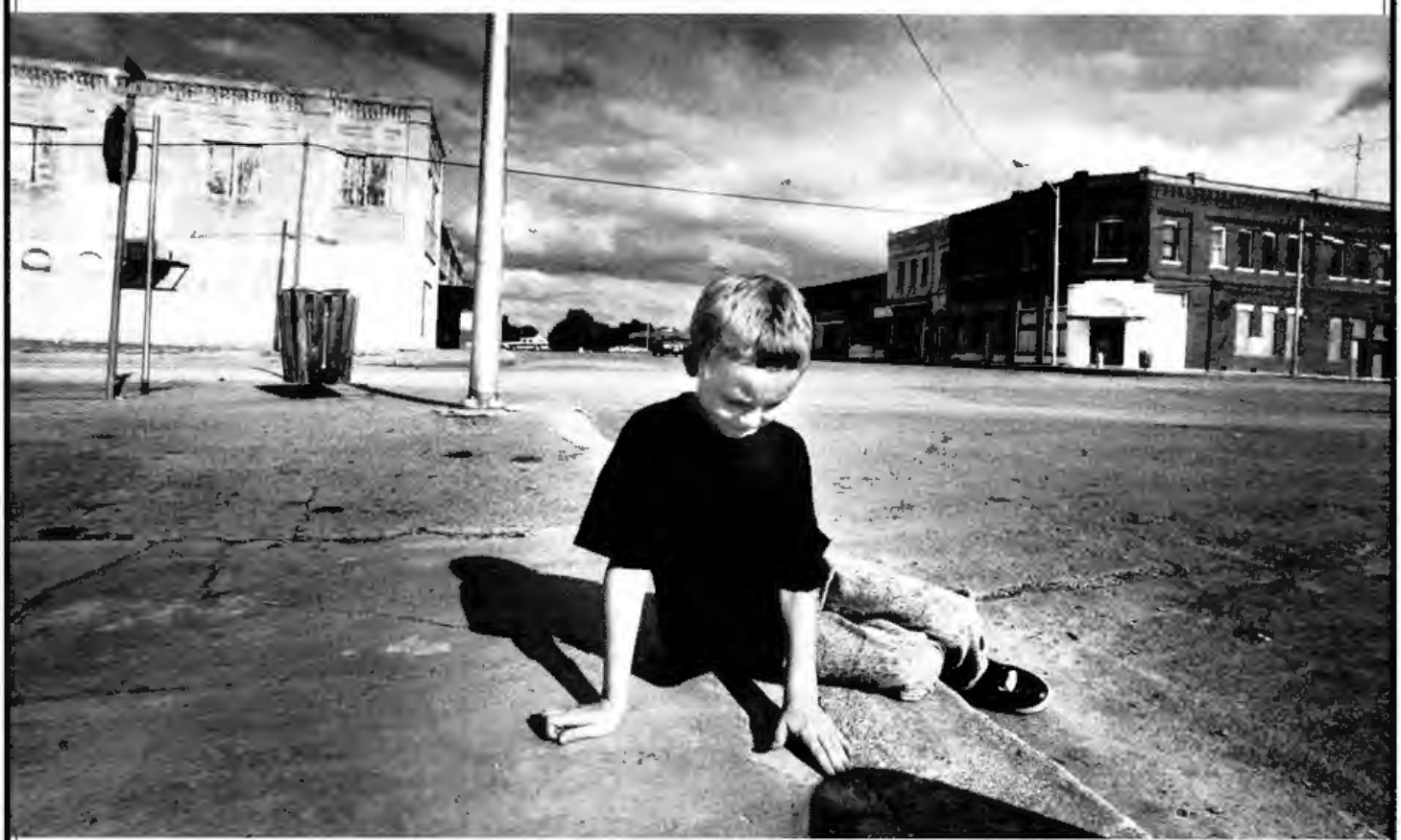
America's Children

What Can, What Should, the Media Do To Save the Next Generation?

9 Articles of Suggestions, Reflections and Cautions



What Third-World Press Really Needs

William S. Wasserman Jr.

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NIEMAN REPORTS

AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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ABOUT THE COVER

Stan Grossfeld, Nieman Fellow 1992, photographed the scene in Grandfield, OK, where a sign proclaims the town as the place "where the harvest begins." With its boarded-up buildings on Main Street, its grain elevator towering over the plains and a dead armadillo on the side of the road, Grandfield "looks more like where the world ends," Stan wrote in The Boston Globe, which ran the picture as part of a spread on loneliness and gave Nieman Reports permission to use it.

Children—An Opportunity for the Media

BY BILL KOVACH

A century that began with the women of the United States struggling for the right to vote is closing with national political foundations shifting to reflect the growing political and economic strength of women.

In no area are these shifts thrown into sharper focus than the family issues which women have brought with them into the economic and political marketplace. These issues are literally altering the way we do business in the United States.

The signs are everywhere to be seen. President Bill Clinton, elected on the promise of change, has designated his wife, Hillary Rodham Clinton, his senior social policy advisor and established a major theme of his term in office by signing the family leave bill.

Demographic, economic and political reality dictates that the 20th Century will close on an agenda largely shaped by the hopes, aspirations and needs of women. Leading that agenda will be issues affecting the children who will succeed this generation in the next century.

After more than two decades of intensely focused work by the Children's Defense Fund she founded, Marian Wright Edelman's voice is heard in the White House and echoes across the country.

In places like North Carolina, where Governor Jim Hunt has declared 1993 the Year of Children. At the American Academy of Arts and Sciences which is organizing a Center on the Status and Needs of America's Children.

All these factors suggest that the crisis in the care, rearing and education of children will be the major social policy focus of the 1990's. In an economy that often requires that both parents work full time, families have fewer resources, less time and virtually no infrastructure to provide for the needs of their children. For each of the past three decades there has been a steady erosion of our assurance that a majority of the next generation will grow into strong, healthy, well-educated Americans.

According to statistics compiled by "Kids Count," an annual publication of the Center for the Study of Social Policy, during the 1980's, "We made no progress or slipped backwards in seven of the nine measures of child well-being." The percent of children in poverty rose 22 percent over the decade and the rate of teen violent deaths grew by 11 percent.

Such fundamental shifts affecting so many people provide new challenges and real opportunities to journalists serving the public interest, for news organizations thrashing around for new community connections, and for the kind of consumer relevance on which a strong economic base can be built.

Visionary journalists have been edging into this subject for sometime now with papers like Children's Express. But only recently did The Indianapolis Star arrange to carry the work of the Express in its mainstream newspaper. New England 21st Century, designed for young readers, and United Youth of Boston, written and produced by teenagers, are attracting the interest of larger papers.

The economic potential of younger reader has been sporadically served by mainstream news organizations. "Kid's news" or "youth pages" have been wedged into a number of newspapers. Many of these are uninspiring and uninteresting cut-and-paste fillers. Others, like the page created by Newsday during the Iraq War to explain the war and its issues to young readers, began with a desire to encourage and reach a newly interested public with serious information. Even the best kids pages, however, seem to eventually suffer from lack of sustained attention or commitment of resources.

But, at papers like The Denver Post, The Albany Times Union, and the San Diego Union issues confronting and affecting children have been treated with serious news beat assignments.

Stimulated by the same sense of timing which inspired Gov. Hunt in North Carolina, The Charlotte Observer has announced that a major emphasis will be on children's issues and the Raleigh News and Observer has launched a special project on children's issues around which a special beat is expected to be organized.

This month the University of Maryland announced a new center for the study of children and families with a goal of helping improve press coverage of issues and public policy related to children.

The economic distress of the past decade has done much to diminish public interest journalism in the United States. But political and economic and social change of the kind the country is now experiencing demands a greater commitment to meet the public's need to know of the characters and issues that affect their lives.

In an effort to help reporters and editors focus on this issue and think creatively about journalistic approaches to its development, Nieman Reports has created a package of articles for this issue by nine writers who have thought deeply on the subject. Perhaps these issues concerning families and children will provide an impetus to a reinvigorate public interest journalism. ■

A Voice for Children

Old Standards of Objectivity Must Be Modified To Understand the Needs of Youths

By Melissa Ludtke

Melissa Ludtke is a former Time magazine correspondent who reported frequently on children and family issues. After graduating from Wellesley College, she joined Sports Illustrated and eventually was transferred to Time. She is writing a book on single parenthood for Random House. Melissa was a 1992 Nieman Fellow. In the photograph above she is holding a friend's baby.

In the mid-1980's Alex Kotlowitz, now a journalist with The Wall Street Journal, befriended Lafayette and Pharoah Rivers, brothers who were trying to live through their childhood by ducking bullets and avoiding the lure of the gangs who ruled the macadam turf at Chicago's Henry Horner Homes. These boys guided Kotlowitz through a world unlike any he had known as a child or an adult. It was a hostile, difficult place where, Kotlowitz wrote, "children have lived with fear and witnessed death."

To enter their world, Kotlowitz played basketball with Lafayette, Pharoah and the neighborhood kids. He bought them lunch and, on occasion, when their sneakers were too worn to play in and their mother had no money, he bought replacements. One time Kotlowitz used money he'd won from a journalism award to bail a friend of theirs out of jail. As years passed, their friendship deepened.

The boys allowed Kotlowitz entry to report on urban childhoods that are all too often neglected. In return, Kotlowitz gave these youngsters a public voice so their stories would be heard by many who would never meet them. Despite the closeness that developed among them, Kotlowitz remained a reporter, observing, questioning, and verifying what happened in his young friends' lives.

When Kotlowitz's article about the struggles of Lafayette and Pharoah appeared on the front page, readers reacted with shock and dismay. Their letters displayed a bountiful if brief outpouring of outrage and concern. For the boys and their friends, their lives went on much as they had before. In 1991, Kotlowitz's book, "There Are No Children Here: The Story of Two Boys Growing Up in The Other America" was published by Doubleday; the violence and death, as well as the boys' fear of it, had not dissipated.

In a section at the end of his book, Kotlowitz explains how he grappled with the question of whether, in telling the boys' stories, he adhered to the journalist's ethic of "objectivity." This enduring standard of American journalism holds that a reporter's job is to present the facts in a detached "objective" manner; journalists learn early to resist the temptation to bring their opinions to the telling of the news and to avoid taking sides. Clearly, in buying gifts for the boys and securing an emotional attachment, Kotlowitz overstepped the conventional bounds of objective reporting.

In his "Note on Reporting Methods," Kotlowitz writes about his transgression:

I know there are people who will say that I became too involved with the family, that I broke my pact as a journalist to remain detached and objective. But, in the end, I had to remind myself that I was dealing with children. For them—and for me—our friendship was foremost. Anything I could do to assist them I did—and will continue to do."

For reporters and editors who in increasing numbers are assigned to "the children's beat," Kotlowitz's struggle no doubt echoes their experience. As a

journalist who reported on children's lives for Time magazine for nearly a decade, I know well the internal conflict that arises when the desire to remain objective runs up against an emotional tug of closeness and caring that seems to occur more naturally when the subject is children.

This conflict between detachment and closeness is not surprising if we recognize that dealing with children, as journalists, is simply a different experience from working on stories with adult sources. I will discuss some of those differences in this article. But, despite these differences, the underlying ethic remains: to present fairly and accurately the information gathered.

The differences with covering children arise out of the societal relationship that exists between adults and children; from a child's point of view, adults are people whom they depend on for protection and guidance. Until proven unreliable, children assume that adults will care for them. That perspective—if absorbed by the journalist—is not the stuff out of which a style of detached objectivity comfortably springs.

In addition, the deplorable circumstances of so many compel me to suggest that it is all right for journalists to suspend a strict adherence to rules governing objectivity and become advocates for children. This does not mean that rules which ensure the fairness and accuracy of reporting should be tossed aside; it merely suggests that reporters, recognizing the perils that confront today's children, can "take sides" with children, if only by granting them a public voice which without the journalist's help they would not have.

Kotlowitz's evaluation of his lack of objectivity in his Chicago story provides a glimpse at a dilemma that confronts reporters. Get too close to a subject and the wall of separation comes tumbling down. As journalists, we are right to ask whether the lessons of Kotlowitz's approach offer us good guidance in devising standards for reporting on children. I believe they do. If so, what are the principles that should inform those standards?

In attempting to address this question, it is wise to examine the particular skills that are demanded of reporters who are assigned "the children's beat"—dubbed in 1992 by the Columbia School of Journalism as the "beat of the future."

The children's beat can be roughly divided into two pieces, news and features. News about children usually involves reporting on stories about legislative efforts to assist children and families as well as investigative efforts to unravel abuses and draw attention to the difficulties in children's lives; sources for these stories are primarily adults who are pushing policies or advocating change. In such coverage, standard journalistic rules apply.

If "objectivity" is at issue here, it is in the decision of where to place stories about children in the newspaper, magazine or on the nightly newscast. I would argue in favor of giving stories about children greater and more consistent prominence. I believe that the dire situation of children's lives today compels us to make what happens to children front-page news instead of burying the stories inside. Although children's issues garner much more attention than they did five years ago—now pushed ahead mightily by the force of Presidential concern—I believe editors have an important role to play in the effort to keep a sharp and prominent focus on children's issues.

When I began working at Time magazine in the early 1980's the magazine did not have a specific news slot for stories about children or families. Nor has it developed one as the decade rolled by, despite the fact that coverage of children and family issues in the magazine increased dramatically. In this pattern, Time is in good company. Today only a few of the nation's leading publications commit space or dedicate a specific reporter's time to the task of understanding and conveying what is happening to children. Often, editors assume that the education beat reporter is covering children, but much of what happens in children's lives occurs outside the classroom.

The consequence of such coverage is, as any journalist knows, that a few good stories appear but the reporting can lack consistency or significant depth. Without a slot for a story, an editor is constrained from assigning a reporter because of either budgetary concerns or a mind set that concludes that children's stories are of only marginal news interest. Completing this circular path, reporters will rarely be given time or leeway to develop sources and educate themselves so they are able to suggest new and promising story ideas. Under such a system, much of what actually happens in children's lives, not surprisingly, goes unreported.

Public awareness about the difficult plight of so many of America's children and of the long-term consequences of our national neglect is growing, thanks in part to increased media attention. But the need for consistent, prominent coverage of these issues has not diminished. By creating a children's beat, assigning a full-time reporter, and making visible the findings, editors will discover that there is a plethora of stories waiting to be told.

The other part of the children's beat involves more direct contact with youngster's lives. These stories tend to be features that portray the actual experiences of children's lives and give youngsters a chance to have a voice in the public debate about their circumstances. It is here that Kotlowitiz's experience dovetails with that of beat reporters.

It is worthwhile to examine the logistical differences that a children's reporter experiences. For example, children don't hold press conferences so daily news will not come out of a press briefing. Nor can children afford to hire public relations firms to keep reporters abreast of changing circumstances or remind them of their clients' resolute interests. Kids are not usually within handy reach of a reporter's Rolodex, nor are they readily accessible by phone, particularly when they are in school. Nor are most of them skilled in the art of the pithy comment or 10-second sound bite. Children may enjoy talking with each other for hours on the phone, but I have not found the telephone to

be an adequate means of communicating with children if one is a reporter trying to understand their point of view; I've found that it is far more effective to be eye-to-eye when my sources are children.

So reporters must go to where children are—to the mall, to school, to day care centers, to after-school programs, and to visit them in their homes. To do this well, a reporter has to learn how to fit into the children's world in such a way that the "truth" of their lives can be arrived at. Often this means trying to see the world as they do, which is sometimes difficult for adults to do.

Late in 1987 I set out to do this kind of reporting. I wanted to learn what it was like for children who were growing up in 1980's America, children who I knew were living a vastly different childhood than the one my generation experienced in the 1950's. Not only had the nation's economic outlook grown less hopeful, but also many families were differently arranged—more divorces, more single parent households—and children were experiencing the strain of these and other changes such as the escalation in violence and drug use and teen suicide, to name a few.

To do this story, I proposed that I would move in and live with families, spending 24 hours a day engrossed in their children's daily lives. I sold this idea to editors at Time based on the premise that objective reporting about children tended to numb rather than stimulate or inform readers about the "truth" of children's lives because of its distant and detached perspective. I was referring to the genre of stories that relied on reams of distressing statistics and detached expert analysis on subjects ranging from why children use drugs to why teenagers get pregnant.

This time, instead of asking adult experts to tell me about children, I would let children be my guides and give them the role of experts about their lives. By living with them, I would observe first-hand the reality of their lives. After I spent a few days with them, the children grew accustomed to my hovering presence and resumed the normal patterns of their lives. Only after being an observer for quite some time did I start to ask the children any questions; I wanted first to try to see the world as they saw it and inhabit it as they did.

This strategy was motivated as much by self-interest as it was by a consideration for them. How would I know if what they were telling me was true unless I had observed and listened closely to them before I began my barrage of questions? I found the best gauge for testing the veracity of what they were telling me was for me to participate in their world, then to ask them about what I saw, what I heard, and what had made me wonder.

...a reporter has to learn how to fit into the children's world in such a way that the "truth" of their lives can be arrived at. Often this means trying to see the world as they do, which is sometimes difficult for adults to do.

I tried to keep in focus the goal of my effort: to convey in the children's voices and from their perspectives the experience of childhood today. There would be no intervening voices of adult experts, except for parents and perhaps a teacher or counselor who was an integral part of the children's lives.

My approach did not qualify as either detached or objective, a fact I readily acknowledged. When I set out, I knew my aim was build trust with the children so they would speak to me honestly about their lives. To do that required me to let go of my objective distance. I wanted these children to speak directly to Time's readers to foster a broader emotional connection with the plight of our nation's children who shared similar experiences with the youngsters I profiled. Even if Time's readers believed that their own children were "okay," I wanted them to recognize that other children who looked and sounded like their sons and daughters were having a tough time negotiating their way through childhood.

On August 8, 1988, eight-year old Katie Davis, a blond, blue-eyed daughter of a Seattle doctor and nurse, stared out from the cover of Time magazine. In the 20 pages of Time devoted to this package, Katie and four other children told their stories. Katie's story spoke to the loneliness she felt while at daycare and of the fear she harbored when she imagined ways in which her peers might convince her to use drugs, something that happened to her older step-brother.

That cover story was entitled "Through the Eyes of Children: Growing Up in America Today." The reaction was gratifying; not only did the magazine sell very well on newstands but readers' comments indicated that the hoped-for connection had, for many, been made. After this story appeared, editors developed an increased interest in using this type of personalized reporting in the coverage of other subjects. For example, when the minimum wage bill was being debated in Washington, the political battle received scant mention. Instead, the editors wanted to portray the reality of what it was actually like to try to live on the income of a minimum-wage job, even with the raise.

In the spring of 1992 I appeared on a media panel at the annual meeting of the Children's Defense Fund. I spoke about my visits to children's homes and told of the days and nights I had spent with the Nelsons, a typical West Virginia coal-mining family whose roots in the mines stretched back for generations. My focus was on 10-year old David, a shy boy whose future prospects were clouded by his family's economic hard times. I told of sleeping in a big bed with Nancy, the Nelsons' oldest child and only daughter, who shared a room with her two brothers and a gun case.

I slept with the children as the cold night wind blew through holes between the boards of their uninsulated walls. I rode to school on the bus with them and sat with them in classes and at lunch. I attended church services with them—twice each Sunday. For a time I inherited the day-to-day routine that

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Television's Opportunity

Clinton Promises on Aiding Youth and Rising Concern Of Public Offer Chance to Broaden Coverage

By Dan Amundson

This could well be the Year of the Child. The Clintons have spent much of their political lives advocating policies to help children. If campaign promises are fulfilled there will be renewed interest in the welfare of children at the highest policy levels. Additionally, over the last several years, news reports of rising illiteracy, juvenile crime, drug abuse and child abuse have raised public concern over the welfare of children. This unique alignment of forces presents new opportunities for children and the national news media.

To make the most of these opportunities the news media will have to take a more complex approach to the coverage of children and children's issues. This change does not, however, imply greater advocacy for selected programs. Advocacy runs counter to American journalistic traditions and is an impractical role for journalists to play. Rather than be advocates, the national media need to assert themselves aggressively as independent, objective, critical analysts.

There are two main flaws in current patterns of coverage. These have to do with the topical focus of the news and the style of analysis. Coverage of children tends to be sporadic, focusing either on crises or national policy conflicts. Thus, audiences see large numbers of stories on Jessica McClure trapped in a well or the political ramifications of President Bush vetoing a family leave bill. National television news rarely presents a detailed discussion of policies or programs aimed at children that allows for an adequate assessment of their merits. If the choice of content leaves something to be desired, this problem is compounded by the level of analysis in the news. All too often children's programs are covered as a political game. In such coverage the point becomes which party wins and how big a loss it is for the other side. In such a context, opposing views simply serve as a means to scoring points in the game.

These two shortcomings of news coverage of children are most obvious on television where the need for pictures and the shortness of time exacerbates the problem. In survey after survey, Americans indicate that television news is their leading source of information. In today's highly diversified and segmented media market, television news is one of the few places to find a truly national perspective. Thus, it makes sense to examine the patterns of coverage in the electronic media in assessing national news coverage.

Over the last three years news coverage of issues related to children has remained relatively stable on television, hovering between 350 stories in 1990 and 425 in 1992. Coverage has ebbed and flowed from one highlighted event to another. In February of 1990, it was the Elizabeth Morgan child custody case; in September 1990, the start of a new school year and a summit on children increased coverage. Stories on children dropped in frequency during the fall of 1990 and more sharply in early 1991 as the Persian Gulf War preoccupied media attention. Coverage rebounded in April of 1991 as President Bush unveiled his education plan and a series of teacher strikes heightened attention to America's schools. The television cameras paid even more attention to children in June when reports from the Children's Defense Fund, the National Commission on Children and the Surgeon General pointed out various problems facing children.

In 1992, the presidential election drove coverage as network reporters assessed the political value of children's issues to politicians and the impact of the recession on children. The year ended on a flurry of reports on the boy

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seeking a divorce from his parents and the "home alone" children in Chicago. This litany of events does more than remind us of the past, it reveals how television news is often driven by unconnected events. Coverage of these events does little to illuminate the full scope of issues facing American children.

A closer look at the content of television news reveals that approximately half of the stories on children are actually stories about the nation's education system. From preschool to high school, television is fascinated by the triumphs and pitfalls of our nation's schools. The television view of schools vacillates between anecdotal reports of experimental programs that seem to succeed and anecdotal accounts of the horrible problems facing some schools. The remaining stories about children have been dominated by reports on children's health and crimes committed by and against children. Even in these areas, television news has a penchant for the personal tale of triumph or woe that feeds our desire for both human interest and tragedy. Thus we hear about the "home alone" children and Katie Beers, the victim of a kidnapping on Long Island, and a flurry of other stories on what have been termed throw-away children.

News about children on television is often news about parents dealing with children. Hence, television news has covered tax credits for families with children, family leave plans, parental difficulties in finding daycare, school choice and health insurance for families. While these are undeniably important to children's welfare, the children's perspective often goes unnoticed. Rarely does the news ask what children want or if the policies discussed will actually serve the needs of children.

The national news media over the last several years have brought new forms of analysis to coverage of presidential elections. Devices such as "ad watches" and "reality checks" provide an opportunity for objective analysis. It is now common for news organizations to examine candidate advertisements critically in order to correct errors and point out distortions or omissions. This approach serves to educate the voter on all aspects of a candidate's record or proposals. While this type of critical analysis has great educational value, it is rarely applied to other issues.

Novelty is always more newsworthy than assessing the familiar, but in the policy realm and the world of children, such assessment is what is most needed. By skipping over assessments of the efficacy of existing programs the media miss an opportunity to provide an objective appraisal of the current situation.

A detailed examination of coverage of children's welfare issues by the Center for Media and Public Affairs during the first six months of 1991 points to this lack of critical analysis. When it came to proposals to help children, media attention focused on the new rather than assessments of existing programs. Four new proposals (tax credits, national testing standards, school choice and corporal punishment) account for half of the policy debate (139 mentions). Meanwhile, existing programs such as Head Start, immunizations, school uniforms and daycare were discussed a total of 32 times. Novelty is always more newsworthy than assessing the familiar, but in the policy realm and the world of children, such assessment is what is most needed. By skipping over assessments of the efficacy of existing programs the media miss an opportunity to provide an objective appraisal of the current situation.

Even when reporting on new proposals the news media became a conduit for proponents rather than an objective analyst. Almost every policy recommendation was supported by a large majority of sources discussing it. For instance, increases in Head Start funding and expanded immunization programs received 100 percent support. Tax credits for families with children (90 percent support), expansion of daycare (71 percent support) and school choice (64 percent support) all received strong backing. This was the result of different sources and groups advancing their own proposals without addressing other policy options. Thus proponents of tax cuts for families with children only rarely compared their proposals to other approaches. In this regard the discussions in the news media fall short of the level of debate that would be found in a balanced presentation.

Presenting ideas in juxtaposition with each other may suffice to supply some sense of balance but it fails to provide a real sense of the pros and cons of solutions. Every policy option has costs and benefits, intended and unintended consequences that need to be fully considered in making complex choices. For instance, most stories on school choice never ask if such plans will lead to racially segregated schools, or if private schools will ever become an affordable choice for the middle class, or how school choice may affect the recruitment of teachers and perhaps increase the price of their services. Rarely does news reporting offer this type of information. Some news stories may have presented opposing views, but more to assess winners and losers than the merits of proposals.

To capitalize fully on the renewed interest in children the national news media need to take several actions.

First, the media should hold the President and Congress accountable for promises made during the campaign concerning children. Fortunately, this process is already well underway as journalists remind viewers regularly of the President's promises. Viewers need to know how their elected officials are doing in trying to solve problems. But this accountability has to extend beyond merely who is winning and losing political battles or whether certain battles have cost President Clinton too much political capital. Even a casual observer is aware of the amount of discussion that has already occurred on the political wisdom of early activities in the Clinton administration. Much less has been said about the details.

As has been pointed out in many other contexts, there is a need for the media to ask the questions that politicians and policy makers may not want to answer. Any good, objective, critical analysis must extend beyond comfortable rote questions and answers that leave as many questions as are answered. Only when difficult questions are asked will viewers find out the full details and consequences of policies.

This suggests the second change that needs to occur. More concentrated attention needs to be paid to the substantive debate over policy. This will have to translate into many more stories on the pros and cons of policies or proposals. These stories should include details on the potential costs, possible unexpected consequences, program limitations and the tradeoffs that may have to take place. This is the sort of information that the public needs to know.

The popularity of the Presidential debates and Ross Perot's commercials suggest that the American public wants to know the details of proposals. More importantly, it suggests that the public is interested in information even when it is not packaged in a telegenic fashion. For television this interest suggests that the public might pay attention to an important story that does not have good pictures.

Care must be taken that increased coverage does not lead to unabashed boosterism. In the past, when television has told tales of programs that seemed to work, the tone has been uncritically supportive. In one anecdote after another, programs are praised without any information to put that success in context. For instance, the viewer is often not told if the program succeeds because of unique, irreproducible aspects of the community. Most successful programs exist and succeed because of a host of supporting factors. These range from community and corporate involvement to other supporting social programs. Without knowing these background facts or the context a viewer cannot properly assess the program. Pointing out these limitations or pre-existing conditions should not be equated with rejecting these programs. Rather it is simply part of a full analysis of the program.

The third change that needs to take place is in terms of topical focus in the news. While there is some news value in reporting on efforts to rescue Jessica McClure from the well, the abduction and imprisonment of Katie Beers on Long Island, the abandonment of the Schoo children as their parents went on a Christmas vacation to Mexico and the efforts of Gregory K. to divorce himself from his parents, these cases are aberrations without broader implications. Television news must make tighter decisions on newsworthiness. Human interest stories that do little but feed our fascination with tragedy should not drive out significant coverage of children as a group. This fascination with the sensational or exceptionally deviant is an even more pronounced problem with television magazine shows. In these prime-time outings, the longer format should allow a deeper, more complete analysis of a situation, but this rarely happens. Usually, the viewer is treated to the most attention-grabbing moments and not substance or depth.

Only by foregoing the sensational, deepening the level of analysis and placing news about children in a broader context, will television serve the information needs of the public.

This eye towards the viscerally engaging seems to distract attention from other pressing issues of policy and practice. Perhaps more important is the fear it may create in parents. Frequently, such exceptional situations are not clearly presented as aberrations, which have little chance of happening to other people. We know from various studies that people's fear of crime and victimization is often much greater than their actual risk. Media messages about crime seem to be at least part of the cause for this heightened fear. It seems reasonable to suggest that a similar mechanism may be at work among parents who watch modern day horror stories involving children.

One episode from the recent past illustrates both television as usual and what it can be when the effort is made. In June of 1991, ABC News focused on the plight of the poor—particularly children. Coverage began with a week-long examination of the problems facing poor children. From June 18 through June 22 there were 15 stories focusing on the typical anecdotes of woe that fill so much time. While typical, the amount and prominence of coverage was unusual. On three straight nights the newscast began with reports on children. These pieces were short on analysis and context, but long on local color, painting a grim picture from Appalachia to Los Angeles.

Beginning the second week of coverage, Peter Jennings announced:

"It took us all last week to see the problem in action. It will take us all this week to lay out the proposals, analyze their potential effects and try to gauge the political will to proceed."

What followed were seven pieces over four days that tackled the proposals made by the National Commission on Children. These stories were long on detail and made a serious effort to explore the effects of policies. For instance, one particularly strong story analyzed the effects of the tax credits, earned-income credits and child-support benefits proposed by the commission on a working poor family. It is interesting to note that there were fewer stories analyzing policies than current conditions and policy analysis was noticeably less prominent in the news. All of these policy stories ran at the end of the newscast.

The future of reporting on children and children's issues revolves around the ability of television news to broaden and deepen its approach to such news. Only by foregoing the sensational, deepening the level of analysis and placing news about children in a broader context, will television serve the information needs of the public. ■

The Local Beat

Denver Post Pioneer Finds Stories Everywhere And Children Remarkably Articulate

By Carol Kreck

The children's beat originated at the Denver Post in 1987, the brain child of Jane Marshall, then feature editor, who had just had her first baby. One of her rationales was that many baby boomers like herself were having boomlets. They would be wanting to know about trends in toys, cloth versus disposable diapers and how to find a nanny.

As the only other mother in the department, I got the beat and wrote those stories. But, at the same time, Ronald Reagan was providing more serious issues; the safety net for children unraveled during his presidency and would continue to do so under George Bush.

Unless you covered children as a beat or were Marian Wright Edelman of the Children's Defense Fund it was difficult at first to see the big picture. Abuse and neglect tended to be covered, death by death, by general assignment reporters, gangs and crack babies by urban affairs writers, infant mortality and AIDS babies by medical writers, deteriorating test scores by education writers.

Since child care, child support and child protection weren't in anyone's bailiwick, they were given short shrift; children's issues at the state house and in Congress were given no shrift at all. When it was all added up, it became clear that children in this country were in big trouble.

We started with a series on welfare reform, which ran in the features section with an announcement that this was the beginning of a children's beat.

Letters poured in from child advocates of various persuasions. A fellow in juvenile justice wrote that we should do a story on kids in adult jails. Incensed that the local children's hospital had started keeping a pediatrician on duty in the emergency room to limit the hospital's uninsured population to 11, pediatricians wanted a story on hospitals "dumping" uninsured kids.

About that time, insurance companies hiked premiums to the point that daycare centers they couldn't afford to do business. Child-care administrators panicked. The child-abuse community, meanwhile, wanted stories that explained more than the sensational circumstances of a child's death.

It was difficult to determine which direction to take, but it hardly mattered. I soon realized my editor had handed me a blank check. Played the right way, all the beats were mine—health care, courts, cops, the legislature, Congress, education, urban affairs. So were the big stories of our time. After all, AIDS is a children's issue, not to mention poverty, homelessness, welfare reform, gun control, prenatal drug abuse and foster care.

The Rocky Flats nuclear weapons plant turned out to be a children's issue when a girl who'd grown up downwind of the plant died of bone cancer. Her grief-stricken father had her ashes analyzed and found an elevated level of weapons-grade plutonium.

While the beat seemed to offer a reportorial box of chocolates, difficulties lay in trying to be a jack of all trades: the ins and outs of covering courts are a lot different from the ins and outs of tracking bills through the state house. I asked a lot of stupid questions and continue to do so. Sometimes such questions help to bring a fresh perspective.

Sources, however, were more than willing to answer any and all of my questions because I was the first re-

Carol Kreck, 45, originated the children's beat at The Denver Post in 1987. She has reported on the emergence of pediatric AIDS, aspects of child abuse and neglect, early childhood education and child care, foster care and prenatal substance abuse. She is the mother of two daughters, 13 and 11, who are the sources of numerous story ideas. She has returned to school with the intention of getting a law degree specializing in legal issues of children.

porter to show an interest in what they cared about deeply. Whatever they're in—pediatrics, social work, law—people who specialize in children tend to be the lowest paid (including children's beat reporters). Frustrated, they have little to lose and take big risks.

It wasn't until I hit this beat that I began to feel like the fictitious middle-aged spy Mrs. Pollifax, exchanging documents in parking lots, having lawyers threaten to subpoena my notes, meeting anonymous sources in bars (sources who often were little old ladies themselves, wanting to explain the circumstances under which they were breaking the law for children). It's also true that these same sources become extraordinarily angry and self-righteous when they think a story casts anything but the best light on them.

Consider the child welfare worker, overworked and underpaid, whose good works rarely get a thank-you, but whose mistakes go on page one. Real bridge burners when it comes to sources, those stories are difficult to write. All you can do is write, "Miss Wilson, whose decision it was to take Baby Joey out of his home, felt worse than anybody that the foster mother's boyfriend who killed him turned out to have a long history of abuse." Sometimes the Miss Wilsons talk to you again, sometimes they don't.

In a package of stories on declining immunization rates, some of the doctors interviewed were livid when they saw we had included an article on a child who'd been catastrophically brain damaged by a diphtheria-pertussis-tetanus shot, the kind of case that inspires other parents to avoid immunizing their children altogether. A year later, some of these same doctors voted to give me an award from the Colorado chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. I can only conclude that a) they had no journalists left to give it to, and/or b) they decided she's not much, but she's all we've got.

Confidentiality is another problem peculiar to the beat. Trying to pin down what happened to a particular child in the custody of social services is often impossible. Revealing, for example, how many child abuse reports were filed on a child who wound up dead is against the rules, even when there's nobody left to protect. Confidentiality protects agencies as well as children, but I've also seen cases where social services did the right thing, and were prevented by confidentiality from telling anybody.

While there have been cases involving confidentiality in which the door was shut and simply could not be opened, in others we went far beyond what should have been possible. Frustrated judges, social workers and foster parents have at various times let us interview and photograph children in detention, group homes and foster homes.

Some children whose parents' rights had been terminated were photographed facing the camera. In an unusual move, the Denver Department of Social Services let us photograph at the Family Crisis Center where the city's abused and neglected children are taken while their cases are disposed. Shot from behind as they were being bathed or held, the photographs were extremely moving, though none of the children was identifiable.

Besides generating stories, the children's beat writer is a source for other reporters on the staff and can improve children's issues coverage across the board. If a general assignment reporter has to make sense of a child-abuse death on deadline, the children's beat writer can give him or her an expert on shaken-baby syndrome, or failure-to-thrive syndrome and help that reporter come up with something more intelligent to ask than, "Are child abuse reports up because more people are reporting or because there is more abuse?"

We also have improved children's issue coverage by teaming reporters on some stories. For immunization, which crossed two beats, medical reporter Ann Schrader and I split the reporting and writing and produced a series with much less trouble than if either of us had done it alone.

While the children's beat originated on the feature page at The Denver Post, those stories now appear all over the paper, and many of old feature-page issues now are covered by reporters who only work on the city side. Still, there are habits learned in feature writing that should follow children's stories wherever they appear:

- Whenever possible, children should be quoted. No matter how off-limits they may seem—kids with AIDS, kids in foster care, kids who committed crimes—it's amazing how often officials find ways to skirt rules and make them available. For their part, most children are delighted for the rare chance to say what they think; they tend to be remarkably articulate.
- Photographs should be routinely assigned. Great art puts children's issues on lead pages above the fold.
- Weaving real children into complicated stories on public policy does more than make those issues more accessible; it makes children more accessible. That's important because when we ask if Americans hate children, a sentiment that seems to be reflected in public policy, the answer may simply be that Americans, especially policy makers, don't know children. So the children's writer's task is to say, this is what a kid looks like, this is the way he sounds, here is how the world looks to him.

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Students Get Short Shrift

Newspapers Typically Pay Little Attention to Children, Concentrating on Politicians and Taxpayers

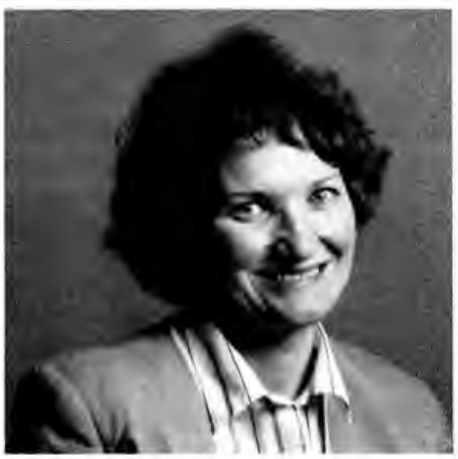
By Dale Mezzacappa

When Bill and Hillary Clinton decided to send their daughter, Chelsea, to Sidwell Friends, an expensive private school in Washington, DC, rather than to a public school, the story was on the front page for days. Most newspapers treated the decision as one of parental hypocrisy: Bill Clinton, advocate of public education, candidate of the teachers' unions, moderate-liberal who is opposed to including private schools in any voucher system, sends his own child to a private school.

To accompany one of the many oped pieces, my own paper, The Philadelphia Inquirer, included a wicked caricature of Chelsea, the kind you see of Henry Kissinger, complete with bulbous nose, stringy hair and braces. My nine-year-old took a moment or two to figure out the subject of this grotesquerie and declared he wanted to write a complaint to the editor. "Why make fun of Chelsea?" he asked, genuinely confused.

Only a few commentators on the subject took the point of view that a bright 12-year-old girl about to be uprooted from her Little Rock home and thrust into the world's biggest media fishbowl might have a say in where she would like to go to school. Who can blame her for choosing cocoon-like Sidwell? In Little Rock, Chelsea attended a magnet public school; apparently, a comparable magnet public school doesn't exist in the nation's capital, at least not one to her liking.

The Clintons, unapologetically, said they did what was best for Chelsea and noted that she had a major say in the decision. But that protest was largely dismissed as mere political damage control.



Dale Mezzacappa studied children and public policy in her 1990-91 year as a Nieman Fellow. She has worked at The Philadelphia Inquirer since 1979 and has covered the Philadelphia public schools since 1986. From 1974 to 1979 she worked at The Bergen Record in New Jersey. She is the mother of a nine-year-old son.

I bring up this example to make one point: for most of the press and the various commentators, Chelsea was little more than a symbol. She was ancillary, treated as but a possession of her parents, a tool to carry out their political agenda—not as an individual, at age 12, whose own wants and needs might matter.

Our presumption that "we know best for Chelsea" is typical of Americans' attitudes towards children in general. This attitude is reflected in our continual debate over the purpose of schooling—is it to ply children with carefully preselected information and skills, teach them to do what they're told, or to nurture thoughtful, independent, tolerant minds? It is also reflected in newspaper coverage of education.

There are many players in the education story: the politicians who allot money to schools and control school boards, the taxpayers who pay for schools, the administrators who run them, the parents, the teachers, the students. Historically, the students get the shortest shrift from reporters.

In some ways, this is no different from most other beats. It is only relatively recently, 20 years after I started in journalism, that writing about those whom policy affects has become as important as writing about the policy makers. Plos, in organizing coverage, on this subject and others, we are shackled by the institutional structure. The norm is still to cover school boards, not education.

And those assignments were never among the plums. Slogging away covering interminable night Board of Education meetings is the way many young reporters pay their dues, and for the most part they can't wait to put that duty behind them.

But while school boards may be dull, education is not. It's a subject that touches everyone, either as a parent, taxpayer, student, or former student. Everybody in the nation over the age of five has experiences with school, and everyone has a stake in the quality of schools not only in their neighborhood, but in general.

Yet education only became a big story—and a prestige beat—over the last five or six years when it became an economic story. Business and political

leaders alike woke up to the nation's declining competitiveness in the world market and turned their attention to the schools as institutions that are no longer efficiently turning out the cogs necessary to keep the nation's economic engine humming—and keep the U.S. Number One. Only then did these leaders train their eyes on schools for an answer to the question of why so many were failing the children.

Newspapers followed that lead. With all too rare exception did we view schools through the prism of justice or humanitarianism, highlighting the waste of human potential, the way children are labeled and sorted from the youngest age, and the way the system is deliberately structured to provide the least to the children who need the most. Least of all did we ask the children themselves what it was like to experience the failure that so many of them were subjected to—and how it affected their behavior.

"When you're dealing with education coverage, we have come far enough to see education is part of a political and economic system, but we seem to forget it's also part of social and psychological development of a child," said Tanya Barrientos, who has covered education at The Inquirer. "We as newspaper reporters have an obligation to remember that and cover it accordingly."

One person who has consistently done what Barrientos suggests is Jonathan Kozol, whose 1991 book "Savage Ineqnalities" caused quite a stir. What he did, quite simply, was visit schools across the nation and point out the glaring disparities among them.

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Kozol did not write an exposé. He simply stated the obvious—that equality of opportunity under our current system is a cruel hoax; that we've created an educational apartheid whose psychic effects on children can only be imagined. His book got so much attention partly because he included the poignant voices of astute children trapped in underfunded inner city schools.

High school students in Camden, New Jersey, a city where two-thirds of the children live in poverty, know full well that the kids across the city boundary line in Cherry Hill get newer textbooks, well-stocked libraries, computers galore and even swimming pools. They know, too, that unlike their better-off peers, their textbooks are sometimes 20 years out of date or are designed for lower grades (and they can't bring them home in any case), that their teachers make less money, that the roof in their school sometimes leaks and the heaters don't work—and they conclude, logically, that society values them less.

Kozol quotes a Camden eleventh grader named Jezebel about a friend of hers who goes to school in Cherry Hill:

> I go to her house and I compare the work she's doing with the work I'm doing. Each class at her school...they have the books they're s'posed to have for their grade level. Here, I'm in eleventh grade. I take American history. I have an eighth grade book. So I have to ask, 'Well, are they three years smarter? Am I stupid?' But it's not like that at all. Because we're kids like they are. We're no different. And, you know, there are smart people here. But them, you know, they have that money going to their schools. They have a nice clean school to go to. They have carpets on the floors and air-conditioned rooms and brand-new books. Their old books, when they're done with them, they ship them here to us.

There is no question that urban school systems are often patronage havens, top-heavy bureaucracies and wasteful spenders. Most big city newspapers—including the Inquirer in 1981 and the Chicago Tribune more recently—have painstakingly documented the failures of their cities' schools in long series that highlight what is wrong and what is missing.

Yet we don't often put much of this into context. For one thing, as newspapers break up into city and suburban editions to reach ever more preselected audiences, bringing regional perspective to the issue becomes more difficult. For instance, we hardly ever take the huge disparity of resources into account when comparing city-suburban test scores. Like others, we often fall into the trap of concluding that if city children are not being adequately prepared for the future, it is largely the fault of the schools and the people in them, teachers and students alike, and we ignore the larger social forces.

Another issue is the fight between the young and the elderly for government funds. Lately there has been some incisive reporting on the skewing of resources in this country, which spends five times more in public money on the elderly—often the rich elderly—than on children, one fifth of whom live in poverty. Yet there is often little sustained attention given to the other major way this generational battle harms children—the elderly often fight tooth and nail, especially in small towns, to keep school taxes at a minimum. The current struggles of young families, coupled with the archaic method of financing public schools through local property taxes, often means that the taxpayers of a town or city don't use the schools (in Philadelphia, fewer than one in five property-taxpayers use public schools for their own children), setting up a natural tension that we often don't recognize.

When reporters are given the time to spend in schools and talk to the students, the results are often exquisite examples of fine writing and prodigious insight, stories that remain in the reader's mind for years. There was Kathy Lally's venture into the lives of students in a Baltimore high school a few years ago; Tom French's chronicle in The St. Petersburg Times of a year in the life of several students, and the series by Emily Sachar of Newsday, later

turned into a book called "Shut Up and Let the Lady Teach," in which she substitute-taught for a year in a New York City middle school and wrote about her experience.

Yet newspapers are still reluctant to devote the resources necessary to produce such stories, seeing them as somehow soft, or not real news.

"As newspapers are downsizing, priorities are not necessarily with education," said Kathy Hacker, a city desk editor at the Inquirer who has been struggling for months to establish a "school life" beat and to reorganize the paper's education coverage to be less driven by geography and politics. "If you have money, you may have school life beats. But it's not viewed as a necessity, not like cops, city hall, courts, all the old time favorites. They're not opposed to it, but they don't see it as important enough to sacrifice some traditional beats, which is a shame."

Barrientos, after a few years on education, asked to establish a "youth" beat, an idea that was accepted. But she still has difficulty selling projects that focus completely on the students and their lives in and out of school.

"I felt we were failing to discuss the issues most important to kids for whom schools are supposed to be," she said. "Essentially, we dive into a classroom now and then to write a story about a program or a teacher, but rarely do we focus on the kids and their lives."

As the rest of government and society abdicates its responsibility to provide all children with health care, decent nutrition and adequate shelter, schools are expected to do more and more, and then are castigated with greater vehemence when they fail in their "basic" mission of instruction.

"We know what the kids bring to school every day and the issues affecting their personal lives are what modern schools have to deal with, because the rest of society has decided they belong in the schoolhouse," Barrientos said.

These issues don't have to be as serious as crack-addicted mothers or a father in jail or the murder of a brother in a gang war or responsibility for younger siblings at age 12—all common problems faced by children in inner city schools. The stresses on middle-class suburban children can be deceptively corrosive, and, if anything, suburban schools don't tend to deal with them as well as urban schools.

"It could be issues as simple as whether they read after school, and if not, why not, or whether they have dinner with their parents," said Barrientos, whose beat is in the suburbs. "All this affects how children learn."

American youths, poor and middle class alike, have minimal educational standards for themselves. Few approach educational pursuits with alacrity. Most would rather work after school at a job so they can buy the latest sneakers and gold jewelry than spend time studying. Status in most schools has nothing to do with academic achievement. Most inner city blacks, especially males, who do well in school try to hide it. Barrientos argues that we don't do enough to probe for reasons these facts are true.

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Schools are organized largely for the convenience of the adults who work in them. After all, children don't necessarily learn best in 45-minute chunks punctuated by bells. And we shouldn't forget this factor when we cover them.

A regional superintendent in Philadelphia one day directed his principal to shadow a child for a day—to do everything the child did, go everywhere, sit in on the same classes. He found it stultifying. The experience was an eye-opener.

Yet covering schools from the point of view of children means more than simply listening to their voices.

It takes most reporters a few years on the education beat before it sinks in that most school systems really aren't interested in finding out whether their expensive programs are actually providing any benefits.

"We can't spend all our time with individual children," said Aleta Watson, the new president of the Education Writers Association, a national group. "Somebody has to keep tabs on whether all that tax money is being spent properly in the schools."

Watson, of The San Jose Mercury News, regards policy stories as the most important role of an education writer, with "people" features second and the old-time staple, politics, the least important priority.

Most newspapers are moving to focus on the first two types of stories. The two most recent winners of the Education Writers' grand prize followed students home, reporting both on their lives and the policies and programs that didn't work for them.

In 1991, The Rocky Mountain News won for reporting on the alarming school failure rates of students who live in Denver's public housing projects. They found the dropouts and interviewed them and the mere 21 who managed to graduate on time with the class of 1990. They also compared life in a city high school with life in a suburban one.

Last year, three reporters from The Herald & Review in Decatur, Ill., took on the issue of school failure in middle America, exploring why 25 percent of the students in this relentlessly average small town failed to graduate from high school. The reporters found that program after program failed to inspire students, and that school officials made little effort to find out why.

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Shaping Values

News Events and Trends That Play Important Roles In Developing Youths Can Be Detected

By Laura Sessions Stepp

Last December, as newspapers ran articles on hot games to buy for the holiday season, I wandered the aisle of Toys R Us, another story in mind. What kinds of messages, subtle and not-so-subtle, were Milton Bradley, Parker Brothers and toymakers sending children by way of their newest boards and buzzers? What kind of values were they trumpeting?

I took but a few steps before spying Exhibit A: "Electronic Mall Madness." "Meet Me At the Mall," "Top Dog" and "Splat!" followed in short order. The newest games, I subsequently wrote after reviewing more than two dozen, "emphasize speed over thought, acquisition without risk and ruthless individualism. They also play off gender stereotypes big-time." Industry representatives said, of course, that they were only selling what their research showed children wanted. But child development experts and several game store owners criticized the games and recommended that parents pay attention to the moral and cultural values that games promote.

Values, a misunderstood and much-abused concept, are what I write about for The Washington Post as part of a beat on children and families. This means I report and write many of my stories with an eye on how a particular event, person, institution or trend may reflect and/or shape the values of the children involved.

I used last year's presidential campaign, for example, as a way to explore Americans' propensity to blame others for problems and shirk personal responsibility. Some of my most telling examples and best quotations came from middle school students. Months earlier, as other journalists reported a public outcry over the rap song, "Cop Killer," I persuaded black and white teenagers to listen to the song with me, then talk about their run-ins with police officers, and the respect—or disrespect—they both gave and received from "the pigs."

When Magic Johnson announced he was retiring from basketball because he was infected with the AIDS virus, lots of newspaper reporters interviewed youngsters on the basketball court bemoaning the loss of a hero. Meanwhile, I was sitting in living rooms listening first to teenagers and then separately, to their parents debate the merits of Johnson's safe-sex campaign, and the reasons why so many youngsters have sex at an early age. The ambivalence of both parents and kids was palatable, particularly from the mothers of daughters. "I was the good girl in school, and I don't know that that was good, either," said one who married when she was in college. Should she advise her daughter to postpone intercourse until marriage, she wondered, when she was encouraging the same daughter to put off marriage until she had established a career?

When former District of Columbia Mayor Marion Barry, a cocaine user and philanderer, was convicted on only one minor count of drug possession, I stitched together the horrified reactions of parents, counselors and other adults in daily contact with young people. I'll never forget the anguished statement of one bus driver and father of four, "How do we raise good children with leaders such as this?"

His cry is precisely why I think news reporting on values should be a significant part of any beat and particularly any youth beat. The adults we cover, their policies and programs, set the model for the moral and social values we want children to have. Their failure is our story and our obligation.

One to two generations ago, when many of us were growing up, the kind of in-depth reporting I'm suggesting wasn't

Laura Sessions Stepp is a reporter on the Style section of The Washington Post, writing about children and families. She joined the Post in 1982 as assistant Maryland Editor. In 1987 she asked to switch to reporting and started a beat on religion and ethics, developing a specialty in the moral development of children. Laura is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Earlham College, with a master's degree from the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. She is married to Carl Sessions Stepp, a professor of journalism at the University of Maryland, and has three children.

as critical. Right and wrong were clearer and norms were reinforced by churches, schools, neighborhoods and the media. Families were, for the most part, intact and friends were available. The parent who had a problem with his or her child could discuss it over morning coffee with a neighbor or after supper over the backyard fence. Since the days of the Brady Bunch, the divorce rate has jumped significantly along with the proportion of working mothers. Parents, both single and married, find it difficult to spend as much time with their children as they would like. The institutional support they once received is no longer there.

The result of all these changes, whether we like it or not, has been to make the media significant purveyors (some would say the purveyor) not only of facts but also of attitudes, beliefs and values. As a Fairfax County, Va. mom told me during the Magic Johnson controversy. "Conversations don't take place anymore around the kitchen table with cookies and milk. They're given in the car, on the run, spun off something I've read or seen on television."

Readers are counting on us to provide coverage that is as complete as we can muster. They want to know why children are killing themselves in increasing numbers, why children are having babies and cheating on their SATs. We give them some reasons—poverty, drugs and broken homes among them—but those reasons don't tell the full tale and I suspect they know that.

Two other reasons come to mind. Values reporting would help refute readers' complaints that all we really care about is the sensational, the quick and dirty. And—if I may be allowed one non-journalistic reason—it might make us better human beings as well as better reporters. Children demand clear answers; interviewing and writing about them has helped me clarify my own beliefs.

A few other reporters already have figured out how to write about children's values with some success.

In November, 1991, reporter David O'Reilly wrote a front-page, three-part series in The Philadelphia Inquirer on character education, an intentional method of teaching values now used in several hundred public schools. The Inquirer gave him six months to report the story—even though the Philadelphia school system itself wasn't part of the movement. "It was the hardest story I've ever done, and possibly the most rewarding," O'Reilly says.

There are countless stories out there like these for reporters writing about children—some obvious, like O'Reilly's and some not so obvious. An education reporter spending time in a school, for example, could do a story on how administrators and teachers there teach children to respond to schoolyard bullies. A sports reporter writing about the winning streak of a popular high school coach could find out from the players what lessons they learned from him or her about life. A business reporter following the debate over flextime could seek out working parents who already enjoy a flexible work schedule, and find out how (and whether) they spend more time with their children and if so, what they do with them and what they talk about.

Reporters engaged in such stories should stay alert to the activities and behavior that get rewarded, for therein lie the values the children will be learning. They must also determine what the adults involved hope they're teaching, what the children say they're learning, and what their behavior shows they're learning. I've found that children often articulate the answers to these questions better than adults; they have a strong sense of right and wrong, they intellectualize less and are more candid, when pressed. I usually bounce their answers off the parents knowing that children also exaggerate—although I keep their confidence when asked.

Values reporting requires sustained attention to details which at first may appear insignificant. While interviewing a 12-year-old boy from a working-class family this year for a story on adolescent pessimism, I remarked on his Virginia Tech sweatshirt. He smiled for the first time and started telling me about his older brother, the first person in his family to go to college. Big brother had made college seem possible, and had inspired this youngster, who otherwise had very little, to be determined to make something good of his life. The story took a slight turn at that point in order to include this hint of courage and perserverance.

I didn't have to use the words courage or perserverance, however; those traits were clear from his own narrative. Frequently people will tell their own moral story with just a little prodding and a willingness on the part of the reporter to sit a while, tape recorder in hand.

I usually find I have to do some interpretation, however, and I always repeat my observations to my subjects before writing them into a story. Interpretation has come more easily as I've interviewed and read the original work of the growing number of experts in the values field: psychologists and education professors such as William Damon, Nancy Eisenberg, Carol Gilligan, William Kilpatrick, Thomas Lickona and Mark Tappan. Their findings often are filtered through their own biases (writing about values lends itself to that, unfortunately) so I have to talk to several experts for one story, and I try to review their actual research. This advance work helps me avoid oversimplification and preachiness; it also helps me see the tension inherent in almost any approach to values.

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That tension can make an otherwise ho-hum story come alive, even land on the front page. I wrote a story several years ago on the highly touted I Have A Dream Foundation, a New York organization of philanthropists who promise whole classes of low-income children that if they make it to college, their education will be paid for. The program had enjoyed a favorable press because it was unusual and fostered easily translatable attributes such as learning, perserverance and hope. But I also discovered that several of its supporters had reservations about it that they hadn't expressed (no one had asked them): reservations about whether it encouraged the youngsters to be dependent rather than independent, and to crave possessions like those that were flaunted by some of the wealthy patrons.

Such stories are inherently interesting and judging by my mail, well-read. So why don't more reporters write them? For several reasons, I believe, beginning with the fact that journalists don't perceive them as glamorous or controversial. These stories deal, for the most part, with everyday people and everyday truths and that "doesn't feel like news," says Cindy Carpenter, a former reporter. When journalists do write about values, they often distort the story in an effort to make it controversial.

Carpenter is a spokeswoman for a New York public relations firm that has been marketing one of the most extensive ongoing surveys ever of Americans' expressed values related to the family. Under the initital direction of Dr. Jonas Salk, researchers have tracked changing attitudes on concepts such as responsibility, respect and financial success, and monitored family activities including household chores, watching television and playing games. Their findings received relatively little attention, until former Vice President Dan Quayle berated sitcom TV anchorwoman Murphy Brown for having a baby while single. Suddenly, "family values" made the news and Carpenter was besieged with calls from the press. Even then, the media glossed over the issue, Carpenter says, by equating values with living arrangements (also Quayle's failing).

Values are admittedly subtle—and that's another reason more reporters don't write about them, preferring articles that are more clearly defined from the beginning and thus easier to put together and sell to editors. The values reporter first must figure out which values to look at. Social values? Political values? Institutional values? Moral values? (Forget the phrase "family values"; it has been so misused by the political right that it ought to be banned from all stories.) Then he or she must weigh what people say those values are against how they behave, and figure out how to explain the inevitable gap between the two.

There are no clean measures here. The people being written about often don't talk about values except in the most narrow sense, nor do they usually realize the values they are conveying. The reporter can always find sources to help interpret—to either buttress the reporter's initial judgment or steer him away from it—but that takes more time than many editors are willing to allow.

Journalists are inhibited in other ways from writing about values. The word itself often is associated with the political right, and many reporters would rather die than appear to be affiliated with conservatives. They've watched conservatives deny government and private assistance to low-income Americans and say things such as "It's not immunizations that children need most, but rather the values necessary to achieve" (Minority health report, National Commission on Children). This "let them eat values" approach seems heartless and destructive.

Aware that today's children face many problems, journalists feel they have to choose assignments carefully. Issues of poverty, drugs, violence, education, health care and day care take priority.

For most, "wrestling with values seems like a true luxury," says Lawrence Kuttner, a psychologist who occasionally writes about values in his regular column in The New York Times.

But values do not have to be, indeed shouldn't be, a concern separate from the others. They can be woven into the stories journalists already do. O'Reilly of the Inquirer notes that once a reporter has analyzed the values of a given program, institution, facet of popular culture or family life, he or she then covers the breaking news "with a new understanding of its deeper implications." The schools reporter who writes about the character education movement, for example, will be better prepared to cover a cheating scandal at the local high school.

Whenever I start interviewing someone about values, the subject inevitably says, "I don't know how much I can tell you." And then, just as inevitably, he or she won't stop talking. I am convinced our readers long to better understand the ethical free-fall that children have witnessed and have been a part of over the last two decades, and they hunger to be inspired by the brave souls and institutions who have attempted to slow the fall. Many of them would like to help but newspapers offer them little insight and few tools; instead we provide yet more gloomy statistics and horror stories.

We pick tales of youthful despair off the police blotter, out of the court file, or from some politician's speech. We also write about troubled children grown up: Wall Street stockbrokers who cheat their clients, for example. We raise ethical questions involving physician-assisted suicide. We write, in other words, about ethical lapses and ethical dilemmas and we ignore the birthing and shaping of values in our children. We have created a world that appears value-less without explaining why values are important or where they have made a positive difference.

Have we forgotten our obligation to report fully the sources of this country's problems and possible remedies? Or have we become so cynical from years of negative news that we no longer believe that things could turn around? I hope not.

"What you are doing is far more difficult than the easy advocacy I engaged in—exposing a crooked mayor, a dangerous faith healer," a former journalism professor wrote me recently.

Sure it's difficult. It's also precisely what we should be doing. ■

Child Abuse—the Wrong Message

Irreparable Harm Is Being Done by Stories That Encourage Needless Removal of Children From Their Homes

By Richard Wexler

Richard Wexler is the author of "Wounded Innocents: The Real Victims of the War Against Child Abuse." He has won more than two dozen print and broadcast journalism awards. Wexler has been a reporter, producer, and/or news director for Wisconsin Public Radio, WGBY Public Television in Springfield, MA, WXXI Public Television in Rochester and City Newspaper in Rochester and is presently a reporter for The Albany Times Union. He is a graduate of the City University of New York and the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. He lives in Albany with his wife, Celia Viggio Wexler, Legislative Director of New York State Common Cause, and their daughter, Valerie.

"In her previous life, the little girl suffered abuse so horrendous that it was the stuff of tabloid headlines for days. But in [her foster mother's] loving arms, the past seems so far away.—The Associated Press, Dec. 5, 1989.

"The cases of 8-year-old Tiesha Carter and 8-month-old Ashlei M. Orellane, severely abused children, raise serious questions about how well New York City is balancing the goal of keeping troubled families together with its responsibility to protect children, child welfare advocates say."—The New York Times, Oct. 5, 1991

"Child welfare workers say the city and state's new emphasis on keeping troubled families together means city caseworkers are increasingly leaving children in potentially dangerous situations with abusive or drug addicted parents."—New York Newsday, April 14, 1991

"I have a physician friend who ...tells me that for every damaged child that is rescued from abusive parents, hundreds more are returned to the same misfits. That's because it is the policy of social agencies in most states that their top priority is keeping families together."—Mike Royko, syndicated column, Aug. 15, 1992

So it's unanimous—or pretty damn close. Child abuse is rampant. Most children who come to the attention of the child protective system have been brutally beaten, raped, tortured or killed. It wouldn't happen if only more children were rescued through placement in the safe haven of foster care, where the typical child is a "crack baby" whose mother just tried to sell him on the street. And more children would be saved if only muddle-headed laws didn't force protective agencies to return children to unsafe homes.

That's the message conveyed by most media coverage of child abuse in America. The message is wrong. Despite the best of intentions, the media are doing serious harm to children caught up in the child protective system.

The media have contributed to the atmosphere of hysteria that surrounds child abuse. That hysteria has led to the passage of laws giving awesome power to child protective agencies. As a result:

- Families are victimized by false allegations of child abuse more than 1.5 million times every year.
- More than 200,000 children are trapped in foster care who could safely be in their own homes if proper services were provided. Children have been taken from perfectly safe homes only to be beaten, raped, or killed in foster care, where the rate of abuse is higher than in the general population.
- The time, effort, and money wasted on false reports, trivial cases and needless foster care is stolen from children who really have been seriously abused and really do need to be removed from their homes.

Yet the occasional article or series about the problems caused by doing too much is drowned in a sea of accounts of children who were hurt allegedly because of doing too little. When the issue of the system's power to in-

trude on the innocent is raised at all it is generally assumed that such intrusion hurts only adults and is just the price those adults must pay to protect children.

The professional community is deeply divided over the extent of child maltreatment in America, its causes, and how to stop it. Yet little of that debate surfaces in the media. At a time when dialogue is vital, the press has fostered a public monologue about child abuse. Why does it happen? Because, to a greater degree than any of us would like to believe, where we come into a story determines how the story comes out.

When it comes to Child Protective Services (CPS) there are few easy entry points. Perhaps only the CIA is surrounded by more secrecy than CPS. Confidentiality laws make it easy for protective agencies to cover up their mistakes—with one exception. If a child dies, it becomes a police matter. There are public records and, often, a public trial.

That is the point at which many reporters are introduced to the child protective system. A child has been killed. The child was, in some way, "known to the system" before his or her death. Naturally, the focus of our stories becomes: How could this have happened?

The other entry point, is, of course, the leak. Both the child protective system and the outside so-called "child advocacy" groups that watch it are dominated by well-intentioned people who want still more power to intervene in families and chafe at the minimal restrictions that now exist. Their 19th Century counterparts called themselves "child savers." When such people leak stories they leak accounts of cases where intervention was thwarted, not cases where it was unnecessary. For example, about once a year, the complete, confidential file on such a case is leaked to The New York Times. The result is a compelling, fair and accurate page one story about how still another child died because the system didn't do enough. Such stories provoke the same outrage among reporters as they do among the public. "Nothing gets my blood pressure soaring like child abuse cases," writes Royko. And that makes it that much harder to step back and see how such reporting inadvertently hurts the children it is intended to help by perpetuating myths about the nature of child abuse and the child protective system. Among them:

- That millions of children are brutally beaten, raped, or tortured by their parents. (See related article on figures).
- That foster care is a safe haven used only as a last resort and only for the most severely maltreated children.
- That the biggest failing of the system is the routine return of children to unsafe homes because "the law" requires it.

But perhaps most pernicious of all is the "err on the side of the child" myth. Because child savers dominate the debate child savers have been able to frame it. And they have framed it as a clash between "children's rights" and "parents' rights." The child savers offer some great sound bites: They tell us that they're "child-focused;" they tell us that "no child ever died of a social work evaluation." And over and over again, they tell us we have to "err on the side of the child."

Even in news accounts sympathetic to victims of false allegations, the dominant theme is that adults have suffered and that's too bad, but it is necessary in order to be sure that children who really have been abused are not missed. But the problem with the child protective system is not that it hurts parents, though of course it does. The problem with the system is that it hurts children.

That is the most important point missed in most news accounts. Typical is "Sparing the Child," a 1990 story for New York magazine that won a National Magazine Award. In that story, Michael W. Robbins writes: "Whatever your fears or misgivings, letting authorities know about your suspicions is what's best for the child...If there turns out to be no abuse or neglect, the worst that will happen is that the family will receive a visit from a...caseworker."

That is not true.

The worst that can happen is what happened to Sara Eyerman, whose story was first told by Kent Pollock in The Sacramento Bee. When Sara Eyerman was 19-months-old, Child Protective Services believed she wasn't growing fast enough. So they took Sara away and placed her in a "specialized" foster home. About six weeks later, Sara began running a 105 degree fever. But the "specialists" in the specialized foster home decided it was okay to wait two days before taking her to a doctor. On the way to the doctor's office, Sara Eyerman died of viral pneumonia. "She should have been in the hospital two days earlier when she had a 104.8 [degree] temperature," said Sara's mother, Angie. "When she was home, she went to the emergency room if her temperature got over 101. I didn't care if they laughed at me when I got there or not. One time I took her when she was cutting a tooth....I kept her alive for a year and seven months. They had her for six weeks and three days and she died."

Sara Eyerman's death, and the deaths of other foster children every year, are a consequence of "erring on the side of the child." They died in the name of protecting "children's rights." They died of social work evaluations.

Yes, Sara Eyerman's case is a "horror story." It is not what typically happens to foster children. But children who die after being returned to their parents aren't typical either. The public has given the child savers enormous power because they told the media "horror stories" and we printed and broadcast them. Shouldn't we give as much attention to the horrors caused by the abuse of that power?

Furthermore, though deaths in foster care are rare, there is compelling evidence that the rate of abuse in foster care is higher than the rate of abuse in the general population.

- A study of case files in Baltimore found abuse in 28 percent of the foster homes examined.
- A second Baltimore study found that substantiated allegations of sexual abuse were four times

Understanding Child Abuse Numbers

In October, 1981, John Walsh, whose son Adam had been kidnapped and murdered a few months before, testified before a United States Senate committee. "We were told not to come here without some statistics," Walsh said at one point. So he gave them some.

Walsh declared that 50,000 children are abducted by strangers every year. Nobody challenged the number at the time. Some of the Senators started using it themselves, and soon the estimate took on a life of its own. But according to a 1990 study for the U.S. Department of Justice, the real number of stranger abductions each year is no more than 300, and probably less.

Several years later, Walsh admitted that "I can't defend those figures," but by then, the panic he had helped to start, aided and abetted by the media, had swept the nation.

And what did the media learn from all this? Apparently, not much.

People in the child welfare establishment, people who in another era called themselves "child savers," are only too glad to provide misleading statistics about the extent of child maltreatment in the United States, and the press is only too glad to print them largely unchallenged.

The most commonly-used number concerning child abuse is the number of reports alleging maltreatment taken by child protective "hotlines" in every state. According to the most recent survey of the hotlines, there were 2.7 million reports alleging maltreatment in 1991. In its August 10, 1992 issue, Fortune magazine took this to mean that "2.7 million kids—some 4 percent of American children—suffered from abuse or neglect last year."

Most news accounts do use the term "reports" in discussing the 2.7 million figure. But they usually do so after describing the most horrifying case of abuse the reporter can find, leaving the impression that all 2.7 million cases involve brutal beatings, rape, or torture.

That is not true.

A report of abuse is no more than an allegation. It can be no more than an anonymous call to a hotline by a neighbor bearing a grudge, or someone who is merely misinformed. Most news accounts don't explain this. More important, they don't mention how many of the "reports" turn out to be true or false after an investigation.

That's understandable. The group that conducted the survey, the National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse, put out gobs of numbers with a press release announcing the survey results—but somehow neglected to mention the substantiation rate, or even to tell reporters that there is such a thing.

And no wonder. Of those 2.7 million "reports" alleging maltreatment, only 39 percent were "substantiated."

When reporters do ask about this, the child savers have a ready answer: False allegations aren't really false. They offer a series of reasons why workers might wrongly label guilty parents innocent, and some reporters are glad to accept this. "For various reasons, including common sense...caseworkers are more likely to miss a real case of abuse or maltreatment than to act zealously on an unfounded case," writes Michael Robbins in New York magazine.

Not so.

In the federal government's "Study of National Incidence and Prevalence of Child Abuse and Neglect: 1988," researchers secondguessed child protective workers, re-checking records to see if they had reached the right conclusion. The researchers found that protective workers were at least twice as likely and perhaps as much as six times more likely to wrongly label an innocent family guilty as they were to wrongly label a guilty family innocent. Thus, not only are 61 percent of reports false, that figure is probably an underestimate.

There are a number of reasons for this, including common sense. When workers say there was no abuse and there was,

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Abuse

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higher in foster care than in the general population.

- When alumni of what is said to be an exemplary foster care program in the Pacific Northwest were questioned, 24 percent of the girls said they were victims of actual or attempted sexual abuse in their foster homes.

And all this does not even include state sponsored foster care abuse: "boarder babies," effectively caged in hospitals for weeks after birth; "overnighters," children kept in offices by day and farmed out to any place that has a bed at night, and "baby warehouses," latter-day orphanages like those in New York City in the late 1980's, in which untrained workers tended children in shifts, health and safety code violations were rampant, at least two children died of infectious diarrhea and all were starved for love.

Even when the physical conditions are perfect and the foster parents do their best, as most do, the removal of a child from everyone he or she loves to foster care is inherently harmful. Pollock of The Sacramento Bee writes about a three-year-old girl, taken from her parents as a result of mistaken identity. "I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry," this child screamed. She assumed that she must have done something terribly wrong and now she was being punished. That girl was returned home within a month—a very long time for small children, who have a very different sense of time from adults. She will live with the trauma forever. And other children don't come back in a month, or a year, or ever.

"Foster care is the garbage dump," said a 21-year-old woman who had been in nine different homes by the time she was nine years old. "That's what they do with kids when they don't know what else to do with them—throw 'em in foster care."

Although abuse in family foster homes gets little press attention, the system's other failings have been cov-

they risk the wrath of their bosses, elected officials, the public and, especially, the media. There is no penalty for wrongly labeling parents abusive.

And what about the cases that are "substantiated"? That does not mean the case against the parent was proven in a court of law. In most cases, it just means that an untrained, inexperienced worker concluded there was "some credible evidence" that a child was abused or neglected or might be abused or neglected in the future. That's all that is needed, even if there is more evidence to suggest innocence.

What kind of "substantiated" cases dominate workers caseloads? In "Scared Silent," a documentary about child abuse aired on all three commercial networks and PBS last fall, narrator Oprah Winfrey opens the program by declaring that the cases of brutal physical and sexual abuse she is about to show us are "frighteningly typical" of the 2.7 million reports.

That's not true either. In fact, such cases represent only eight percent of those 2.7 million reports. Far more common are cases categorized as "deprivation of necessities." Often, these are cases in which a family's poverty is confused with "neglect."

Had Winfrey and producer Arnold Shapiro really wanted to show "frighteningly typical" cases, they would have to have shown cases in which the accusation was false or the parents were labeled neglectful because the food stamps ran out or they didn't have a decent place to live. The rampant confusion of poverty with neglect is the biggest problem besetting the child protective system today, and, unfortunately, the least reported.

Data from survey research often are similarly flawed—or the data are taken out of context by the child savers.

Thus, for example, the National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse declares that a Denver study of sexual abuse allegations "found that only eight percent of reports were false." In other literature, the figure from that study has been given as six percent. (The difference depends on whether cases in which the researchers could make no determination were included when percentages were computed).

In fact, whether one uses six percent or eight percent, that figure applies only to malicious falsehoods. The researchers found that an additional 17 percent of the reports were made in good faith but also turned out to be false. And in another 24 percent of the cases the researchers could not determine if the report was true or not.

Thus, what this study actually found was that at least 23 percent and possibly as many as 47 percent of all sexual abuse allegations are false. Furthermore, to be considered true in this study, a report needed only to meet the "some credible evidence" test used by child protective agencies, even if there was more evidence that the report was false.

Some numbers are repeated so often that people are surprised to find how little data there are supporting them.

Studies attempting to estimate the percentage of people sexually abused during childhood have come up with results ranging from one percent to 62 percent. In addition, these studies use widely varying definitions of abuse, and usually include abuse by anyone, not just cases subject to the jurisdiction of Child Protective Services.

But because large numbers attract more attention than small numbers, the claim appears repeatedly that "one out of three girls and one out of ten boys will be sexually abused" during childhood. The best evidence we have concerning the true prevalence of sexual abuse comes from a review by seven Canadian researchers of 20 different studies. They found that the studies with the best methodology consistently found that between 10 and 12 percent of girls under age 14 are sexually abused by someone (not necessarily a parent or guardian) during their childhoods. The study that produced the "one out of three" claim was singled out for criticism by these researchers.

That 10 to 12 percent figure, like all of the best evidence concerning the true extent of child abuse in America, is cause for alarm, concern, and action. The problem of child abuse is serious and real. But the solutions have been phony. The first step toward finding real solutions is getting a real understanding of the numbers. ■

ered repeatedly and well. Yet at the same time, when we write about abused children we continue to view foster care as a safe haven.

I believe that is because of one assumption that is almost never questioned: that all the children in foster care really need to be there. It is assumed that all of the children in care were taken from brutal and/or hopelessly addicted parents, so even bad foster care must be an improvement. That's not true, either. The foster care system is filled with children who don't need to be there.

The typical foster child is not a crack baby. Far more common are children who have been taken from their parents because the family's poverty has been confused with "neglect." Children like the children of James Norman.

James Norman was a widower living in Chicago. He took enormous pride in his children, and in how he was raising them. But after he developed a heart condition, he was unable to work full time. Then he fell behind on his bills. Then the electricity to his apartment was cut off. Then the helping hand of Child Protective Services struck. A CPS worker found a messy home with food spoiling in the refrigerator because there was no electricity. Instead of offering help with housekeeping and utility bills, the worker immediately removed the Norman children.

James Norman took three buses and walked a mile at each end of the trip to visit his children. After nearly a year, Norman's lawyers had arranged the financial help that CPS was supposed to provide, and a court hearing was scheduled to determine if James Norman's children finally could come home. But 12 days before the hearing, James Norman's heart finally gave out. He died at age 38. In the last years of his life, James Norman had a weak heart, but it took Child Protective Services to break it—and to make orphans of the Norman children.

Or consider the case of Aurora A. She was hospitalized after being beaten by her husband. When she was released from the hospital, CPS wouldn't give back her children because they didn't like her housing arrangements. The

children spent five years in foster care. At one point, they actually were returned to their abusive father because he had an apartment and their mother didn't. When he was 12, one of Aurora A's children talked about the experience: "It's hard for me to tell you how bad foster care is," the boy said. "My mother used to come visit me a lot when I was in care, and when she left, it felt like the whole world was leaving me."

Except for the fact that they are horrible, cases like those of James Norman and Aurora A. are not horror stories, not if that term means "unusual."

A study of foster care in Newark, N.J. found that 25 percent of foster children were in care solely because their parents lacked decent housing. It was an "underlying cause" of placement for another 17 percent. A study of "boarder babies" in New York City found that the biggest single factor forcing them to remain in hospitals was lack of housing. Also in New York City, a judge found that the city routinely tears apart families solely because they are poor. In Illinois, a class action lawsuit alleges that the state "routinely removes children from their parents due to homelessness or other conditions caused by poverty alone." And in California, homeless children were given emergency shelter only on condition that they be separated from their parents, until a successful lawsuit put an end to the practice.

Housing problems aren't the only cause of needless placement. While the media remain fixated on the so-called "home alone" case in which a well-to-do suburban Chicago couple allegedly left their children alone for a week while they jetted off to Acapulco, a far more common type of "lack of supervision" case gets little attention. That's the case in which a single parent struggling to hold down a job and stay off welfare can't arrange adequate child care and is charged with "neglect" as a result.

A study of lack of supervision cases by the Child Welfare League of America found that the services needed most often to solve the problem were the obvious ones—day care and babysitting. But the "help" most often offered by child protective agencies was removing the child to foster care.

Experts who are not in the child saver camp estimate that at least half the children now in foster care could be safely in their own homes if proper services were provided. In some cases, that may mean nothing more than a rent subsidy or a place in a day care center. In more serious cases, intensive family preservation programs have kept together thousands of families the child savers were ready to break up. These programs provide short term but extremely intense help to families. A caseworker typically deals with only two families at a time and is on call 24 hours a day. Traditional counseling and parent education are provided, but the emphasis is on practical help to ameliorate the worst effects of poverty. These programs are not only more humane than foster care and less expensive than foster care, they are also safer than foster care.

That is a vital point. The New York Times story cited at the beginning of this article carried the headline "A Quandary for System, To Preserve Families Or Protect Children." The assumption that the more one tries to keep a family together the more one is endangering a child is repeated over and over again in stories about the child protective system. Yet intensive family preservation programs have a track record of safety that is far better than foster care.

Yes, if we leave a child in an abusive home and provide no help we are endangering that child. But if we divert resources now wasted on foster care to intensive family preservation programs, we are increasing, not decreasing the chances that children will be kept safe.

Even when a child is not removed from a home, a friendly visit from a caseworker is far from "the worst that will happen" if an allegation is false. For small children, being taken aside by a stranger and interrogated about how their parents treat them can be terrifying in itself. The younger the child, the greater the potential for lasting harm.

And, since Fourth Amendment protections against unreasonable search and seizure don't apply to child protective cases, the interrogation often is accompanied by a strip-search as the worker looks for bruises. In Illinois, strip-searches are so common that the state has said in legal papers that any effort to restrict them would bring the entire investigative process to a halt.

But what about those cases in which children are left in or returned to abusive homes. How does that happen?

Some journalists, like Quindlen, say a "false ideal...that biological is always better" is rampant in the system. Quindlen writes about this alleged ideal in the context of a visit to a residential treatment center for 300 children taken from their parents. She is told about the alleged ideal by the center's director. Neither Quindlen nor the director ever explain how it is that, if there is such a strong preference for biological parents, all these children got taken away in the first place.

Other stories go still further and take at face value the claim that some law somewhere requires the return of children to unsafe homes. There is no such law.

The federal Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 requires that agencies make "reasonable efforts" to keep families together—reasonable efforts, not ridiculous efforts. That is the full extent of the law's "biological preference" and this minimal requirement is routinely ignored with impunity anyway. Many states have similar laws.

Then if the law isn't forcing children into the clutches of brutal parents, why do the people in charge of the system keep saying that's the problem? Because it's a lot less embarrassing than the real answer. Bureaucrats say "we returned this child home because the law forced us to" because it's easier than saying: "We returned this child home because we screwed up."

If there is one thing the media have done well, it is to document the extent to which the system is overwhelmed. A bachelor's degree in anything and a quickie training course is all you need to be a child protective worker in most states. Add to that impossible caseloads and what do you expect? One of the workers responsible for returning two-year-old Bradley McGee to the father

who killed him had 47 cases to keep track of. A worker who failed to adequately monitor the home of Adam Mann, a five-year-old killed by his parents who was the subject of a PBS Frontline documentary, closed the case because she had 60 to 70 others to deal with.

And why are caseloads so high? Because the system is flooded with false reports and trivial cases, every one of which must be investigated (see related article, page 20). That is the other way "erring on the side of the child" hurts children—it diverts resources from children truly in need.

What, then, can the media do to improve coverage of child welfare? The first thing that can be done is simple. The next time a source says that children are returned to unsafe homes because of "the law," ask to see the actual statute. Other solutions are more complex:

1. Follow the money

The federal government spends at least eight times more on foster care than on programs to keep children out of foster care. That's because aid for foster care is an "entitlement." Meet the basic qualifications and a state gets a percentage of its costs reimbursed for every child it places in foster care. There is no such entitlement for family preservation, though bills pending in Congress would begin to change that.

As a result, although family preservation costs less in total dollars, it may cost more for the state or local government footing the bill. That leads to needless foster care placement. The problem is compounded when care is provided by private agencies paid on a per diem basis. We know we're supposed to be suspicious of big government, big business, and big labor, but big charity often gets a free ride. The fact that the agencies are "nonprofit" is irrelevant. The pressure to survive often induces in such agencies a form of greed that is as corrosive to common decency as the worst corporate behavior.

The result of this pressure was documented in a brilliant series about the private agencies that dominate foster care in New York City done by The Daily News in 1975. The series showed how agencies kept children in care needlessly in order to keep their per diem payments rolling in.

The sources for the 1991 New York Newsday story cited at the beginning of this article, in which people complained that the city allegedly is not putting enough children in foster care, came largely from those same agencies. Only in the third to last paragraph was it noted that, at the time the story was written, 17 percent of the beds these agencies administered were empty. That should have raised a red flag.

The current administrator of the city's Child Welfare Administration, Robert Little, often makes this point to reporters. The media duly note it in a paragraph and move on. Although the media often report on how financial incentives affect health care—doctors ordering more tests when they own the labs, for example—private child welfare agencies have been largely exempt from the same scrutiny. I know of no effort to follow up on what The Daily News did 18 years ago.

2. Broaden the sources

This is the easiest advice to give and the hardest to follow. What do we do when our editors come to us and say: "Do the definitive story about child abuse in America. Take all day if necessary."? We rush to the clip file or the database and see what's been done before, then call the same people who were called for the last story. That usually means calling "child savers." Though the professional community is divided on these issues, the child savers have avidly courted the media and wormed their way into our Rolodexes.

One way to broaden the base of sources is to treat the child protective system as analogous to the criminal justice system. Just as we would not write a story about that system without contacting defense attorneys, so too, stories about the child protective system should include whoever regularly provides defense counsel in child abuse cases.

In some communities there is no such institutional provider. But in other places, a public defender's office or agency that regularly represents the indigent may be helpful. In some cities, the federal government's Legal Services Corporation is actively involved in litigation surrounding these issues. These sources can lead you to one of the best ways to get around the confidentiality barrier: civil lawsuits.

When the victim of a false allegation of child abuse files a civil suit, the veil of confidentiality is lifted. Even if there is no trial, documents and depositions taken during the pre-trial "discovery" process usually are readily available. Not only does this allow you to get all sides of the story, you can get all sides of the story under oath.

Similarly, there are dozens of class action lawsuits dealing with child protective and foster care systems around the country. The Aurora A. and James Norman cases are parts of such suits.

Other sources are listed in the resource guide on page 24.

3. Check foster care panics

Try to obtain statistics on how many children are placed in the weeks before and after a child's death is in the headlines. Then ask if all those additional placements are really necessary.

Finally, a personal note. In October, 1991, I was part of a group of people who held a conference at Harvard Law School to organize around these issues. We formed the National Coalition for Child Protection Reform. On a volunteer basis, I have drafted a press kit for the group. The coalition is the only organization I have joined in 16 years as a journalist and, in answer to the obvious question, since the publication of my book, "Wounded Innocents," I have not written news stories about this topic.

In September 1986, three-year-old Eli Creekmore of Everett, WA. was kicked to death by his father. Eli was "known to the system." He had been taken from, and returned to, his father repeatedly before he died. The death provoked a press and public furor, as well it should have. It also caused a foster care panic.

continued on next page

A Guide to Resources for Better Reporting of Child Abuse

Newspaper Series

Kent Pollock, "The Child Protectors," Sacramento Bee, August, 1986. This is the first series I know of to examine the excesses of the child protective system and still one of the best.

Jim Okerblom and John Wilkens, "In the Best Interest of the Child?" The San Diego Union, December, 1991. This five-part series, dealing largely with false allegations of sexual abuse, is only a portion of what Okerblom and Wilkens have written over the past year and a half. Their outstanding reporting, combined with the work of a county grand jury (see below) is beginning to force changes in the way Child Protective Services operates in San Diego.

Tom Charlier and Shirley Downing, "Justice Abused: A 1980's Witch-hunt," The Memphis Commercial Appeal, January, 1988. This series deals with so-called "mass molestation" cases around the country.

David Shaw, "Where was Skepticism in Media?" (Title of the first story in an untitled Pulitzer Prize-winning four-part series on coverage of the McMartin Preschool case) The Los Angeles Times Jan. 19-22, 1990.

William Heffernan and Stewart Ain, "Big Money, Little Victims" (Title of the first story in an untitled six-part series on the New York City foster care system) The New York Daily News, May 13-18 1975. This series documents how private child welfare agencies in New York City kept children in care rather than work to return them home or free them for adoption so they could continue collecting fees to care for the children. Though this series is almost 18 years old, it is, unfortunately, not out of date.

Other Resources

National Coalition for Child Protection Reform, 9 Willard St., Cambridge MA 02138 (617) 491-8706. This group of volunteers, of which I am a member, has published a press kit offering an alternative view of the child protective system. Included are a series of recommendations for changing the system.

The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation 250 Park Ave., New York, NY 10177-0026 (212) 986-7050 has published a press kit called Keeping Families Together: Facts on Family Preservation Services. The foundation's Program for Children has been a national leader in funding and promoting family preservation as an alternative to foster care. The foundation is an excellent source of information about family preservation in particular and the child welfare system in general.

The National Center for Youth Law, 114 Sansome Street, Suite 900, San Francisco CA 94104, publishes Youth Law News, a bimonthly newsletter packed with information about issues involving child welfare and child poverty. It also puts out other useful publications.

The 1991-92 San Diego County Grand Jury spent a year investigating that county's child protective system with extraordinary thoroughness. The portrait painted by their reports is frightening. Though they focused on only one county, the system in San Diego is typical of the operations of Child Protective Services throughout the United States. Reports include: Report No. 2, Families in Crisis, Feb. 6, 1992; Report No. 6, The Case of Alicia W., June 23, 1992, Report No. 7, The Crisis in Foster Care, June 29, 1992; Report No. 8, Child Sexual Abuse, Assault and Molest Issues, June 29, 1992; and Families in Crisis—Supplement, June 29, 1992. This last report documents what the Grand Jury viewed as a remarkable willingness by authorities in San Diego to respond to the Grand Jury's findings and try to change the system. Reports are available from the Grand Jury, County of San Diego, 1420 Kettner Blvd., Suite 310, San Diego CA 92101-2432. (619) 236-2675.

Other Reports:

Karen Benker and James Rempel, "Inexcusable Harm: The Effect of Institutionalization on Young Foster Children in New York City" (May, 1989). Public Interest Health Consortium for New York City, c/o Health Action Resource Center, 490 Riverside Drive (Room 243) New York, NY 10027 (212) 222-5900 ext. 910. This report, on the city's "baby warehouses" provides a bracing dose of reality to counter one of the latest child welfare fads: the "back to the orphanage" movement.

"Study Findings: Study of National Incidence and Prevalence of Child Abuse and Neglect: 1988" (U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, 1988).

"Splintered Lives: A Report on Decision Making for Children in Foster Care" (1988) Association for Children of New Jersey, 17 Academy Street, Suite 709, Newark, NJ 07102 (201) 643-3876.

A one-year subscription to Youth Law News costs $40. The rest are free. ■

Abuse

continued from preceding page

CPS workers, terrified that the "next" Eli Creekmore would be on their caseload, rushed to remove children from their homes for little or no reason. The number of children in foster care soared from 5,300 to almost 6,400. The manager of the state's foster care program attributes 50 to 75 percent of the increase to reaction to the Creekmore death and the publicity surrounding it. Even the state's own study found that after the Creekmore death 30 percent of the petitions for foster care placement in the Seattle area were unnecessary. We know what will happen to many of these children. Many will bounce from home to home, emerging years later unable to love or trust anyone. Some will grow up to join the ranks of America's homeless. Some will fill our jails. But they will suffer in obscurity. No one will mourn for them as an entire state mourned for Eli Creekmore. No one will be held accountable for their fate. No one will demand that we "err on the side of the child" by keeping more children out of foster care.

None of that will happen. Unless we decide that false allegations of child abuse are as worthy of our attention as child abuse itself. Unless we decide that the tragedy of wrongful removal from a loving home demands as much attention as the tragedy of wrongful return to a hateful home. Unless we decide that children abused by the system are as worthy of our attention as children abused by their parents. ■

Family Life: The Last Taboo

Newspapers Can Best Serve Parents and Grandparents By Helping Them Connect With Other Parents

By Richard Louv

In the mid-1980's, when I began writing my column for The San Diego Union (now, after a merger, The San Diego Union-Tribune), children were not yet on the cultural radar screen. At that point, we were still in the Exorcist era, when children were to be feared and not heard. Through the 1970's, you could hear it in our daily language: the young and the hip often referred to children as rug-rats, curtain-climbers, little monsters. To some Americans, particularly the devoutly environmental (and I include myself among them), children were seen as the essence of overpopulation. To some cultural conservatives, children were little monsters, '60's mutants, uppity little long-hairs.

Rather than celebrating children, the media tended to demonize them: An ad for the movie "It's Alive" read: "It was born three days ago. It has killed seven people. Its parents are human beings. Whatever it is....'It's Alive.'"

This new attitude toward children was extraordinary. Even during the Middle Ages, folklore did not project such fiendish hostility onto children. Our children certainly felt this break with the past. When I asked one classroom of high school students what they most feared about the future, several said, "Kids." I asked why. A tough-looking junior answered. "Because kids will just keep getting worse." Unlike many editors who discounted children and family issues as less-than-serious (something to be relegated to cute stories in the lifestyle sections), my editors at the newspaper encouraged me to write about how family life was being reshaped by the tectonic societal shifts. My newspaper column did not start out as, and in fact is not now, a family-issues column. I write about trends—social, political, environmental and technological. No institution in society is affected more than the family by rapid changes in these four areas; consequently, about half of the columns that I write are about the family. In 1988, Houghton Mifflin offered me a book contract to further explore the topic. (Response from other book publishers was indicative: One New York editor said a book on the reshaping of childhood was not a commercial topic; another said, "I don't think this is an issue American women want to read about.") By the early 1990's, the public mood had changed. Children were suddenly a hot political topic; even so, the media were most interested in who should be blamed for falling test scores and rising rates of child poverty and teen-age suicide. Media was not yet much interested in exploring how parents could be helped.

Over the next few years, as I interviewed nearly 3,000 people across the country, primarily children and parents, some of the research was used in my column, which proved to be a useful testing ground for ideas. In researching "Childhood's Future" and my column, my strategy was, whenever possible, to avoid experts. I learned quickly that much of the work on family issues, by sociologists, psychologists and journalists, was expert-bound: We tend to interview professors and each other, but we tend not to listen to children, and we listen even less to parents—who are to be blamed and not heard. Media have tended to treat parents as a larger form of children: Too often, stories on parenting are warm, fuzzy and cute. While parenting *is* a warm and positive

Richard Louv is a columnist for The San Diego Union-Tribune. He is also a contributing editor to Parents magazine and the author of "Childhood's Future" (Anchor Books) and "Father Love" (Pocket), a book about fatherhood in America, to be published in May, 1993. He is currently working on a book about how parents can reshape their communities. He is married and the father of two boys, class of 2000 and 2006.

experience for many of us, it is not cute: It is the most difficult job we have; we face extraordinary pressures and isolation. But the meta-message coming at parents these days, from the culture, is that parenting itself is bad for kids; what we're told by the media is that what we really need is an expert, a psychologist, the right how-to-parent book—these books all seem to have the same title: "I'm OK as a Parent and You're Not."

However, what parents need most are other parents; parents may not know the right answers, but they always know the right questions. In my group interviews with parents (for the column and the book), who would usually sit around kitchen or dining room tables, the sessions would start slowly and uncomfortably. Talking openly about parenting did not come naturally to any of us. But once we got our politics and ideologies out of the way, we discovered how much we had in common.

So often, parents would make such statements as, "I thought I was the only parent who felt like hitting my kid." Or, "I thought I was the only one fighting the Nintendo War—and losing." Or, "Why do I feel like strangers are raising my children?" Interview sessions scheduled for an hour often stretched to three and four times that long. Mothers and fathers said it had been the first time that they had ever talked with any parents for any extended time about what *it feels* like to be a parent. Why have we become so disconnected from each other?

The reasons are complex, and worthy of a newspaper's most serious reporting efforts. Among them: during the 1950's and 1960's, our mothers, and sometimes our fathers, traded parenting tips over the back fence, on the park bench, in the coffee klatch. Today, parents who stay home during the day with their children often find their neighborhoods deserted. For many parents, working ever longer hours, the workplace is the new neighborhood. Yet many parents feel that if they're too open in the workplace about their family needs and stresses, that they'll be tracked—on the Mommy Track or the Daddy Track—treated from that point on as a second-class employee. Other reasons for our silence include our trans-regional lifestyle: the length of our commutes (not only for Dad but also for Mom and the kids) and the changing shape of our neighborhoods and cities, housing developments with three-car garages and wet bars instead of community-building front porches and wide sidewalks.

On several computer bulletin boards around the country, parents log on via modem, and participate in ongoing electronic forums. Late at night, after work and family duties have ended, these parents use their computers to seek the kind of parenting advice they can't seem to get from parents they encounter during the day.

As a boy growing up with loving but troubled parents, I always sensed that when I walked out the front door, I could find some of what it was I needed emotionally—I could find the web of support. Some of that support was offered by older people in the neighborhood whom I would adopt as my surrogate grandparents, whether or not they wished to be adopted. They would listen to me, feed me cookies, loan me books. Today as a parent I realize that I still need such contact from older people who can nurture my parenting in a non-judgmental way.

For too many children and families, the invisible web of support that helped our parents raise us has all but disappeared. But it's not too late to weave a new web.

In addition to covering the usual family policy issues, I believe newspapers can best serve parents and grandparents—and other readers who care about children—by showing them how to reach out to make new connections. Families are already creating these new connections in some unexpected places (and I hear from many of these parents, who write long, articulate letters about their efforts). For example, in New York, the Parents League, established primarily to help parents through the hurdles of private school enrollment, conducts workshops for parents. According to Parents League officer Pat Girardi, "It's clearly difficult for parents to make contact. One of the ways is through courses. I don't think my own mother ever thought of taking a course on parenting or going to a parenting center. Our success with the parent workshops suggests that we're replacing the park bench where mothers used to spend time with one another. Our most successful workshops concern allowances and birthday parties—those are the kinds of subjects that parents would chat with each other about on the park bench, the nitty-gritty details of being a parent." Girardi told me of one restaurant that encourages mothers and their children who have just moved to the city to drop in on Wednesdays at noon and meet each other. The restaurant also publishes a newsletter for parents. In some cities, parents also meet each other through a growing number of playground committees, which oversee neighborhood playgrounds, report vandalism, organize play groups. I learned of one parent group, in an apartment, put together by the building's wise and caring doorman.

Some parents tell me that when the going gets rough they receive the most help and support from mentoring parents who are five or 10 years older. I found a growing recognition of the importance of intergenerational contact for children *and* parents.

Children need contact with older people, whether these are their grandparents or older people in the neighborhood whom they can adopt as surrogate grandparents.

One of the most intriguing new forms of parent contact is something I have come to think of as the "electronic back fence." A single mother spoke movingly of how her phone friends—other single mothers—were instrumental in her survival as a good parent, and how she still depends on this phone network for support now that her daughter is in college. In Missouri, the parents in one small town have created a telephone

network that they use to make sure their children are safe. On several computer bulletin boards around the country, parents log on via modem, and participate in ongoing electronic forums. Late at night, after work and family duties have ended, these parents use their computers to seek the kind of parenting advice they can't seem to get from parents they encounter during the day. Many at-home parents are developing fascinating ways of easing their isolation, creating associations and clubs to help them with their sense of isolation. Some at-home mothers maintain their professional contacts and continue their education part-time. Some start new businesses from home, often with other at-home parents as partners.

A few creative parents are beginning to retrofit lonely neighborhoods with family-friendly features. Parents are starting block parties for families, establishing safe houses, starting neighborhood watch programs—but going beyond the issue of crime: extending and transforming neighborhood watches into parent-support groups. One mother, in suburban Poway, CA, has even ripped up her front yard to create a patio meeting place for neighborhood families. Churches, synagogues and other places of worship are realizing how much more they can do to become family-support centers, and not only for the members of their own congregations.

Parents can also reshape child care: Some of the best daycares are co-operative centers, *family* centers. My wife and I are required by our four-year-old's co-operative daycare to volunteer four hours a month, each of us. In the beginning, these were the longest four hours of my life. But gradually I realized how good it was for me and for my son. One of the attributes for me is that I get to turn to other parents, my fellow co-opers, and we trade parenting notes. Similarly, some of the nation's best schools are becoming community hubs for parents as well as children. Parent-school associations are beginning to address the issue of parent isolation by encouraging parents to meet in groups. When I suggested this idea to one PTA president, she said, "Oh, we do that. We have psychologists come in and talk to us." No, I said, I mean parents turning to parents as experts. "We don't do that," she said, and paused. "But you know, I could use that. Sometimes I feel like the last parent on earth."

It's unfortunate that so much of the physical upkeep of schools is falling to parents, and yet when my son and I attended Oak Park Elementary's painting party (the San Diego school had not been painted since the late Sixties), the hallway buzzed with happy teachers, students and parents. As we painted, we talked, about our children, about our community. At the time, my son, who is bused to this school, was feeling like the new kid on the block. But when we arrived, he led me to door of his room, and announced that he wanted to scrape that door first. Now he feels as if he owns a piece of that school. And so do I. Parents and children need more than school reform; they need *community reform.* Together, we need to figure out ways to emerge from our isolation, to help each other—in our schools, child-care facilities, workplaces, neighborhoods and cities.

Parents are tentatively beginning to turn to each other in the workplace, forming "family caucuses" to affect labor union negotiations, and to simply meet and talk. Some of the wisest employers are giving employees time off to volunteer in the schools or daycares.

One idea that emerged from the column and was elaborated on in "Childhood's Future" has caught on. Under my suggested Family Ties legislation, employers would be required to give every employee (not only parents) two to four hours per month to volunteer in schools, visit their child at daycare, or visit a parent in elder care. In San Diego, the Southland Corp., which owns 7-Eleven stores, has adopted such a plan as part of its benefits package. So has the Riverside County Department of Education and at least one mayor has adopted the idea for his city's employees.

Another proposal that I have promoted in the column is the idea of creating a community parenting curriculum.

...today the number of fatherless children is fast reaching a level comparable to the number of children with fathers. So who teaches these kids how to be parents? Television? Has anyone told them that good fathering is more than the absence of violence, more than bringing home the bacon, more even than the list of chores on the refrigerator door?

Within the past year, my column's focus has shifted to fatherhood in America (the topic of a new book, "Father Love," to be published by Pocket in May, 1993). I have become increasingly dismayed about the lack of educational emphasis placed on family life and parenting—particularly for young males. For example, at a San Diego high school that has a pregnant minors program, young women are required to take a course in parenting; young men (some of whom have impregnated the young women) are not required to take the course. Yet, many of these boys want to be good fathers. "I want to be that Cliff Huxtable family," said one boy. "I want that perfect kind of family," he told me. I asked: Has anyone ever talked to you about how to become a father like Cliff Huxtable (a k a Bill Cosby)? He shook his head and looked at me like I was crazy. For some boys, becoming a good father is about as mysterious a process as getting an MBA from Harvard.

Where do they turn to learn about fathering? Not that many years ago, if a child had a bad father, or no father, he or she could at least absorb some sense of fathering from men in the neighborhood. But today the number of fatherless children is fast reaching a level comparable to the number of children with fathers. So who teaches these kids how to be parents? Television? Has anyone told them that good fathering is more than the absence of violence, more than bringing home the bacon, more even than the list of chores on the refrigerator door? Unless future or cur-

rent fathers *know their* power, they will be unlikely to value it as much as they should, or nurture it in themselves. One of the 14-year-old moms in the class wondered: "Why isn't this kind of class required of all kids, before they become parents?" Good question.

So here's my community-curriculum proposal: Every high school student in America should, in order to graduate, be required to take a course in parenting and child development. This is one area where a voucher program (possibly with no exchange of money) could work. Here's what the schools should say to students and their parents: You're required to take (5, 10, 50?) hours of instruction in parenting. Go out into the community and find a course. Go to your church, your synagogue, your Buddhist temple. Go to the YMCA. Go to Planned Parenthood. Go to a course offered by some public-service-oriented corporation. Within reason, we don't care where you go to discuss family issues; we just require you to go do it. If you can't find a course out there, this school will offer you one as a last resort.

Why do we need such an approach? Because the success of our schools is determined more by the emotional and physical health of children than by any kind of academic reform; because rising rates of teen suicide, child abuse and crime are often linked to the quality of parenting. Why should the public schools be involved in family issues? Because, like it or not, they're still the only common portal through which most American youngsters pass. Yet today in our schools, except for an occasional home economics or child-development class (always electives), talking about serious family issues is more of a taboo than talking about sex.

Unfortunately, that same taboo still exists in the pages of too many newspapers. ■

Why Youths Kill Themselves

BY TOM REGAN

Earlier this year The Montreal Gazette made a controversial decision. The paper carried a long article on the suicides of two local teenage girls, Katia Arpage, 15, and Genevieve Poirier, 14. The article included interviews with the girls' friends and peers and their relatives. It dealt very specifically with the reasons why the two teenagers might have killed themselves.

What made the story so controversial was its subject matter—suicide, particularly teenage suicide. For many years, Canadian media have followed what amounts to a hands-off policy on suicides. They were oot alone in this practice. The police would not give out details on even the most public of suicides. Agencies were reluctant to discuss statistics on suicides. Communities avoided public discussion of high suicide rates among certain groups until it became impossible to ignore them.

The reasons for this shared silence are varied. Some people see it as a cultural taboo—they just don't like to talk about it. But the most legitimate reason for this stance is that many people fear that talking about suicides will lead to copycat behavior. Officials of the Halifax-Dartmouth Bridge Commission, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, for instance, will not discuss how many people attempt suicide by jumping from one of the two bridges that cross the harbor. The Commission says its experience, and the experience of similar authorities around North America, shows that when bridge jumpings receive public attention, the number of jumping incidents rises. So in the past the media have decided not to cover these and other suicides.

Tom Regan, Nieman Fellow 1992, is a columnist for The Halifax, Nova Scotia, Daily News.

But it may be time to change that policy. It's time the media start covering suicides, because it's time we start to deal with the reasons why people kill themselves. "The Statistics Canada 1993" yearbook says suicides are now one of the leading causes of death among teenagers and young adults, particularly men. In the United States suicides by young people have increased in recent decades. Suicides account for 6 percent of the deaths among 10- to 14-year-olds and 12 percent of deaths among 15- to 19-year-olds. Hiding our heads in the sand no longer serves a useful purpose.

One of the reasons the Quebec media are changing their stance is that the adolescent suicide rate in the province is among the highest in the world, third behind Finland and Hungary. Some sources argue that this figure is misleading. Dr. Roland Perry, the chief coroner for the province of Nova Scotia, says that the reason that suicide ranks so high as a cause of death among young people is that other causes like heart attacks or cancer are much rarer in people so young. Nevertheless, it's the reasons that these young people kill themselves that must be discussed, according to experts in sexual abuse and suicide. Often young people kill themselves because they have been abused or feel abandoned. As long as suicide remains a topic of limited coverage, the chance to deal with the issues that lead to suicide remains largely unexamined.

This kind of change in coverage is not unheard of. Until the early 1980's, the media avoided covering stories of sexual abuse because they felt that it would either offend their readers or that it wasn't anybody's business what went on behind closed doors between a man and a woman. Pressure from women's groups and others forced the media to change their policies. Now

media regularly carry stories of sexual abuse, a situation that has lead to a much greater awareness of the problem, and a change in the social attitude toward abuse. (Drunk driving is another example of how a decision to publicly cover an issue forced a chance in the social attitude toward it. The issue of deadbeat dads is undergoing a similar transformation.)

Law enforcement officials also feel it's time to change the way we talk about suicides. Earlier this month in Halifax, White's Lake resident Lorne Webster clubbed his wife to death, and then stabbed himself. His wife had terminal cancer. Two or three years ago, the Halifax Royal Canadian Mounted Police would not have disclosed any information on what had happened. But Sgt. Bill Prince says the police have decided to change that policy. "I think we're becoming more aware, and the RCMP are divulging more information on them," said Prince. "I don't think that's wrong. It's only through awareness that people realize it [suicide] is happening."

As far as the fear about copycat behavior goes, Price says the RCMP now believe that more harm is done by not talking about suicides. "It's only through things like this, people reading about it, that things change."

Perhaps part of our reluctance to discuss suicide is that we tend to view suicide as some surt of mental problem— 'anybody that wants to kill themselves must be sick in the head.' We combine our fear of mental illness, with our fear of death, and top it off with our discomfort at discussing uncomfortable issues. The result is a painful silence around a suicide, usually accompanied by numerous people wondering, "Why?"

But there probably isn't a person alive who hasn't thought about suicide at some point. Most of us realize that suicide is not the answer to our problems. But for others, it's not that easy. Overwhelming misfortune, loneliness, fear of disclosure of a mistake, or even a single event can trigger a suicide. (This is particularly a problem in the United States, where almost half of the deaths caused by firearms are self-inflicted.) What makes people think this is their only option? Renowned psychologist James Hillman, who wrote "Suicide and the Soul," says that suicide is the ultimate literalization of the wish for change—that by dying, we can change the circumstances of our lives, and start all over again in some way. Only we can't.

Covering suicides would help us talk about what leads people to contemplate the act, and how outside forces affect that decision. For instance, last year a young acquaintance of mine committed suicide after he had lost his job when his company folded because of free trade. He had a loving, supportive family. But he was distraught over losing his job. By avoiding public discussion of suicides like this one, we also avoid discussion of how our society creates conditions—either economic or cultural—that can lead people to believe suicide is their only choice.

Public discussion of suicide might also help the families of suicide victims. The cultural taboos that surround suicide often deny these people the chance to deal with the feelings of grief and guilt that come when a loved one kills himself. By making suicide a 'non-event' in terms of open discussion, society forces people to shoulder their grief alone at a time when support is extremely important.

In the end, many people—especially young people—commit suicide because they feel they have no other options, and no one to talk to. Perhaps bringing the stories of suicide into the open will help change social attitudes the same way writing about sexual abuse did, and continues to do. By making suicide a topic of public discussion, perhaps we can help those people contemplating suicide find the support they need, and show families of suicide victims that it's not "their fault." Something has to be done to stop this carnage. Silently wringing our hands is no longer the answer. ■

Special Pages Just for Young People

By Ira E. Stoll

Hoping to tap the fountain of youth, a number of newspapers are devoting increased space to new sections created expressly for children and teenagers.

The fountain of youth, in this case, is a proposed solution to the young reader problem that has plagued newspapers for years. Survey after survey shows that young people raised on television, radio, video games and computers read newspapers less than the generations before them. But editors at Newsday, The Chicago Tribune, and The Boston Globe, at least, aren't giving up on kids. Instead, they're going straight at them with an assortment of newly launched sections aimed at hooking them on newspapers.

The sections vary in size, format, and approach. But they tend to be more ambitious than traditional Sunday kids' sections, which favor puzzles and write-in contests. These new sections are trying hard to be full of news.

The idea is to give young readers, particularly children and teenagers, something in the newspaper that is at their reading and background level and that explains the news in their terms. The special sections apparently can be a success with readers. For example, The Baltimore Sun and Seattle Times produced student sections on the Persian Gulf War that met with a demand so great that the sections had to be reprinted in the tens of thousands. While other papers dropped their sections after the war ended, Newsday stuck with its Student Briefing Page, which now appears as a full tabloid page in the newspaper's Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday editions.

"We wanted to do something for young people, to get future readers," said Newsday Special Projects Editor Bill Zimmerman, who edits the page. The Student Briefing Page concentrates on interpreting and packaging the news of the day in a way that engages young readers. Zimmerman, one full-time writer and a part-time researcher create the page with contributions from Newsday reporters who usually cover news for grown-ups. The page is anchored by a 500 word article that usually covers a serious news topic. December 15-17, 1992 brought three pages on the famine and U.S. intervention in Somalia. On December 8, the topic was neo-Nazi activity in Germany; on December 11, an article explored President-elect Bill Clinton's goals for the upcoming economic summit. The articles are in plain English, but they are substantive. Clay Richards, writing about Clinton and the economy, took the time to explain that the Secretary of the Treasury "handles the nation's economic policy." Richards's article didn't duck serious debates such as whether Clinton should focus on quick-fix stimuli to jump-start the economy or concentrate on the long-term solution to the deficit problem. A sidebar explained in more detail that the Treasury Secretary "comes up with tax and fiscal policies, manages the government's debt, controls the currency and helps the President represent his economic policies abroad."

"The response has been phenomenal," Zimmerman said. He's received 30,000 to 35,000 letters since the page began during the Gulf War. Readers are regularly encouraged to write with thoughts and opinions on topics like "What can we do to stop these hate crimes and promote racial harmony?" The page also includes interactive, news-related cartoons and puzzles. Zimmerman sees the empowering, interactive fun component—write in the paper, write a letter back to the paper—as a major reason for the page's popularity with readers. But Zimmerman does not measure the page's success solely by the reader response—public service also counts. He said newspapers have "a moral commitment" to bring news to young readers.

He said he is most proud of running an article by Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel. Zimmerman also pointed with pride to the page's coverage of the story of Katherine Beers, an abused child. A Student Briefing Page item told readers the tough facts of the case, invited them to write Beers a letter, and also informed them about a New York state child abuse hotline.

The Student Briefing Page has its weak spots. At times, it reads more like a textbook than a newspaper. For instance, one recent page carried a clip-and-save Presidents Trading Card of William McKinley, "The Idol of Ohio." There was no news peg for the trading card. And the neo-Nazi page carried a clip-and-save list of Key Events in German History, which included Otto I being crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 962 A.D.

Zimmerman himself says he'd like more space and staff and the opportunity to write more about his readers. "Young people have told me they want to see more stuff depicting young people as constructive human beings," he says. "I think that we need to do more of that."

On the whole, though, the page has

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Ira E. Stoll is a junior at Harvard College. He's president of The Harvard Crimson, the student daily. He started thinking about newspapers and younger readers in a class taught by Warren Phillips, retired publisher of The Wall Street Journal, at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

STUDENT NewsLine

Please send the questions you would like answered about current news events, along with your written opinions and thoughts. Include your name, school, grade and send to Student NewsLine, Boston Globe, P.O. Box 2378, Boston, MA 02107-2378.

BOOK REVIEW

Sarah Plain and Tall

This book, by Patricia MacLachlan, is about a family with no mother. The father puts an ad in the newspaper for someone to help with his children. One day, a woman named Sarah responds. She is plain and tall, but very friendly. Anna, Caleb and their father start liking Sarah as more than just a helper. At the end of the book, father and Sarah get married. This story is very touching because Caleb, Anna and their father need Sarah and Sarah needs them.

DALIA GANZ
Grade 4, Memorial Spaulding School
Newton

Student NewsLine welcomes brief, snappy, book or movie reviews from young readers. Include your name, address and phone number.

Things to remember if you get lost

By Patti Dalton
GLOBE STAFF

Four boys from Dartmouth, three of them brothers, headed out on a snowy morning to play in an industrial park near their home. It was a Tuesday morning in February. School vacation week.

The boys lost track of time. They were afraid they would be late getting home. So they took a shortcut through a densely wooded swamp.

One made it out

One of the boys made it out of the swamp by mid-afternoon. More than 300 police, firefighters and volunteers began to search for the other three in driving rain and winds up to 80 mph. As night fell, blood hounds, high-powered floodlights and night vision goggles were used. At midnight, a Coast Guard helicopter using infrared lights took off from Otis Air Force base on Cape Cod to join the search.

Sound like a TV movie?

Perhaps. But it actually happened to Matthew D. Robert, 11, and Brian Eklund, 13. They were eventually found the following morning after a night of pain, fear and cold. All three suffered from mild hypothermia, exhaustion, dehydration and muscle injuries after their 22-hour ordeal.

Wilderness training helped

But it could have been far worse. What helped save the boys, according to their father, Robert, was that two of them had had wilderness training as Boy Scouts.

"I learned that you stand by a tree," Bryan said after his rescue. "It keeps you warm." So he sought the biggest tree he could find that night and told his brothers to "huddle up."

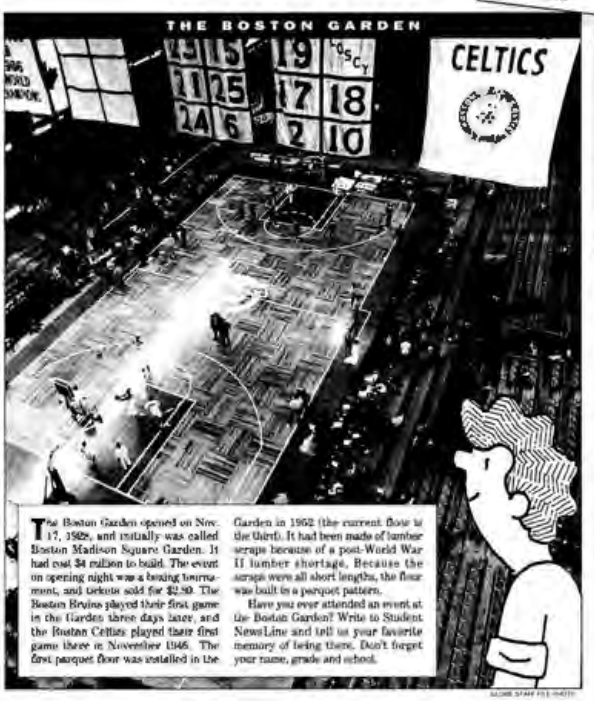
According to Boy Scouts spokesman Bob Myers, the boys did the right thing in finding shelter behind a tree and staying put.

ROBERT EKLUND IS LED OUT OF THE WOODS

"There are alternatives, of course, to staying in one place," said Myers, "such as sitting something in the distance and then following it. This prevents a person from going around in circles. But these boys were in a swamp on a dark and rainy night so the best thing for them to do was to huddle together for warmth and stay in one place."

For the Eklund brothers, now safe at home with their parents, that strategy worked.

THE BOSTON GARDEN



The Boston Garden opened on Nov. 17, 1928, and initially was called Boston Madison Square Garden. It had cost $4 million to build. The event on opening night was a boxing tournament, and tickets sold for $2.50. The Boston Bruins played their first game in the Garden three days later, and the Boston Celtics played their first game there in November 1946. The first parquet floor was installed in the Garden in 1952 (the current floor is the third). It had been made of lumber scraps because of a post-World War II lumber shortage. Because the scraps were all short lengths, the floor was built in a parquet pattern.

Have you ever attended an event at the Boston Garden? Write to Student NewsLine and tell us your favorite memory of being there. Don't forget your name, grade and school.

GLOBE STAFF FILE PHOTO

MORE SURVIVAL TECHNIQUES

Myers and others familiar with survival techniques offer these additional tips:

▶ Stay calm. Sit down and relax. It may take 15 or 20 minutes before the panic subsides, so be patient.

▶ As you relax, think. Look for recognizable landmarks or footprints that will lead you home. Listen for traffic on a distant highway and follow the sound. But if there is any doubt about where you are, stay put.

▶ Check your backpack and pockets. Matches, a flashlight, compass, food or water all could come in handy.

▶ Look for hazards that may pose a threat to you, such as a loose, overhanging tree limb that might fall down.

▶ Try to find an open space that is visible from the air. On the other hand, if you are lost during a thunderstorm, do not go out into a big open space. You could be an easy target for lightning. Keep your body low to the ground and stay sheltered by trees and underbrush until the storm passes.

▶ If you are lost near a stream, you could follow the water downstream. Eventually, it will connect with a larger stream, then a larger. Somewhere along the way will be a house.

▶ Gather firewood and determine whether there is any water or shelter nearby. You can live about three days without water, longer without food.

▶ But most important, think positively. With the right frame of mind, you can survive a long time without shelter, clothing, nourishment or real. You cannot survive without hope.

ILLUSTRATIONS: TOM CLARK

Finally, a new Boston Garden is on the horizon

By Peter J. Howe
GLOBE STAFF

After weeks — actually years — of talking and haggling over whether Boston needs a new sports arena, who should build it and who should pay for it, Gov. Weld signed legislation on Friday that all but guarantees there will be a new Boston Garden.

The reasons Boston needs a new Garden have been pretty clear for some time. After 65 years of hockey, basketball, ice shows, circuses and rock concerts, the old Boston Garden is worn out. It is rat infested. Many seats have obstructed views. The amenities are foul. And there is no air conditioning, so it gets terribly hot in June during Celtics playoff games.

Also, in 1995, Central Artery construction crews will knock down an important building next door to the Garden. The building is where the Celtics store their famous parquet floor. It also holds the ramp that the ice-resurfacing Zamboni machine and even circus elephants travel to get into the garden.

For all those reasons, the businessman who owns the Garden, Jeremy Jacobs of Delaware North Cos. in Buffalo, has been planning since 1985 to build a new and bigger Garden costing $160 million. But during the last few weeks, those plans ran into unforeseen trouble at the State House.

A secret meeting at Boston College

Many legal issues

Jacobs and the developers needed to get legislation passed to begin construction. The Garden will be built partially on land owned by the state and on top of North Station, so there were many legal issues to settle between the Garden owners and state agencies.

However, some powerful members of the Legislature thought the state was giving too much money and land to the Garden developers. The president of the state Senate, William Bulger, held up passage of the bill in January. He made the developers renegotiate and said he saved taxpayers $30 million.

However, Jacobs said Bulger and the legislators made it an unfair deal. On Feb. 15, he said he was dropping plans to build a new Garden.

Last week, everything turned around. On Tuesday, Rev. J. Donald Monan, president of Boston College, arranged a secret meeting at his house with Jacobs, Bulger and other legislators. Father Monan knew many of the people involved in the Garden deal because Bulger and several other legislators went to Boston College and Jacobs has given the school a lot of money over the years. His son is also a student there.

It was the first time Jacobs had met personally with the legislators, and his willingness to fly to Boston apparently helped win them over.

On Wednesday, legislators met all night at the State House with representatives of Jacobs' company to work out final details of the bill.

On Thursday night, the bill was passed and on Friday, Weld signed it into law. The Garden is expected to open in September 1995, in time for the start of hockey and basketball season.

YOUR LETTERS

Last week, we asked what you thought our five former presidents, pictured here, were saying to each other. Here are the words you put in the mouths of, from left, George Bush, Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Carter, Gerald Ford and Richard Nixon.

Enough with the scandals

BUSH: Hey, Ronnie, wasn't it a good idea to pardon the officials involved in the Iran-Contra affair?

REAGAN: I don't know, George. It might have made it look more like a cover-up.

CARTER: Hey, George. We've heard enough of Iran-Contra.

FORD: Jimmy's right. We should pay more attention to the deficit.

NIXON: I'm sick of scandals! Watergate, Iran-Contra. Why don't people care about important things anymore?

BRIAN HALEY
Grade 8, Pierce Middle School
Milton

Who kicked whom

BUSH: I'm taking over.

REAGAN: Oh yeah?

CARTER: I kicked you out of the White House, Gerry.

FORD: Jimmy, next time maybe I'll pet you.

NIXON: At least you didn't get kicked out, Gerry.

CARISSA FROSNITZ
Grade 8, McCarthy-Towne School
Acton

Someone, fix the economy

BUSH: You know, Ron, our economy stinks.

REAGAN: Why, George, it's nice to see you've come to your senses.

CARTER: Wonder what Clinton's going to do about it.

FORD: Well, as I always say ...

NIXON: Shut up, Gerald! It's bad enough already.

MATT DUMPHY
Grade 6, Tobin Elementary School
Cambridge

Pardon my golf game

BUSH: I can't believe the retirement thing. We still get paid.

REAGAN: Well, yes. But the prices of jelly beans haven't trickled down.

CARTER: Shucks, I used to work for peanuts.

FORD: When do we tee off?

NIXON: Pardon me?

ERIK GABLE
Grade 7, Falmouth Academy
Falmouth

Acting or learning

BUSH: I wish I could be elected president again.

REAGAN: The president-elect thinks I want to be a movie star again.

CARTER: And I want to go back to my peanut crops. They are probably doing now.

FORD: Free?

NIXON: All I want to say to Bill Clinton is, don't use secret tapes. Do I dial

NICHOLAS BERSON
Grade 3, Kimball School
Concord, N.H.

What did you say?

BUSH: I'm sure you never told me about arms for hostages. I'm sure. I don't remember.

REAGAN: Er, uh, I just remember telling you that the, uh, hostages were armed ...

CARTER: Ah can't believe that alum surrounded by all these wasteful-up Republicans.

FORD: Right foot, chew. Then, let's see, left foot, chew ...

NIXON: So I said, "No, Mr. Premier. I don't think Chinese food leaves you hungry. Just sick."

JOSIE SOHMAN
Grade 6, Greenfield Middle School
Greenfield

THANK YOU!

Reader response to Student NewsLine has been overwhelming. We get scores of letters every week. We cannot print all the letters and we are sorry we cannot respond to the ones we do not print, but we do read every one and we are delighted. Till you are writing. Thank you!

Special Pages

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widely been considered a success. Zimmerman said some of the 1000 schools participating in Newsday's award-winning Newspaper in Education program buy the newspaper, at reduced rates, specifically because of the Student Briefing Page. Although it's hard to tell for sure, Zimmerman believes the page is bringing new readers into the rest of the paper. Marketing studies show more people are familiar with the page than with other parts of the newspaper. The page itself appears near the front of Newsday. "It's not buried in the soft features section," Zimmerman said.

The Los Angeles Times Syndicate makes a weekly package of Student Briefing Page material available to several newspapers that pay from $60 to $100 a week for rights to print the articles and graphics. One such customer is The Boston Globe, which introduced its Student NewsLine page on January 11, 1993. "We thought maybe this way we could attract some younger readers," said Globe Assistant Sunday Editor Wendy Fox, who oversees the page. Student NewsLine appears on a full broadsheet page every Monday in The Globe's front section. Syndicated articles and interactive cartoons from Newsday fill most of the page, although letters from Student NewsLine readers appear on the bottom of the page and provide a local dimension.

> Editors point to reader response, measured in numbers of letters, as one sign that the youth sections are worth making room for.

"We want to make a connection with younger readers, or younger people who are not reading," said Globe Executive Editor Matthew V. Storin, who added that the newspaper had not been getting enough such readers through traditional avenues such as the sports and comics pages. Storin said he views Student NewsLine as a first step in a broader strategy to attract young readers.

The readers response to Student NewsLine has so far been "fabulous," Fox said. She was receiving about 50 letters a week even in the first few weeks of NewsLine. Storin said he would eventually like to do a similar page with The Globe's own staff, but Fox said that would be much more costly and logistically complicated.

The Chicago Tribune undertook just such a complicated and costly venture, a weekly 12-page "KidNews" section, in August 1992. The motivation was similar to that of Newsday and The Globe. "The Tribune saw generations of kids going by and not growing into a newspaper habit," said KidNews editor Stephen Cvengros.

The KidNews approach, however, is shocking compared to the Student Briefing Page or Student NewsLine. "We're aiming at the kids. We're not necessarily trying to make the parents happy or the teachers happy," said KidNews assistant editor Wendy Warner. That is clear to a reader of the section, who will find advice on how to convince his parents to let him listen to the heavy metal music he craves. The section isn't afraid of sex, either. A brief article on the front page of the Janoary 19, 1993 KidNews about a new line of "Celebrity-Spoof Trolls" notes that "the trolls come neutered or anatomically correct." Warner said parents called to complain when an article described snakes awakening from hibernation as "horny."

KidNews features a Tough News page that includes an In Your Face column, introduced with the lines "Being a kid isn't easy. Here's a look at how the world messes with kids and how kids sometimes fight back." One recent In Your Face column included news of a child adopted by a lesbian couple, a teenager who sued her high school volleyball coach when she was cut from the team and a report on children who commit sex crimes.

Warner said teachers do use KidNews in the classroom, but Cvengros emphasized that the section was editorially independent from The Tribune's Newspaper in Education program. While getting kids into a newspaper habit is a big priority for KidNews, it also tries to provide useful information—movie reviews by kids, listings of events and products for kids, news that affects kids. On the front page of the section, a major news event, like Clinton's inauguration, was explained in simple language.

Newspapers are struggling in a tough economy to find enough space to print serious articles written for adults. Will these news holes shrink even more to make room for pages of news for kids? Will national investigative journalism be sacrificed to make room in the front section for letters from kindergartners (like one that recently appeared in The Globe's Student NewsLine) reading, "Don't throw litter in the water because it hurts the fish and the sea creatures?" Editors at Newsday, The Globe and The Tribune say the kids pages are pure add-ons, space not taken away from other sections. Editors point to reader response, measured in numbers of letters, as one sign that the youth sections are worth making room for.

The mail counts should be taken with dose of skepticism. The majority of letters, as The Globe's Fox acknowledged, come in big manila envelopes full of letters from "second graders from Mrs. So-and-So's class." There is a risk that the pages will be seen as preachy or text-bookish, and turn kids off. That danger is aggravated, editors readily admit, by the image of Mrs. So-and-So standing over the class cracking her whip as the kids grudgingly write letters to the local newspaper.

If letters aren't to be the measure of the success of the new sections, what is? It's impossible to accurately measure the impact the sections have on circulation, and if it were possible, it would be too soon. Editors say they are keeping a close watch on the quality of sections, and plan to judge them by their educational and news value. The success of these sections designed to help newspapers may ultimately be judged by how much they help young readers. ■

Voice

continued from page 6

was theirs so that through me these children could tell their stories of childhood.

I regarded my role as a reporter as one of giving these children a public voice, allowing them to be heard in places where children's voices are often silent. As a journalist, I took with equal seriousness my responsibility to place these intimate stories in an accurate context, supported by the available evidence that experts on children had produced. The children's stories were never meant to free float in a contextual vacuum. I believe that my job as a journalist is to inform myself as fully as I can about the pertinent issues so that subjectively told stories could inform readers accurately about the kinds of issues that are central to children's lives.

With that obligation met, I felt relieved of what I believe can be an unconstructive pretense; that is the presumption that I could report with detached neutrality about these children's lives. As I saw it, I was acting not only as a reporter but also as these children's advocate. Through the power of my position as a journalist at Time magazine, I was transferring to these children a privilege that comes as part of our jobs—the opportunity to influence public opinion.

In my talk at the Children's Defense Fund meeting, I spoke about what I see as the value of this approach:

"Granting children the ability to tell their stories through me is, I believe, a constructive use of journalism's power. I am not a columnist who has been granted the right to tell you what I think. But I have been trained to listen and to report back what I hear. I consider myself to be a journalist who believes that by letting children tell their stories—always certain to ground those stories in a firm foundation of facts, informed public opinion and public policy debate—I can offer readers a deeper appreciation of the complexities of our human condition."

As mentioned above, this type of reporting necessitates honing skills that will establish a level of trust with the children. Getting kids to confide in you, as a reporter, means first breaking through the barrier of being a stranger. It is in that process of gaining the trust of children that a key difference develops from the customary interplay with adult sources: while we assume that adults understand the give-and-take of a reporter/source relationship, built as it is on mutual self-interest, a child should not and cannot be expected to be so savvy, or to have the ability to protect his or her own best interests in the exchange of information.

If a reporter holds firm to a strict objective standard of detached neutrality, then individual children may be ill served by increasing journalistic scrutiny. This is especially true for the most vulnerable children, many of whom have been let down by adults before. And it is precisely these children, the troubled ones who are hurting already, who usually draw our interest. For them, more harm than good may arise out of their published revelations unless care is taken to adequately protect them.

Because children depend on adults to protect and guide them, I would argue in favor of journalists' adopting an approach that might be called "empathetic objectivity." In this manner, reporters would take into consideration their position not only as journalists but as adults whose societal job it is to care for and support children. As Kotlowitz concluded, "But, in the end, I had to remind myself that I was dealing with children." If every reporter who covers children kept a copy of that sentence on the wall next to the computer I believe we'd be moving in the right direction in our coverage of children lives.

Caring about the children can be a two-edged sword for journalists. It simplifies the job while at the same time complicating it. A sincere, caring approach to this type of reporting can make kids less inclined to try to manipulate information, a trait which children can adopt as a defense mechanism against letting a stranger get too close. But when a reporter brings to the beat a genuine care for and concern about children, a conflict may develop between a desire to protect the child and the job of revealing what has been learned. For example, if a child tells a reporter things that may jeopardize his or her own privacy or that of family members, a reporter may be faced with decisions about what to publish. After all, children have not been schooled in the use of phrases such as "off-the-record" or "not-for-attribution." It may be up to the reporter to make those judgments in the child's best interests.

A detached, "objective" reporter, relying on standards applicable to adult sources, might swing in favor of going with the information regardless of what fallout may be foreseen. However, if that decision-making process could be seen through a standard of "empathetic objectivity," the same reporter might in the end decide to use the material, but at least the process of deciding would take into consideration the child's stake in it.

Alex Kotlowitz tells us in the afterword of his book that he decided not to include certain information that the children at a late point in the editing process told him would be damaging. Though he may not have agreed with their assessment of its potential "damage," he decided not to use it. Kotlowitz writes: "I obliged both boys. It was my feeling that none of those events would have altered the shape of the story."

The American public can learn a great deal about the lives of children through increased media attention. And, despite protests from some quarters, we know that the way the media depicts events does have a great deal to do with the kind of political and societal action that results. It is clear that journalism is playing an increasingly significant role in the debate about how to best help America's children as it brings coverage of children into the mainstream of daily reporting.

The children's beat is a relatively new creation in American journalism. For decades the adage that children are better seen than heard applied to most newsrooms. Unfortunately, the children's beat is still not a fixture in a large number of news organizations.

This may be much more a result of tougher economic times, which have led to reduced staffing, than a deliberate decision to ignore the subject. With Hillary Rodham Clinton's strong endorsement of children as a priority issue, even editors who several years ago might have dismissed children's coverage as not vital to the enterprise certainly will be taking a second look.

It is fair to say that those who, in my view, are fortunate to be assigned the job of covering children do not have a well-worn road map to follow. There simply have not been enough steady footprints to follow. However, this lack of a preordained pattern may be for the best because it leaves open the possibility of experimenting with different methods of reporting and learning how to mesh the fairness and balance that journalism demands with the compassion this subject implores.

Learning how to report on children will be an evolving process. As with political and foreign coverage, in which debates about the media's role continue to be waged, reporting on children will be examined, criticized, and reevaluated at media seminars such as the conference held at Columbia School of Journalism last year. Such attention sends a significant signal that the children's beat is now being taken seriously; and that is a positive change from a decade ago.

Precisely where the pioneers of this beat will lead us cannot now be predicted. But there are a few things we do know: we know that something drastic must be done to help our nation's children. And we know that for journalists who take on the children's beat to succeed they will need the support of editors who take seriously the stories that surface and give them prominent play. It is my hope, as the children's beat becomes more established, that journalists keep in mind that while they serve as a vital conduit through which children can be heard, they are also adults on whom these same children, and others like them, depend. ■

Local Beat

continued from page 11

Though I see a proliferation of writers specializing in children's issues, I'm not sure how the beat itself will evolve.

At the Denver Post, I'm becoming more and more interested in juvenile justice. After years of public policy which ignored children's needs, it makes sense that inordinate numbers of children are disturbed and violent. Instead of demanding treatment, Colorado district attorneys are prosecuting many of them as adults to the hearty approval of the general public. One could argue it's blaming kids for what we did to them.

The other aspect of juvenile justice that bears looking into is the quality of legal representation afforded these kids. Just before they're thrown into the juvenile justice or social service systems at a dependency-and-neglect hearing, they get a court-appointed lawyer, called a guardian ad litem. But walk the halls of any Colorado court house and you'll see lawyers shaking kids' hands for the first time just before their hearings. They get another handshake when the hearing is over and for many children, that is the extent of the relationship with their lawyers.

Do these stories amount to advocacy? In cases where children's situations are bad, even a matter of fact story is advocacy. On other levels, as well, I have steadfastly refused to do stories on how parents can help their latchkey children be more comfortable. Even when the source was as reputable as the PTA, such stories seemed to put the newspaper in a position of legitimizing a questionable institution.

On a variety of occasions I've had children reveal their own abuse When that happens, it seems to me you have to drop everything and make reports. That's advocacy of a sort too, hut what choice is there?

The fact that this question must be asked shows how far the children's beat has come since the biggest issue was paper or cloth. ■

Students

continued from page 14

If educators plod along with little interest in the quality or benefit to children of what the schools are doing, newspapers must step in to assess these programs. And not just the endless dropout prevention, adopt-a-school, and mentor programs that are cropping up. The business-as-usual practices of most schools—special education, vocational education, tracking by ability, bilingual education, discipline practices—must all be examined from the ground up.

The New York Times recently took on bilingual education; other newspapers have tackled why special education, designed to give handicapped children an equal chance, has turned into a dumping ground and dead-end for all kinds of problem students. The next subject for scrutiny should be the changing nature of vocational education, which has also traditionally been used as a dumping ground, and how slow schools have been to adapt to the job needs of the new century.

The next step is to break a new barrier in freedom of information access by seeking computer tapes of certain student records—names expunged for privacy reasons, of course—so they can be analyzed in ways that school systems are reluctant to do themselves.

The slogan of the school superintendent in Philadelphia, Constance E. Clayton, is "The Children Come First." That, of course, doesn't stop her from slashing budgets when money is tight, from eliminating music teachers in schools that really need them and stuffing more children into already overcrowded schools, from waiting for months to fix leaky roofs and broken boilers. It didn't inspire her to plead for the children before the City Council, which has the power to raise school taxes, when the political wind was blowing against any kind of tax increase.

The experience here proves how easy it is to say children matter more than anything, but how hard it is to make it happen. It's a lesson education journalists would do well to heed. ■

What Third-World Press Really Needs

A New View of Survival Techniques Based On Very Different Economic Realities

By William S. Wasserman Jr.

Graduating from Harvard College with a degree in history and a miscellaneous background as a private in the U.S. Army, a year in France on the GI Bill, and some time as a Vermont farm hand, William S. Wasserman Jr. "strayed into a New Hampshire newspaper office one wintry day in 1950 to get out of the cold." He started as a reporter and later moved to the business side with the Southwestern Publishing Company in Fort Smith, Ark., and with The Middletown (N.Y.) Record. In 1958 he bought The Amesbury (Ma.) News which, over 28 years, grew into North Shore Weeklies, Inc., a chain of 10 weeklies with a circulation of more than 180,000. He sold the company in 1986 and has since been an occasional consultant.

Some Americans seeking to help the press in the Third World may be approaching the task backwards.

In several different settings I have had a chance to participate as a former American newspaper publisher in exchanges with the press in underdeveloped countries. I went to Zaire to evaluate the needs of the Zairian press for the State Department. I was part of a press delegation sent to Russia to exchange views with members of the Russian press. I participated in a conference sponsored by our government for editors and publishers from nine African countries. And I have been on the periphery of two State Department-sponsored trips to the U.S. from the Third World press. In all instances the thrust of these exchanges has been to share with an underdeveloped press the ways in which the American press works and prospers and to suggest how our ideas, techniques and equipment can be useful to them.

I think we have got it backwards. We have talked about how to make their press perform like ours, but in fact the American press has no counterpart in these countries. These newspaper people are predominantly concerned with how they will publish their next issue. It is the next meal which concerns them. Their newspapers are going broke. They all ask the same question: "How do we survive?" Not "How do we stay free?" or "How do you sell automobile ads?" but "Where do we get the means for the next issue?"

I won't demean the fact that press freedom, writing and editing skills, and raising revenue through advertising are all important. But none of these areas has commanded the attention of the Africans or the Russians in the same proportion or intensity as their concerns about survival.

We Americans have not given them the right answers to their questions. We have talked about how we do things. We have talked about press freedom when their very existence says they have freedom enough for the moment. We have given lectures on how advertising needs to be a focus when no one needs advertising in their subsistence economies. We have shown them production techniques that literally boggle their minds—color scanners and half-tone computers and rotary presses—when their production methods more properly relate to what we were doing 30 years agn in upstate Vermont.

Essentially, we have tried to tell Third Worlders—and much of Russia shares Third World characteristics—how the American model can work for them.

I am sure not all the American press emissaries have tried to carry this message. I have heard of American professionals who go to the Third World with a very open mind and try to see how their experience can be useful even in a very different context. I know also that the Center for Foreign Journalists in Reston, VA is currently working to design curricula for Third Worlders that can be modeled on a variety of premises, not necessarily resembling those in the U.S.

But the programs I have seen have been designed to make the American model serve, and we are wasting time and money by the fistful in this effort. Why? Because the Third World econo-

mies do not resemble ours at all. Most telling of all, the economic base of American newspapers, advertising, does not play a role in the Third World. In our country, our readers are synonymous with consumers, while in Russia and in Africa the reading public is huge but the buying public is minuscule. That tiny group has very few choices about where to buy because there is no consumer economy. Instead, there is an economy of necessities, and no one needs advertising—either for buying or selling—when purchasing is at such a level.

At a conference of nine African countries in early November last year, I asked the publishers present how much advertising their papers carried. "Sometimes—maybe once a month—half a page," was one answer. Most said they could not count on display advertising as a source of revenue.

So in terms of the economic base for newspapering, we must re-think how Third World newspapers are going to develop revenue when it will not be based principally on advertising. Secondarily, we need to be thinking less about how to increase revenue and more about how to curb costs.

What is fundamental, and most hopeful, about the Third World press is that it exists. Indeed, it is vibrant and vigorous. The appetite for newspapers is huge, and the interest in publishing is very strong.

Given these parameters, I suggest Americans focus on:

1. Trying to convey some sense of goal setting and budgeting to meet those goals.
2. Exploring sources of revenue and support other than advertising.
3. Investigating whether our broader technological experience can help find less costly typesetting and printing methods.
4. Suggesting ways of editing and layout and production that will reduce costs while providing the necessary editorial content.
5. Reviewing the kinds of advertising that might have success even in economies with very limited consumerism.

These are minimal suggestions. New suggestions in a similar vein no doubt will emerge. Since I share fully in what I think has been an American myopia, and come newly to the concept of newspapers without advertising, I can only make a stab at filling out the concepts above.

Goals and Budgeting For Small Papers

Every group of publishers—regional, American, or international—needs to work on the tasks of goal-setting and budgeting, but here let me suggest a different thrust.

Since cost-cutting is a major aim, perhaps the first job for the Third World publishers is to define how *small* rather than how large their papers should strive to be. What are the *minimum* number of pages that will satisfy the goals of the newspaper enterprise? How *targeted—or limited*—can the circulation be? How well can that circulation be defined so that there is as little waste in publishing as possible? (Most of the Africans spoke of 20 percent returns from circulation, far too costly a figure.)

Of course this kind of goal setting requires a thoughtful analysis of the publishing enterprise's purposes, and indeed that is entirely appropriate. With this information, a publisher should then be able to list sources of revenue and estimate revenue per issue. Expenses likewise. A compilation of the equipment necessary to publish follows from the analysis of how small the publication can be to achieve its goals. My sense of the African and some of the Russian publishers is that, for very different reasons, they have not made budget calculations and hence are often unaware of their survival prospects.

Revenue Other Than Advertising

The chief source of revenue in both the African and Russian newspapers seemed to be circulation. What was not clear was whether the cost of producing and delivering a single newspaper exceeded the revenue from its sale—a key question when there is little or no advertising revenue. Perhaps the most important accounting function to be explored is the determination of marginal unit costs and marginal net revenue. That information might lead to changes in distribution patterns and quantities and in evaluation of the per issue sale price. It seems entirely possible that higher per copy prices and reduced distribution may be a route to take. In any case, every effort should be made to see how circulation can be adjusted to increase net income.

Almost every publisher from the groups with whom I met raised the possibility of government subsidies. The traditional American reaction is to throw up our hands and warn of the threats to press freedom. But upon reflection, the American press indeed has its subsidies: reduced postage rates, especially for in-county circulation; exemption from sales taxes; government, but still free, press in the form of National Public Radio and Public Television. Can we suggest formats for subsidization that, as in the case of our postage rates, don't impinge on the freedom of the press or proffer overwhelming competitive advantage? How can subsidies be made safe and at the same time constructive in terms of developing a free press?

Another possible source of revenue which has been suggested is the publication of public notices. Legal advertising, we call it. Should the press encourage their government to enact statutes requiring public notice of bids, of contract awards, of certain kinds of meetings, of licensing functions, of changes in the laws? Would not such statutes both aid the newspapers and contribute to more open government?

Does tourism offer any revenue possibilities? Who is getting the hotel market? The airline trade? The convention trade?

Technology Selection Based on Low Costs

We can address production problems. But since the Third World economies do not resemble ours, neither do their production capacities. They have very little capital formation for the purchase of equipment. Their number of pages produced and press runs are generally small. Technical training is minimal, and access to technological support is limited, sometimes non-existent. So it is inappropriate to share with Africans the production processes of our daily press. Instead we should focus on what we have that they can actually get and use.

The ground rules for discussing technology should be that we look for the most inexpensive methods of production compatible with the publishers involved. In most cases in the Third World we are dealing with small weekly publications. In the U.S., even weeklies often belong to a chain with a central production facility or contract out to a large production facility. So selecting sites for Third World publishers to visit must be carefully done with an eye to finding small units that use computers, have their own camera and a small press. Bear in mind that even if a number of Third World publishers in a region find a cooperative way to use a single press facility, that facility will still be relatively small, perhaps three press units with a page capacity of 24 tabs.

Typsetting and composition. The cost of making newspapers has dropped dramatically with the use of computers, which allow editors to be their own backshop. Every African publisher has that mechanical goal—his own computer—high on his wish list. We should research this technical field and see what kind of packages are possible, how they might be delivered without paying prohibitive import fees, how software\language requirements could be met, what technical adjustments would have to be made for varying physical problems (electrical surges, etc.), and what technical support can be identified. Can AID buy direct from Apple at low prices? Would either AID or a press foundation invest in an inventory of second-hand equipment which could be available for back-up?

The prices for minimum set-ups are low. Here are two alternatives:

1. The bare minimum for a small weekly paper

A used Mac Plus	$ 400
4 megabytes of ram	$ 150
Personal Laser printer	$ 900
Surge resistor	$ 70
Quark software	$ 550
TOTAL	$2070

With this equipment, the type would not come out formatted for page make-up but in strips and would then require paste-up.

2. Not quite the minimum... This package would allow page make-up on the printer; the printer output would not be page size, but the page would emerge in three strips which would make up the page. The whole page would be screen-designed.

LC Mac	$1125
12" monitor, black & white	$ 204
Postscript laser printer	$1600
Surge resistor	$ 70
Quark software	$ 550
TOTAL	$3549

What we should be trying to find out is whether this equipment can be made available. The prices I quoted are U.S. The possibility of delivering such equipment at these prices ranks at the top of the Western world's capacity to aid the Third World press. In general the overseas prices tend to be almost double either because of agency commissions, import taxes or bribes necessary to get the equipment to the purchaser. But perhaps through government-to-government agreement, equipment could be delivered at more or less the U.S. price levels.

Printing: I talked to a major newspaper publisher from Niger and asked him why he wasn't interested in a rotary press. We found out why. Together we calculated that his 24-page tab produced in four page units cost him $25 an issue for hand folding. Fast, too. With labor that cheap, and time less of a factor than here, a rotary is not cost-effective. That partly explains why most African newspapers are printed on sheet-fed presses, which print two or four pages at a time on one side. We should be finding out how much second-hand, reconditioned sheet-fed presses cost delivered to Africa. And we should also be exploring the possibility of copying machines used as presses—hardly a concept sweeping American newspaper production centers but a very current way of producing African papers with a minimum of technological background.

Funding: Are there any sources of capital funding for Third World newspaper equipment? If $100,000 would equip 10 newspapers, isn't that a possibility? Are there foundations, press groups or government programs to generate such funds?

Editing and Layout With American Style

What we can share best is how to produce papers more efficiently and for less cost because that is what will help make tomorrow's editions possible.

The American press has an armful of experience in tightening up news holes, in producing smaller papers with an adequate amount of reader interest. Can we share the techniques of cutting opinion and stories to the bone? Can we teach writing which is spare? Can we show how smaller type sizes in display heads will save space? Can we explore tight layouts with careful use of half tones and art? And, applying the same standards to advertising—if there is any—can we suggest effective layout and high rates in order to minimize space consumption? In short, can we share ways to make a 24-page paper a 16-page paper without sacrificing impact and readability?

At the same time, can we find ways to suggest smaller press runs?

Can the readership be targeted? Is it possible to achieve the same impact with a smaller group of readers?

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Black Columnists Speak Up

Black columnists are special voices in a time of change in American journalism. At the suggestion of Derrick Jackson of The Boston Globe, the Nieman Foundation sponsored a two-day conference of 24 black columnists from across the country to provide a forum to discuss their mutual interests, concerns and possibilities. The following panel discussion, "The African-American Voice in the Mainstream Press," was held December. 8, 1992, at Harvard University. These excerpts were prepared by the Nieman Foundation.

Derrick Jackson

This is the first ever meeting, in an official sense, of African-American columnists, or at least since the inception of the Kerner Commission Report. In this century, to our knowledge, there have been meetings of African-American intellectuals all along, very notably the Niagara movement at the beginning of the century, which ironically featured for a while William Monroe Trotter who graduated from this university.

We all have come to meet here in the spirit of people who are trying to figure out what it is we're trying to say and what it is that we're about in a largely white newsroom in a world that calls itself increasingly multicultural.

On this panel we'll have Les Payne, who's assistant managing editor of Newsday. Les runs foreign/national issues and writes his own column in which he tries—I'm not sure I'm getting it right—he tries "to land a foot on the government because the government lands a foot on people."

Next on the panel is Donna Britt of The Washington Post. Donna got people reading the Style pages, though unfortunately still today most newspapers do not have African-American voices discussing the contemporary things like movies. Now she's moved onto the Metro pages.

Next is DeWayne Wickham. DeWayne is a columnist for Gannett and USA Today and, like Les, is a former president of the National Association of Black Journalists. He is a colleague who has not been afraid to share ideas, share concepts and most of all include African-American columnists in enterprises that often otherwise we would miss out on. Most notably we went together to Guantanamo Bay almost a year ago to interview Haitian refugees. The plane had about seven or eight other journalists and no one else broke from the pack. The conclusion that we came to was that no one else in that pack was really interested in the words spoken by their own mouths of the experience of the Haitian refugees.

And last but not least on the panel is Bill Rhoden. Bill is a sports columnist—the only byline African-American columnist—at The New York Times, despite the fact that it's in a city that's 55 percent African-American-Latino. To this day, The Times does not see fit to have a person of color on the Op Ed page or on Metro.

Les, why don't you lead off.

Les Payne

Okay. Well, I'll tell you what I really said, since Derrick kind of muffed my quote. Murray Kempton, who's a columnist for Newsday and the best dean of all columnists in the world—whenever he's asked about a quote he always graciously says, "I got that from someone else." He says that the job of the columnist is to ride down out of the hills after the battle and shoot the wounded. That's a quote from Murray that I kept in my head for many years. When finally I got to work with Murray, or he for me actually, I asked him about that and he told me, "Well, I got that from someone else."

You'll know immediately now where I got this particular quote from, although I didn't tell anyone at the time.

CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

August, Mark, Tampa Tribune
Bayé, Betty, Louisville Courier Journal
Blackistone, Kevin, Dallas Morning News
Britt, Donna, Washington Post
Caldwell, Earl, New York Daily News
Dawkins, Wayne, Camden (NJ) Courier-Post
Freeman, Gregory, St. Louis Post-Dispatch
Gilliem, Dorothy, Washington Post
Jackson, Derrick, Boston Globe
Jarrett, Vernon, Chicago Sun-Times
Lewis, Claude, Philadelphia Inquirer
Lockman, Norman, Wilmington (DE) News Journal
Miller, Sherman, Wilmington (DE) News Journal
Milloy, Courtland, Washington Post
Montre, Lorraine, St. Louis Post-Dispatch
Payne, Les, Newsday
Perkins, Joseph, San Diego Union
Peterman, Peggy, St. Petersburg Times
Prince, Richard, Rochester Democrat & Chronicle and Times-Union
Ray, Elaine, Boston Globe
Smith, Elmer, Philadelphia Daily News
Wickham, DeWayne, USA Today
Wilbon, Michael, Washington Post

It was a Newsday television spot, a promo, and in terms of explaining what I did as a columnist, I said, "You're trying to give the under-voice of the opposition and trying to give voice to black people in the city," and I said that our forefathers didn't land at city hall, city hall landed on them. Now those of you who've seen [the film] Malcolm X know that that was a blatant lift. Malcolm X said that our forefathers didn't land on Plymouth rock, Plymouth rock landed on them.

So, as Derrick said, I run the national and the foreign side of the paper. I write a column once a week. There are very few black foreign affairs columnists, mainly because, like writing the column itself, it is usually a plum assignment that has and should be held by someone experienced abroad, hopefully as a reporter.

From left, DeWayne Wickham, Les Payne, Kevin Blackistone, Bill Kovach, Derrick Jackson and Donna Britt

Donna Britt

We were talking before we came here, and one of the questions that came up was who do we write to. I thought about that, and people magnanimously and smartly say they write to the people, they write to their grandmother. I mean, I think I write to me, and the me that I write to, I believe after thinking about this, was the me of maybe 30 years ago when I was young enough to be an avid consumer of the culture and old enough to recognize that the culture did not recognize me, and to look for me in it. And so what I do now is bring me and all the other little me's to the culture.

I know all about white people's stuff. I have been steeped in white people's stuff for as long as I've been alive and I have enjoyed it. Much of it I have enjoyed. I mean, I love old movies. Film was my major in college. Literature. I know it, and I have sons that are growing up knowing it. And it frightens me because I know that to be an avid consumer of that is to be an avid consumer of your absence and of your denigration. So there's a constant struggle in me and I think in most black people to balance the me that you do know with the me that the culture tells you is you. And as a writer my mission has been to bring, to validate, which I know is a valid culture, by bringing it to other people. And I know that that seems to be a healing thing for black people and it also is for white people who have been lessened because they don't know us. And there is power in them not knowing us, and sometimes we use that because when they don't know us we can do things that they don't quite get and we can maneuver and do stuff. But I think that we're enriched by everybody knowing everybody's stuff.

So in trying to do that I have written about things that have not been written about, as far as I know, in most newspapers. I did a piece on black women's behinds, and the reason I did that was because I grew up knowing that this was—that black men thought this was a big deal. But everything I saw in the culture was blond hair and blue eyes and it was like, "Well wait a minute. All the brothers are going on and on about this, so what's the matter here?" And when a rap record celebrated this, I had an opportunity to write about it and got a lot of really wonderful feedback.

A recent one I did was a column that I really didn't think was that controversial about being tired of voting for white men for president, which was something everybody I knew had talked about. I mean, basically the discussion is, "Which white man are we going to vote for?" I've voted five times, my mother voted 11 times, my grandmother had voted 17 or 18 times, and no one ever had a chance to cast a meaningful vote for anybody other than a white man. Jesse—we're talking about primary politics. I'm talking about somebody who's going to win, and what that felt like. There are millions wrote me and called me to tell me how racist I was. But that is something real that we feel. And there are so many aspects of that, particularly in popular culture, if you're dealing with movies, if you're dealing with literature, if you're dealing with what we see on the television. And we are avid consumers. We disproportionately consume those things. So basically that's what I try to deal with in The Post twice a week on the Metro page, although it's really not a typical Metro column.

DeWayne Wickham

We are each supposed to speak about a different area of concern, and mine is politics. I remember in 1988 when Jesse Jackson was a candidate for the presidency. I asked someone on his staff what they thought the chances were of Jackson winning. He conceded that Jackson had no real chance of winning. "Well, who will win?" I asked. "The last white man in the race with him," he answered. That's how many blacks came to define American presidential politics during Jackson's two campaigns for the Democratic presidential nomination.

One of the useful roles that black columnists play is to give a different perspective to events. In this regard, I want to say a couple of things about the 1992 presidential election.

First, were it not for the black voices of dissent—particularly some black columnists—the real story of this election would have been greatly bastardized. The 1992 election was one in which the nation was told that Bill Clinton, a Southerner, had figured out a way to bring back into the Democratic fold those voters many people in the media have come to call "Reagan Democrats"—people who started leaving the party around the time Lyndon Johnson and his Democrat Congress started embracing the civil rights goals of African Americans. In truth, they are best described as anti-civil rights Democrats.

When Clinton defeated George Bush, many of my white colleagues who analyzed his victory told us that Clinton somehow managed to do just that: win the support of large numbers of Reagan Democrats. Not long after the election, leaders of the Democratic party's state organizations held a meeting in the Virgin Islands to assess the election and they basically reached the same conclusion. Not once during this post mortem did party officials give any credit for Clinton's victory to black voters. This was a significant oversight that needs to be addressed by black columnists.

In 1992, Bill Clinton won 40 percent of the white vote, the same as Michael Dukakis did in 1988. Despite a concerted attempt to get disaffected whites to vote Democratic in the presidential election, Clinton's efforts did not increase his party's share of white voters by even a single percentage point on election day.

A major reason that Democrats have lost most recent presidential elections is because they haven't been able to win in the South, where most white voters can be labeled "Reagan Democrats." So what happened in 1992 to push Clinton into the White House? One, Ross Perot, and two, black voter turnout increased 20 percent over 1988.

Perot siphoned white voters away from Bush. And 82 percent of the high black voter turnout cast their ballots for Clinton. In seven key states, the black vote provided the margin of victory for Clinton. In Louisiana, blacks actually comprised the majority of all votes Clinton received. Had black voters stayed home in droves on election day, Clinton whould not have carried these seven states and he would not have won enough electoral votes to defeat Bush. This is a reality that many in the media have ignored.

Bill Rhoden

Intriguing. I am very, very pleased and privileged to be here for a couple of reasons. I'm very much into tradition and generation, particularly when it comes to African Americans, because that's basically what we have to be, that's our strength and that's our source.

My first newspaper job was at the Afro-American newspaper and the editor was Sam Lacy who was 86 years old, who was still a sports editor. He gets up every day at 5 o'clock. He's in the office at 6, walks up five flights of steep steps to get there, and Sam was the one who, along with [others] broke down barriers in sports. They broke down segregation. They broke down the hotels.

And I guess what that told me was that the problem in sports is that it's always regarded as a toy department, even in The New York Times. For a lot of guys who were in sports, most of the white guys, it was sort of like a paid vacation. It was sort of like, if you don't make it on the third floor they put you in sports and you hang out with the ballplayers and there's no sense of any type of urgency. And one of the things I've noticed is that black sportswriters have really intensified and elevated the level of debate because we don't really have time to waste. We don't have time just to kind of go to the ballpark. There are too many social issues that are intertwined and wrapped up into sports. Right now everybody's talking about [Cincinnati Reds owner] Marge Schott and the comments that she made, which were probably typical. Any sports fan can answer this. That's why most of the front offices in all the major sports are predominantly white.

One of the things that I like to be my launching pad for discussion is, in terms of activism, is closing the intellectual and the philosophical economic gap between the black athletes, who per capita represent probably our greatest financial resource among African Americans in this country, and the black intelligensia. There's definitely been a gap, and what I'd like to see, and I think some of the things I preach in the column, is just the idea of a sort of higher political mind—that merging between the black intelligensia and the black athletic community. I think that if that would happen, when that would happen, I think it would probably be one of the most significant political and economic things that happens in our community.

Derrick had mentioned that I'm the only person who's got a signed byline [column] in The New York Times. That's embarrassing. Not for me—I'm proud to be in the position I'm in. But we've got a lot of brilliant African Americans at The New York Times. You know, sometimes they say, "Well, you were the first guy to win a national championship," which means that he's the first one who was worthy enough to do it. No, we've got many, many, many, many, many, many talented African Americans who have come through, who have left because they're frustrated by that glass ceiling. And, so at one level I'm proud to do what I'm doing. It's important. There's not another black sports columnist in New York City, if you can believe that, and I think only seven nationwide. We're sort of the new breed of African-American sports columnists, and again what I want to do—what Kevin [Blackistone of The Dallas Morning News] does—is basically raise the level of debate. Sports is significant in our community and is also significant in the whole community because it's making a lot of money for a lot of people and we don't control it. We don't control it at all, and it's pitiful. That's one of the things that in my lifetime I would like to see end. I would like to see a very lush, flourishing sports community that is controlled by African Americans and the money stays in the community.

Q. & A.

Q.—I'm interested in to what extent columnists have discovered limits upon their freedom. Most people in the business assume that columnists have reached the ultimate; they can give free rein to

their views. I happen to know from my own and other experiences that columnists and editors seek to exert what I think is substantially more influence. Sometimes [there is] downright rejection or censorship of ideas that you want to put in your opinion column relative to, in my view, what they do with white columnists.

Britt—I don't know about other people. My most dangerous censor is me. The Post has never said you can't write about this, or you can't write about this in this way, but I've said it to me because there's a price to be paid for honesty. And when you are a black columnist—I mean, every columnist gets attacked—when you are a black columnist you are going to be attacked in ways that white columnists can't even begin to imagine.

I wish [our audience was] only dual. I wish I only did have to deal with the black community and the white community because it—the black community—is 12 communities now, or it feels that way to me. When I write some things, the voice that I fear the most is this guy who calls me who—and I know his voice, I don't know his name—but he calls me and tells me constantly that I am sort of a handkerchief head, Aunt Jemima, I'm not nearly black enough because of this and this and this and this, and that hurts. And you know the oppressed white man can call me, I mean all these other groups can call me and call me names, but when this guy does that, that makes me look at myself 10 times harder than I would otherwise. And I don't know that there's the equivalent in the white community because I'm writing so much for us and about us, and it matters so much. You know, I don't know about other people. Maybe you get pressures from inside.

Wickham—I think I've encountered censorship at a couple of levels. When I write for the Gannett News Service, which sends my column out to Gannett's 81 daily newspapers, I am sometimes censored by editorial page editors of some of these papers in this way: if I write a column that is uniquely black, I get used a lot more than when I comment on subjects that are not. I think some editors see me only as a black columnist, and to the extent that I write often about issues I believe to be of importance to blacks, they don't value my work in the same way they seem to value the work of white columnists like George Will. Ironically, Will rarely writes about blacks, but is not looked upon by editors as a "white columnist."

At USA Today, I have to get clearance in advance for my column idea. Even though they don't try to influence what I have to say, this requirement does have a censoring effect. On occasion, I've been told there's already been something on the editorial page on this topic and I am encouraged to find another subject. This is something of a restraint on my ability to explore subjects from the unique perspective I bring to the paper.

Payne—My experience is at two levels. One is the community, the readership, the audience in which letters come in. It's not just the tone [of the letters], it's even the language. In other words, every columnist gets bad letters and angry letters and this is the way it should be. But the tone that I see and letters complaining about black columnists tend to be not simply that I disagree or you're an idiot but rather, "Why do you let this columnist write this," and that is different. That is a qualitative difference in the type of letters. And then it depends on what paper you're writing for, how they respond to that.

Now in terms of internally, there is pressure. There's a tremendous amount of inertia within a paper. We like to say that there is not, but it depends on how far you go. I mean, my view is I break icons. If I write a column I look back more often than not if I haven't really looked at a very dearly held icon in the white community—Larry Bird or whoever—then I figure, well, let me go back here and put this in on it, I left something out here, and so that is my approach. I don't seek to change anyone's mind or bring them over to my side, or to argue, because I believe that this kind of bigotry cannot be reached with reason. And even if it could, let someone else reason with them. My view is not to reason. I'm totally intolerant of this kind of stuff. But beyond having said that, I also have to say that this is known about me: I've been at the paper for 21 years. I'm also armed in a way that a lot of columnists are not armed, that is that I'm an assistant manager and editor at the paper, so that's kind of the caveat.

But beyond that, I've had one very strange experience which I don't understand until this very hour. When Bernhard Goetz, who was a gunman who stood up in the subway in New York and shot four teenagers after one of them asked him for five dollars back in '85-6, one of the policemen investigating the case described Goetz as a "golden blond gunman." And I liked that phrase, and so I began to use that. I picked it up, put it in quotes and I would refer to him as the "golden blond gunman." Now that really irritated a lot of people in the Jewish community. Until this hour I don't know. If anyone can tell me—and I have a lot of Jewish editors and friends at the paper and none of them have told me—it irritated them to the extent that [Ed] Koch, for instance, who was at that point the mayor of New York City—he is no longer the mayor thanks to the forces of good—he went to Washington and attacked me, Jimmy Breslin, and threw Earl Caldwell in for good measure—and attacked me for being a racist, [saying] "and another thing, he refers to Bernhard Goetz as a golden blond gunman."

You know I have to write about what Koch said. And knowing me you also know that I also have to use the term "golden blond gunman." So I put it in quotes, and I got a call from the editor and he said, you know, tell Payne that he can't use golden blond gunman. It was related to me by our line editor. It was just very strange for me, I mean, I don't get these kinds of requests because I know the rules, not because I'm intimidating. So I said, "Well, wait a minute. You know, I've got to use this phrase." So I had this discussion with the editor, and we went to the wall but we didn't go over it. I said, "Look. Either the phrase stays in in quotes as it is, or the column doesn't run."

Now, obviously after Koch has attacked me, this column has to run. So it was a stalemate and the column ran, but when the column appeared that Sunday the switchboards of Newsday were tied up from Monday through Thursday. They had to hire three additional secretaries who eight hours a day did nothing but answer the phone. Every major Jewish organization called. The publisher of the paper was gotten on the phone at least two, three times every hour. And whenever I would ask anyone, "Well, what is there about this?" no one has ever been able to explain to me why this hit such a nerve. And every time I write about Goetz, I use the term "golden blond gunman."

Betty Bayé—Before my column in The [Louisville (Ky.) Courier] Journal started, they were promoting the column to say it's coming on Thursdays, and then a picture of me. And a man wrote a letter to the paper, signed his name, address and telephone number, and said, "Do we really need another nigger on the editorial page because it's already beginning to look like a chapter of the NAACP," not knowing that the NAACP is indeed an integrated organization. I hadn't written a

word. So when you talk about the pressure—just the very idea, I mean, the concept of a black person having an opinion could prompt somebody to say, "Do we really need another nigger?" Not knowing whether I was going to write about flowers, petunias, whatever it was, he did not want to hear it, and to sign his name and address and telephone number.

What I think is interesting, I get letters that call me nigger, this and that, and they do sign their name and address and telephone number. And some people in the column business have made it a point to respond to these people in different columns. I have made it a point not to respond. And when someone asked me in a television interview how I reacted to this, to being called these names, what I finally figured out was that if you have grown with the idea of white skin privilege and you are white and poor in America, then perhaps that's why you are angry, because you don't understand why the privilege has not accrued to you.

I think that that understanding has helped me to put all that nigger stuff in perspective and keep on doing what I'm doing because it's like, I do understand. You don't have anything. And if you were intelligent you would figure out that maybe you have more in common with my folk than what is different because it's raining at your house too.

When people say, "Why do you all need African-American this and that?" people have to understand what it's like to be a part of that group and to go somewhere where people affirm you and say, "It's okay. You're not crazy." You know, we really have to do that. And I tell them that any investment that newspapers [make] in Hispanic journalists or black journalists, they really are investing in saving their lives because were it not for these groups, people would be going through the newsrooms with Uzis, and you have to have a way to talk about what you do and not stay in a state of rage all the time. So that's how I feel. The rage that we feel as people who have gone to school, who have paid the dues and [are] still treated as if we came directly from the project to the newsroom by people who went to schools I never heard of who will assume that they are taking a chance on giving me a column.

You know, someone saying you write so well but why do you write about black people? Well, either I write well or I don't. Nobody else has to answer those kind of questions but us. It's constant kind of prove yourself, prove yourself over and over again, and I'm getting angry right now thinking about it.

Peggy Peterman—Piggy-backing on what she said—and I don't believe I'll every forget it—I've been a columnist for over two decades and I wrote a story about Dorie Miller. Dorie Miller was a black mess man in this ship at Pearl Harbor, fixing food, and when Pearl Harbor was attacked he went up top deck and manned a machine gun—whatever it was—and was able to shoot down several Japanese airplanes. I was just doing a general story about Dorie Miller—people don't even know about him, he just got recognized about four years ago, really. So I went to my editor—and this is always having to prove, always having to prove—I went to my editor and she said, "Very interesting story but I've got a New York Times story here, and the reporter has the name spelled differently from yours. And the facts are just a little different." So I went and got the book that I had used, which is "From Slavery to Freedom," by Dr. John Hope Franklin—whom everybody knows I thought—and I showed her what Dr. John Hope Franklin had written about Dorie Miller. And she looked and I explained who he was because I could see her eyes had glazed over. I said, "He's got 80 honorary degrees—one from the Sorbonne." And she looked back at whoever that reporter was and I believe she figured that reporter at The New York Times was white, and he had to have the clarity and the knowledge and understanding, and she said, "But this reporter said"—and I couldn't believe it. I couldn't even prove to her with Dr. John Hope Franklin because what? Dr. John Hope Franklin was black? And I was black. And it didn't make any difference he had 80 degrees—didn't make any difference. And this book was written in I don't know how many languages. It didn't make any difference that he's at Duke University in the law school and the man that Bill Clinton stopped everything for when he went through Chapel Hill just to sit in his presence for about an hour or two. None of that made any difference to her so—it was incredible. I remember taking my book and closing it up and walking away. That's all I could do. I think she saw that and she said, "Well, if you think he's credible." I'll never forget that. I've never—I could not even imagine. So that made her basically dysfunctional. She was actually dysfunctional. And that's some of the stuff I've had to go through. Not a lot of that because that one was really severe. But that's just always having to prove, always trying to—

Gregory Freeman—I wanted to say this especially to some of the fellows because I notice when Betty mentioned that someone called her nigger, a lot of faces were surprised. I'm willing to bet that a majority—if not all of the black columnists in here—have received that sort of mail. I get a regular letter. This guy isn't as brave as yours. He never gives a name or address or anything, but he cuts out my column very nicely, signs it "The Educator," and always starts off "Dear Nigger," and it goes downhill from there. Usually it's, "Why don't you tell you people to stop having so many babies. I'm tired of supporting you," and this, that and the other thing. And I'm used to this guy, but I'm like you in that I don't dignify that with a response because my thought is if I do that, I'm only encouraging additional letters like that.

But I mean, that's not the only one. I mean, I get quite a few on that wave length. Some kind of lulu writes me a postcard every so often with bizarre things like, "No black will ever be mayor of St. Louis." Really strange things like that. But I'm willing to bet if we went around this room everybody would probably have similar experiences. You find a way to deal with it, but it never stops hurting.

Rhoden—Well, everybody talks about the "N" word, and my sister sitting back there—we vowed about six years ago never to use that word again because a lot of times as African Americans we joke with each other and use the "N" word never realizing that the word was never designed to be any source of love. It was always a negative, nasty, angry—it resonated with hatred so we stopped using it.

I get letters like that too, but the interesting thing about looking at our field, which is athletes, is how a lot of athletes, brothers particularly, have been curiously silent about this. See, because what we find is very interesting. The bottom line with these guys is money. They've been funneled through a system. They don't really think Afrocentrical because none of the people who have helped them get along are black. They're black to a certain level.

What we haven't realized as a people, meaning African Americans, is that they have always seen what we do in terms of sports, as a business. How has it been a business when slavery couldn't happen anymore, then it segued into athletics, and it's made a lot of people a lot of

money. Well, we've always seen it sort of as Jackie Robinson—can he make the team and hope he can make it, not realizing that this is a billion-dollar business.

Who are the agents? Who are the lawyers? Who are the attorneys? These guys call me all the time, agents call me and say, "Bill, why can't we get to Kenny Anderson? He's a—" I say, "Listen man. By the time these guys get to be freshmen in college, they have been lock, stock and barrel owned for about eight years and not by us because we haven't made that investment." So the white agent hands them all to the white realtor, to the white banker, to the white this, to the white that. And when you speak about Schott, the interesting thing is (to her) this is a toy, you're looking at businesses. You look at Schott's businesses, Chevrolet business. You look at Bud Selig [baseball owners' council chairman] who is supposed to be leading the investigation, right? This guy has one of the worst hiring practices in Major League Baseball and his private business is abysmal.

A lot of times it's further reason why sports is sort of this metaphor—it sort of symbolizes this sort of control. Who's the strongest? Who controls and all that, and that's why a lot of these owners buy these teams—so they can sort of have these guys, they can own people. They own these people. And the fact that Schott would talk about training monkeys—and you don't have any outcry among wh—. I think it's up to a lot of African-American people to put pressure on the athletes. What do you do with this money? What institutions are you building?

One thing I say before I turn it over is the idea of the extent to which you perceive yourself as a columnist or a black columnist and how tightly you wrap the cloak of blackness around you. I know I had a conversation with one of our hundreds of editors, a big one, about a hockey column I wrote. He said, "Now that was an important column." So I said, "Well, it was an important column." Well, it was important because, in his way of thinking, it proved that you're sort of fluent in some other thing. And I said, "Well, you didn't have this conversation with Dave Anderson. You don't ask Dave how many times—I'll bet there are people on this paper who have never written about African Americans, and more who've never written about them positively."

Q.—I'm wondering if there are any examples of the roles we play in this pluralistic society—this debate about diversity and multiculturalism—if anyone has any examples of how they try to maneuver through that, the changing conditions.

Wickham—Let me just say that Les often talks about being a provocateur and I like to think of myself as a disturber of the peace. When I write I try to be unabashed in saying that I believe in affirmative action, I believe in quotas. I don't think we should back away from this. I think this is one of the things that black columnists bring to the table that is unique—an unwillingness to "moon walk" on the issues of such great importance to a majority of African Americans.

As black columnists, we understand that the biggest affirmative action program America has known was slavery and the century of legal discrimination that followed. And we understand that quotas exist all over this country and that the only ones that seem to offend white folks are those intended to bring blacks into the American mainstream. Quotas that allow the kids of Harvard's board members to attend this university do not draw the outrage of whites in the same way that quotas intended to remedy practices of racial discrimination against blacks do.

I think black columnists should not shy away from support of affirmative action and racial quotas. White Americans continue to be arrogant in their belief that they are entitled to this country's riches and privileges—a sort of reverse quota system—and as black columnists we ought to dare to challenge these warped notions.

I try to do it all the time. I wake up every morning pissed off about something. I remember one morning reading in The [Baltimore] Sun a very short article about a young black man in South Africa who was tied to a tree by his white employer and beaten to death over a period of several days because he accidentally backed a tractor over the man's pet dog. In retrospect, the thing that pissed me off most is that with the exception of this one small story, news of this event went virtually unnoticed by this country's major print and broadcast news media.

This oversight shouldn't surprise us. Look at the mastheads of major newspapers. Where do they have their foreign bureaus? Look at them and you will see an acknowledgement on the part of white editors that Africa—the world's second most populous continent—is not very important to them. This is due in large measure to the Eurocentric bias of newspaper editors, just about all of whom are white men.

Some journalistic scholar did a study and he says that [the] value of one American life is equal to five European lives or to 15 lives in Turkey or to 1,000 lives in Africa, meaning that as editors look at stories you need 3,000 people to die in Africa to compete with a story in which the school bus skids off the road and two kids die in Oshkosh. I think we need to grapple with some of these assumptions.

While we can argue the whole notion about proximity in terms of those kinds of stories, how do we counter the belief that somehow the war that is taking place, the horrible ethnic cleansing that is taking place in Yugoslavia, has greater relevance, given who we are as a people in this country, than the starvation and the wars that are taking place on the African continent? When 10 percent of the population of this country have their roots in Africa and you cannot say that about Yugoslavia? But somehow we've just rushed off journalists to cover the genocide that is taking place in Yugoslavia and we have virtually ignored the African continent.

Q.—Do [black columnists] have any kind of influence, except for Les, in the news content? What kind of interaction do you have with news editors and what kind of feedback do you give each other?

Wickham—I have unofficial impact. I talk to Peter Prichard, the editor of USA Today, on a fairly regular basis and he generally is receptive to my suggestions about stories. When the Haiti story was really pretty much on the back burner of journalism, I suggested that it ought to be a cover story in USA Today. While he didn't say, "Great idea, Dewayne, we'll get right on it," there were several cover stories written about Haiti over the next few weeks.

Getting papers to do the right thing sometimes just requires black journalists have the courage to raise an issue with their editors.

Q.—As a follow-up to that, I'm interested in hearing more from Donna about the voice you want to bring to your column and whether or not your column's presence on the Metro page has helped shift any of the coverage or brought some new elements to the coverage.

Britt—Courtland [Milloy of The Washington Post] could probably tell you better about any changes on the Metro page. Frankly, I didn't read Metro before I—ever since I was a Metro reporter in Detroit and I was the person who covered

every 5-year-old killed on her birthday. It's the death and destruction section of the paper. In Washington there was so much death and destruction among black people that it was an intolerable thing to read. I read it now much more faithfully but he tells me more about the effect I may or may not have had.

As far as the effect that we have on the larger society and whether or not we are powerful or powerless—my very first column for Metro was—People Magazine had just come out with its sexiest man in the world, or whatever ridiculous thing they come up with every once a year. It was Nick Nolte because Nick Nolte has just come out with The Prince of Tides. I saw the movie and I knew it was going to be him—the hair fell the right way, the sun glinted, the earth moved—I knew it was going to be Nick Nolte. And the column was about how dare they eight years in a row say the sexiest man in the universe, the world, the galaxy—however they describe it—is a white man. It has been Mark Harmon, for God's sake. It has been Sean Connery, it has been Tom Cruise, it has been—you name it. And I named all the Hispanic and black—all the folks who don't fit into the WASP stereotype. I mean, not even Jewish men make it. It's that bad.

And I got a letter from People Magazine, from Landon Jones [the managing editor], saying great column, I appreciate it, I hope—I'd like to quote it exactly—and I am hoping like you are that Malcolm X will be—and this was back in February—that the upcoming Malcolm X film will be a hit because I too think Denzel Washington is someone who is deserving of that honor.

A couple of months after that, they did the 50 most beautiful people in the galaxy, the world—whatever—and Denzel was on the cover of the magazine. And I don't think that was accidental. It's a B.S. poll, but it's the kind of B.S. we need to be a part of because we because we are beautiful and we are every single thing that is positive in this culture, so that is the kind of thing you can have impact and it all matters.

Q.—Do you think your column is appropriately played on Metro and what does that say?

Britt—There have been continuing discussions. When I came to Metro, part of my concern was how columns were played in Metro. I felt that they were not played like a paper that cared about its columnists, and I feel like what I'm saying is important and it should be played that way. There have been continuing discussions in my section about that. I don't compromise on this. I feel that we have been devalued so long that if you devalue me, you are devaluing millions of people and I just won't stand for it. As our discussions have continued, Metro columnists have gotten more and better play. Right now, generally, we are almost always above the fold and more often than not in the left rail. And this has to do with my being a pig-headed bitch about it basically. And sometimes you have to do that. And I know I'm on the record with it.

Milloy—The fortunate ones of us—we are in a paradoxical situation where we have probably the easiest job in the world and probably the hardest job in the world because basically we get paid for our opinions. A lot of us get paid a lot of money to provoke or, as Les has pointed out, to provide ourselves with self-therapy, to disturb the peace, and by and large we get paid by white people to disturb white people's peace.

We are living in a very different age than when I became a journalist. I mean, I was looking in the paper the other day and they're talking about 500 new cable channels. That's coming in my lifetime, and this suggested people are really getting their information from other places now. And in the days when Walter Lippmann and Scotty Reston and H.L. Mencken were very, very influential with their opinions—we now have more people writing opinions with less people giving a damn about it. And what we are trying to do in this group is to find out what is the worth of somebody else's opinion.

Britt—The panel and especially including Derrick and some others here today have found that by clear, concise writing, by clear thinking and by bringing passion to their thoughts, they tap into sentiments that other people never knew they had. People can say, "Wow, that's how I felt. Wow, that's how I would have expressed myself if I had this opportunity," and they really give voice to a voiceless population.

Now what is the value of that really? Well, for the people who want themselves validated, they're willing to buy the paper, willing to write in, and that means that the people who publish the paper were willing to pay them to continue to do that. Beyond that, I'm not sure that newspapers are what they used to be anymore. And I think that we're really wrestling with a dinosaur here, something that is pretty soon going to be obsolete and that we're trying to—I'm here tonight to try to figure out how best to use this writing talent to make a difference because we cannot—we don't have to just write columns for newspapers. We might decide that what we need to do as a group is to publish a regular compendium of our opinions and market it out to select thinking people and get a nice cross-section, because things are changing and we're just trying to keep on top of the curve. What you have before you here, I think, are people who by instinct, by training, and by something really deeper than that in their guts and hearts have been able to rise to the top of a very competitive business and get in a spot where somebody will pay them good money to just say, "I'm going to kick your butt."

Payne—On the international portfolio, which I kind of share with DeWayne up here, I think though that there's a little bit more to it. I think that one of the things about this opinion which is bottomed on facts and reporting is to prevent this country from deluding itself. And I think that the whole foundation upon which journalism is built, which is to say people can make better decisions about their lives if they are informed than they would if they were not informed, I think is so sound that it will not be overwhelmed by those 500 channels. And if that call is not filled, I think that this country will delude itself. And I think that if you overlook the kind of journalism including opinion shaping that will inform you to make the decision, you're in huge trouble—channel or no channel.

And in some not-so-distant future those 500 channels that we're going to be watching—there are going to be other people who—maybe the Muslims in Bosnia—are not going to be watching those channels. So I think it was glib to say that, yeah, this opinion, we'll get paid for it to irritate—but we're not irritating you for the sake of irritating and that's the point. I mean, not only is that a key function but that is a vital function to this. I think the need to be informed, the need to provide information is mission.

So I think what really we are talking about is the core of journalism, which is to say that in order to make intelligent decisions, in order to play for the future, in order to secure a living room where you can put in that television with 500 channels, you've got to have information and there's no way that I can foresee it getting out there. There may be a different way that we gather it. There may be a different way that we dispense it, but it

has to have the kind of complexity and the multicultural input that is vital here. Let's not move over that too glibly because... the danger that I see is eight years ago, when corporations moved in and began to buy up all of these newspapers, they were privately owned at that point. They began to buy them, and now you have like eight major media conglomerates, and I'm just talking about the newspaper business that I know and study and observe. These corporations are buying up these newspapers. And strangely, what has happened, particularly in a down economy, is that they're saving money—which is to say, they're cutting back on foreign coverage, they're cutting back on city coverage, they're going to People Magazine, they're going polling instead of reporting. And under this delusion they are driven by what corporations are driven by—and that is profits. As far as I know, the First Amendment wasn't drafted to protect the businessmen who like to make profits. And I think that there's a very dangerous thing happening here.

I see some very good people getting out of this business. Gene Roberts, for instance, who I think is a giant. I could mention many others. I won't embarrass anyone in this room. This bad misinformation, in many cases, propaganda in other cases, undernourished fluff journalism in other cases—it is sadly deceiving the American public and it's driving out people, and it's a very dangerous thing here. So I think that what we're coming across in our way here, to get back to why black columnists are talking about the need to have input, is not simply so that we can wear $1,200 suits like Dewayne, although he's not dressed up in one tonight. But Dewayne's one of my very best buddies and I should say that.

I don't want to get on to a preaching, but I'm really, really concerned about that. We are not the irritant for hire. What we're really talking about is trying to say the heart of this democracy is always based on an informed public. And you can't inform people with surveys and polls and these focus groups. You really can't inform them. How can you—because you poll people who are not informed to find out what do they think about something they don't know anything about. It is absolutely incredible. And I think this is the real danger. It's tragic what is happening here.

Sherman Miller—I think there's another piece needs to be brought in here. I think black writers also have a responsibility to keep black politicians in line, to make certain that they serve their community. I will share with you a situation that happened in Delaware where I write.

Payne—That's a given, by the way. I don't want to interrupt you but that's a given. The job of any journalist is to keep politicians in check. We are watchdogs.

Miller—Well, let me finish the story. I will submit that what you say is correct, but I'm not sure that's always happening. My concern was that we have a lot of people in the streets without housing. We have projects with six-unit houses and every unit had at least one house boarded up. There were enough houses in those projects to give a house to all the homeless people. The government also had appropriated $90 million to fix the houses but it wasn't being done. There was a local politician who was having a problem with our mayor. He'd be on the television calling the mayor bad names and so forth and, in my humble opinion the mayor punished his area. Now I equated this black politician to David Duke. He and the entire family and everybody wrote letters to the both newspapers and called me every kind of nigger under the sun and they were all published, all published. Those letters sent a signal to the white community that it was okay to chastise blacks in that manner. The point I'm making is that we have some black politicians and black leaders who do those kinds of things that then send the wrong signal to the main population, and that those things can then come back and de facto hurt the rest of us because that becomes the image.

Wickham—One would be compelled to ask, how did you punish the white politician?

Miller—I'd punish the white politician the same way.

Wickham—No, no, no. I'm talking about the mayor. The scenario that if I heard you correctly was a scenario in which the black politician upset the mayor. Is the mayor black?

Miller—No, the mayor is white.

Wickham—And the mayor punished him—

Miller—In my opinion, yes.

Wickham—By withholding from his neighborhood the monies that would be needed to improve the vacant homes?

Miller—No, it was not just the vacant homes but economic development in the whole neighborhood.

Wickham—And so you felt you needed to hold the black politician accountable for pissing off the white mayor, who in turn neglected the black neighborhood this black legislator represented?

Miller—No, I held both of them accountable. I didn't think it was just totally the black politician, but I thought the black politician should be held accountable.

Wickham—This gives us an opportunity to make the point that there is diversity of opinion among black columnists in terms of how we view issues. I would not have spent 10 cents worth of ink writing about that black politician. And the reason why is because he had no power, and he did nothing in terms of his responsibility as a government official—not nonfeasance or malfeasance—to deny the good citizens of Wilmington, Delaware, the public services they were due.

Miller—You see, the point I'm trying to make to you is I saw him only as a microcosm of Gus Savage in Chicago. In my opinion, Gus was one of the worst things you could have had in there, in the U.S. Congress. This guy was just a miniature Gus Savage, and I feel that there are a number of those people around the country. We have a responsibility—

Wickham—There's no question. The principle is that black journalists, black columnists have the need, duty to hold all politicians', and especially black politicians', feet to the fire.

Jackson—IBefore Game One of the Chicago Bulls and the Blazers finals, I asked the head of the NBA Players Union, "Charlie, what if all the black players walked off? What if Magic Johnson and Michael Jordan walked off one night saying we're not going to take it anymore. There are two black coaches in a sport that's 80 percent black," which is 7 percent of the head coaches in the league, by the way. And Charlie said, "It will never happen, never happen. We have a no-strike clause. We have a no-strike clause. We can't do it, we can't do it, we can't do it."

So that launched into a whole tirade about black athletes have to be the ones that take the lead on that. And Charlie said, "I know what the solution is. The solution is you people in the press have to keep the owners' feet to the fire." I said, "Charlie, don't you understand? The newsrooms are whiter than the NBA front office." For any of you that don't know the statistics, in very brief form, 51 percent of newspapers in this nation to date still do not have a single African-American journalist, or a journalist of color. Ninety percent of newspapers in this country do not have a single [black] sports reporter.

Rhoden—And love it. ■

New CIA Wine, Old CIA Bottles

The Press Should Exert Pressure to Release Information Valuable to Public in Post-Cold War World

By Zachary Karabell

Less than four weeks after the August 1991 coup sounded the death knell of the Soviet Union, an American bureaucrat sat before a Senate committee and tried to answer a barrage of questions. Robert Gates had risen steadily through the ranks in Langley, VA when George Bush nominated him to be the next Director of Central Intelligence. An academic by training, Gates had spent his days in the CIA as an analyst, and with the passing of the Cold War, he was seen by many as a reasonable choice for director: an American apparatchik, trusted for his loyalty, known for his caution and free from the taint of covert operations.

But Gates had been number two at the agency during the Iran-Contra affair, and questions remained. The world had changed, and Congress wanted to make sure that Gates knew that. During his Senate confirmation hearings in September 1991, Robert Gates responded to the often antagonistic Senators and said, yes, it was time for Congress to rethink the CIA, and yes, it was time for the CIA to rethink itself. Gates said that with the upheavals in the former Soviet Union and the radical restructuring of the KGB, it was understandable that the American public was questioning the role of that most Cold War of all Cold War institutions: the Central Intelligence Agency. He told the committee:

"We must try to help people understand better what CIA does and how we do it. Our new approach grows out of the belief that it is important that CIA should be accountable to the American people...as a law-abiding organization comprised of talented people of integrity who have a critical role in supporting national security policy makers..."

The Senators were reassured, and Robert Gates was confirmed. Within weeks, Gates convened a Task Force on Openness to discuss how the CIA ought to present itself to the American people.

The Task Force concluded that the agency needed to revivify its public image, and one way to do so would be for the CIA to release an unprecedented amount of previously classified information. The CIA then proceeded to classify the Task Force report, and on the ground of national security, refused to release it to an inquiring journalist. The absurdity of this bureaucratic faux-pas was not lost on the CIA and the report was partially declassified; but the knee-jerk reflex toward secrecy even on the question of openness raises questions about the CIA's capacity to change.

Gates is no longer Director of Central Intelligence. He has been replaced by R. James Woolsey, a former Undersecretary of the Navy and arms negotiator. Nothing in Woolsey's background suggests that he is desirous of radical change within the CIA, and to date, his only recorded comments on openness came during his Senate confirmation hearing on February 2, 1993. Asked by Senator Howard Metzenbaum what he would do to pursue Gates's initiative, Woolsey replied, "With respect to the question of what documents are classified and the speed with which they are declassified, it is not a subject with which I am particularly familiar. I believe it is important, especially for historians. It's also one aspect of security; by classifying so much, you end up exerting a great deal of energy and money on too much. Beyond that general observation, I plan to make this an early priority for me to study." When pressed by Metzenbaum if openness would extend to providing businesses with economic intelligence, Woolsey requested that those specifics be dealt with in secret, during "executive session," closed to the public.

William Jefferson Clinton is the first President elected after the Cold War, and he is but one year older than the CIA itself. With a new administration, with a large group of new Senators and Representatives, with new heads of the CIA and of the Senate and House Select Committees on Intelligence, it is a propitious time to take another look at the CIA and government secrecy. It is time to undertake, as Woolsey seems to support, a thorough reevaluation of what information is classified and for how long. But unless that reexamination leads to substantially more information being made public, nothing will have changed.

While much information will need to remain classified, it is not unreasonable to seek a new approach toward government secrecy and to question why secrecy is the rule and openness the rare exception. Portions of intelligence estimates, analyses of threats, economic reports, environmental concerns, health crises, and a host of other government materials could be provided to the public upon request without jeopardizing

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national security or "sources and methods" of intelligence gathering. The release of such material would be a step toward substantive openness, but it is not a step which many in Washington seem disposed to take.

The obvious result of secrecy is that information is withheld, and one obvious effect is that journalists are denied a vital source. Until now, the vast preponderance of this information has been classified, and even the Freedom of Information Act has been unable to pry more than a fraction of it away from the vaults in Langley. Few could deny that the media have a vested interest in this information, but few have done anything to seek greater access.

There is an even deeper issue. CIA analyses and information shape the conduct of our foreign policy, and since the agency's inception, that information has been removed from the public sphere. Though preventing our rivals from obtaining a full picture of our policies, this secrecy has also prevented our public from openly debating many of those policies. There has always been a question of who owns the secrets—the CIA, which collected them, or the American public, which paid for them with tax dollars. The answer is neither simple nor pat, but to date it is has been axiomatic that ownership belongs to the CIA and not the public. So long as that continues, our foreign policy will continue to be shaped without the benefit of discourse by an informed public.

There is little question that the policy of "openness" originated with Gates. According to David Gries of the CIA's Center For the Study of Intelligence, "Gates has felt this way all his career...Without Gates, these changes would never have happened."

In the early 1970's, Gates published several articles calling for greater cooperation between the CIA and members of the public—journalists, academics, businesspeople. In a letter to the author, Gates offered the following explanation for his initiative: "My advocacy of openness derives from my belief that there is a tremendous lack of understanding and knowledge on the part of the American people about what the intelligence process is...I believe that long-term support for the Intelligence Community...requires greater public understanding and support of what we do...Now, particularly in the aftermath of the Cold War, public support is even more critical. When many believe that we either conduct our business like James Bond or that we are involved in every conspiracy on the face of the earth, more needs to be done to explain the reality of our role and activities. I have believed this for a long time."

These comments suggest a fundamental alteration in how the CIA deals with secrecy. However, the Task Force report, which Gates endorsed, explicitly states that the goal is not openness per se but rather the impression of openness: "We generally need to make the institution and the process more visible and understandable rather than strive for openness on specific substantive issues." The Task Force memo further states that it is in the interests of the agency for the American people to view it as the most open intelligence agency in the world and as a "law-abiding organization whose role supporting national security policy makers continues to be important in an even more complex and dangerous world."

These statements leave the impression that the Task Force placed a premium not on openness but on better public relations. Gates denies that such is the case. In his letter, he says that "openness purely as image-building is easily discernible by the press. I believe that we must prove our bona fides not only by openness as to our processes and issues, but also through the declassification of historical documents. We are not naive. We know that there is skepticism and cynicism on the question of openness and intelligence. My goal is to prove that we are serious about this and that the culture is changing."

To this end, the CIA announced its intention to release historical information more than 30 years old, including select material on the Bay of Pigs, the JFK assassination, and covert operations of the 1950's. The agency also promised the release of intelligence estimates on the former Soviet Union up to 1982. In addition, the Task Force recommended that the CIA's office of public affairs play a more visible role as a liaison between the CIA and various public organizations, particularly the press and academia.

However, even on activities more than 30 years old, the agency believes that there are fire walls which stand in the way of full disclosure. As Gates put it, "our openness on substantive issues will always be limited by concerns for sources and methods," i.e., the agency will not release material which might endanger former agents or officers and it will not reveal its modes of collecting information. These provisos, while perhaps important, can be applied so rigorously as to result in the continued withholding of almost all information relating to CIA covert actions and paramilitary operations.

There has always been a question of who owns the secrets—the CIA, which collected them, or the American public, which paid for them with tax dollars. The answer is neither simple nor pat, but to date it is has been axiomatic that ownership belongs to the CIA and not the public.

As Gates's comments suggest, it is clear that he made a preemptive move designed to strengthen the position of the CIA. If the CIA can convince the American public and Congress that it has changed with the times, that it is not a covert relic of an earlier era, then it can justify its continued institutional existence. Though there is resistance within the CIA to releasing any information, Gates realized that the aforementioned material from the 1950's has little chance of harming the CIA. In short, the CIA has proposed to change very little, but just enough to say with credibility that it is changing.

Even what the Task Force proposed has met substantial opposition inside the CIA. "The new regulations distress a lot of agency people, and that is a sign

that something is working," says Kenneth MacDonald, the head of the CIA Historical Staff. Gates himself conceded that, "there is no question that my view of openness is controversial within the agency, particularly the declassification of historical documents." And if Gates perceived resistance, Woolsey, an outsider, may have even greater trouble getting the bureaucracy to move.

Still, what may be revolutionary within the CIA seems far from that on the outside, especially when one considers that even on these episodes more than 30 years ago, there still remain entire topics that the CIA will not release. Any documents dealing with operations, such as specific blueprints for the Bay of Pigs, or with sources and collection methods will in all likelihood be withheld. In the past, this information would not even have been considered declassifiable. In fact, in the 1984 CIA Information Act, operations and methods were specifically exempted from the Freedom Of Information Act. Now, the Historical Review Board will consider whether or not to release methods and operations material, but MacDonald and others remain skeptical that it will be released.

Even accepting that the internal changes may be more significant than the external ones appear to be, the primacy of good PR cannot be denied. With political pressure to reduce the Federal debt, the CIA is a natural target. As David Wise, a journalist well versed about the CIA, put it in an interview with the author, "with the end of the Cold War, the raison d'etre of the CIA has disappeared. In order to put a more positive spin on itself, the agency and Gates came up with a new sales pitch—openness."

Compared to the overall budget, the CIA is a nickel and dime operation, but it is a cost nonetheless. During Woolsey's confirmation hearings, several Senators talked of the need to cut the agency's more than $18 billion budget. But will Congress seek greater access to the secrets that the CIA and the Executive Branch collect?

Marvin Kalb, former NBC correspondent and now director of Harvard's Barone Center for Press and Politics, sees little cause for hope. Asked if there is a "public mood" in favor of more openness, Kalb replied, "If there were a poll taken now, the American people would register overwhelming satisfaction with the limited amount of information that the CIA is providing to the people."

At the moment, Congress is not interested in exposing the CIA to public scrutiny, and it never has been. Since 1947 Congress has wanted to make the CIA more open. It has wanted to make the CIA more accountable. But not to the public—to Congress itself.

Throughout the late 1940's and 1950's, an odd Congressman or Senator tried to create oversight committees for the CIA. It was not until 1975, however, that a proposal was adopted. In the wake of Vietnam and Watergate, the Church Committee investigated alleged abuses committed by the CIA and other secret agencies of the US government. One outcome was the creation of Permanent Subcommittees on Intelligence in both the House and the Senate. Now chaired by Representative Dan Glickman and Senator Dennis DeConcini respectively, the intelligence committees are the prime congressional oversight bodies. They are intimately involved in formulating the CIA budget, and they are supposed to be consulted on all major matters touching on the agency and its covert operations.

For years, the CIA and the president resisted the creation of these committees because they feared that Congress was prone to leaks and congressional oversight would thus lead to compromised security. Of course, there was also the question of territoriality. Lyndon Johnson had no intention of letting Congress dictate to his executive branch. Curiously, in practice the oversight committees have probably been less prone to leaks than the agency itself. Most committee staffers do not wish to be named in interviews, and they are very cautious about revealing anything sensitive. When Representative Glickman and the former heads of the committees, Representative McCurdy and Senator Boren, were interviewed for this article, the answers they gave were far less forthright than those given by Gates, by the head of the CIA historical staff, by the head of the CIA Center For the Study of Intelligence, or by the director of the CIA's Office of Public Information.

One would expect that Congress would support the idea of greater openness. After all, it was the Church Committee in the 1970's and the Iran-Contra hearings in the 1980's that criticized executive excesses in secrecy and covert operations. But now, the congressional subcommittees on intelligence view the prospect of openness warily.

No one disagrees that openness is a nice concept. One of DeConcini's aides commented that the Senator is concerned about the sheer volume of information the government classifies and is therefore an advocate of less classification. This is certainly part of the problem. Boren stated in response to questions from the author that he believes that "both Congress and the Administration will be more open about intelligence issues than ever before," but cautioned: "Of course, we have to balance different elements of the public interest. A successful democracy demands informed citizens, but indiscriminately disclosing information could undermine the immediate safety and the long-term interests of our country."

McCurdy also had reservations. "The chief problem I see with the creation of an expectation that more in intelligence can be open is that, inevitably, it will confront the fact that much of intelligence will have to remain secret."

Glickman echoed these sentiments, though he seems more disposed toward limited openness. "Our intelligence agencies possess a lot of information that could be of greater value to scientists, the private sector, environmentalists, and members of our business and financial industries. We should do what we can to improve access to information, of course with the provision that no sensitive or classified information is compromised."

David Holliday, a former assistant to the chair of the Senate subcommittee, is more candid about what he believes are the underlying concerns of Congress. He says that he is an advocate of a more open government, and he admits that

"a lot of things have occurred since 1947 which could be released without injury." But he balks at the idea of systemic openness. "Intelligence services are necessary, and in order for them to survive, there has to be some confidence that the things the country does with those services remain secret...The intelligence business is basically adverse to democratic principles, and many of things which intelligence agencies do cause distaste among the public, even legal things. The outcry which results from a release of secrets creates an atmosphere in which punitive action is easy to take." As if this weren't bad enough, release a few select secrets, says Holliday, and you have taken your finger out of the dike. "You can't reveal a little bit about a secret. All you do is whet the appetite for those who want more information."

Holliday is not alone in his views. Staffers on the House subcommittee say much the same thing. The upshot is that Congress is deeply concerned about the effects of openness. Whenever the question of openness is raised, it is endorsed with a list of provisos, and these provisos often strip the concept of meaning. "Sources and methods" is for the intelligence community like "national security." It is a legitimate concern, but its definition is usually so broadly construed that it can cover just about anything. When Glickman, McCurdy, Gates, Woolsey, and others warn that "sources and methods" must be protected, they are iovoking a rational that can be used to withhold and classify almost anything.

So now we have a situation where neither the CIA nor Congress believe that fundamental change is necessary. The only notes of concern sounded at Woolsey's hearing were over the budget and the use to which economic intelligence would be put. Several senators expressed their belief that now, more than ever, the CIA is a bulwark of American security. Openness is clearly not high on the agenda, and fundamental change is not being discussed.

Though the CIA secrecy affects many, there is no interest group, except for the press, that can galvanize attention on the issue. Academics have never been a cohesive lobby, and there is no organization with the strength of AIPAC and no individual with the reputation of Ralph Nader dedicated to these concerns.

Like the government, the press is not monolithic, and many journalists are skeptical of the media's capacity to exert pressure toward greater openness. Kalb is hardly alone in expressing such reservations. Seymour Hersh, who has broken more than his share of stories on the dark side of the CIA, told the author to dismiss the idea that journalists can or will do anything to seek greater access. "The press would love to get more information," he says. "But if you expect the American press to lead a social revolution, don't. It is never going to happen." These sentiments were echoed by David Wise, who told the author that "there will be no cohesive effort on the part of the press to push for openness...Reporters do not act as a group."

Hedrick Smith, who has decades of experience dealing with the CIA, also sees historical constraints on the ability of the press to push for openness. Smith points out that in the 1970's, the press played its role of watchdog and demanded information because of a public mood disillusioned by Vietnam and Watergate. In the 1980's, however, Smith says that the press was essentially cowed into submission by a hostile administration and a hostile public. "The attitude of we've got to stop the government from lying pervaded the Washington press corps until Reagan. Reagan was a charmer, and the public got tired of the press knocking the government. Politicians started attacking the press. Now, with the end of the Vietnam syndrome, we see an end of a certain type of investigative jouroalism. The atmosphere simply isn't propitious for going after the CIA."

In addition, many journalists are apparently satisfied with the status quo. Kalb points outs that "the press can get far more information than it could get 20 years ago." Hersh goes further. "The CIA have always fed information to the press. They're not going to release more under any conditions, and journalists know that."

Even if we accept that many journalists do not seek significant changes and that at best the public mood is nebulous on the issue, does that mean that acquiescence to current practices is the best response? There are clear and present dangers to high levels of secrecy. As David Wise put it, "secrecy helps government mislead the people." The CIA culture of secrecy, Congress' misgivings about openness, and the media's institutional inertia must not form a fire wall which keeps the public at arms length from the information which governs our foreign policy.

What exactly can the press do? To begin with, the press need not lie prostrate in the face of possible public and political resistance to greater openness. Journalists can make more use of the Freedom of Information Act, and newspapers and networks can use the courts to demand swifter compliance and to challenge CIA exemptions from certain FOIA requests. That, of course, requires time and money, but the benefits would more than justify the costs. In addition, editorials, news segments, and radio segments could be devoted to framing the debate.

The media need to start asking hard questions about when secrecy is necessary and when it is not; when the release of information will truly jeopardize that nebulous thing called national security and when the only thing it will jeopardize is the reputation of the people who were supposed to be preserving it; why secrecy is now the rule and openness the exception; why the agency which collected the information, guarded the information, and has a vested interest in the information must be the sole arbiter of if and when it will release that information. As was true in the 1970's, the media have a responsibility to raise these questions, as well as one more. The media must ask itself why it no longer asks these questions. Answering this last query may be the first step in asking all the rest. ■

The Ones We Miss

On January 9, 1993, members of the Investigative Reporters & Editors organization met with the National Press Club in Washington to discuss the media's failure to unearth big stories. The moderator was Christopher Georges, Editor, The Washington Monthly magazine. Panelists were Bill Kovach, curator, The Nieman Foundation; Scott Armstrong, Taxpayers Against Fraud/The Information Trust; Mary Fricker, business reporter, The Santa Rosa Press Democrat; Seymour Hersh, Pulitzer Prize-winner for My Lai massacre story; Raymond Bonner, former foreign correspondent, The New York Times, and staff writer for The New Yorker, and Courtland Milloy, columnist, The Washington Post.

Christopher Georges

Most people who follow it closely would agree that local and regional investigative reporting is actually doing quite well, making great strides in recent years, and perhaps in covering more big stories than the national investigative corps have been. But, inevitably, the big stories are the demand of the national press, so any discussion about why investigative reporting is failing will have to focus on them.

I want to set the stage quickly by painting as negative a picture as I can of investigative reporting in Washington. Probably the easiest way to do this is to read to you a list of random sampling of 15 of the biggest investigative stories over the past few years, and tell you who broke them.

On the press side of the ledger there are three. Some people will disagree. There's the story of Congressional finance abuse, which led to the resignations of Jim Wright. A lot of the work was done by The Wall Street Journal and The Washington Post. There's savings and loans, a lot of the work being by done by The National Thrift News and other papers. There's John Sununu and his White House travel abuses. Again, that was The Washington Post.

On the side of the ledger that the government investigators can take credit for, you could start with Wedtech, which the Manhattan U.S. Attorney was responsible mostly for. The ill-wind defense contractor scandal coming out of the Naval Intelligence Service. The Ed Meese ethics probe, which the Manhattan U.S. Attorney again led. Corruption at the Chicago Commodities Exchange, FBI. Generic drug companies' improper safety tests, the FDA and Congressional investigators. The HUD scandal, HUD Inspector General and GAO; Wall Street insider trading; the SEC;. Ivy league student financial-aid fixing, which was the Justice Department. Universities' misuse of federal funds was Congress. Solomon Brothers' attempt to corner the Treasury market; the SEC.

Then there's a couple of stories, BCCI and Iran Contra, [where] I suppose, dual credit can go to both the press and government investigators. But again, without the government investigators on those cases, it probably would never have materialized. So it's not exactly an inspiring record, especially considering that since Watergate the amount of investigative reporters in Washington as well as the amount spent on investigative reporting in Washington has increased dramatically. For example, if you take a quick survey of the amount spent by the networks and the major papers, it's more than $100 million annually. You take ABC News, and they've got four investigative units at prime time. CNN's got a staff of 30 investigative reporters. CBS has "Sixty Minutes" and so on.

The print press—you've got investigative reporters at The Times and The Post and The L.A. Times, The Wall Street Journal. In fact, 98 percent of the nation's 500 largest papers have investigative reporters. There's a lot of reporting going on, but it seems as though a lot of the results are coming from the government as opposed to the investigative reporters.

With all these investigative reporters running amok in Washington, why is it that the government is breaking most of the big stories? That is what the panel will be talking about today.

Bill Kovach

It really makes no difference that it's not as healthy as it used to be in Washington and it's better than it used to be in the region.

A friend of mine tells a story of an African student who traveled extensively in the United States and decided to write a book on the country, which he was going to call, America—the Dark Continent, because most of the people in the United States were so ignorant of so many things, like racism and urban poverty, that they were just not equipped to deal with the real modern world. He came to the conclusion by comparing what he experienced as a black man traveling through the United States, and what the news media reported about the United States. Like many of us, he happened to miss the day the paper ran the revealing blockbuster on bank redlining or the housing project. What he didn't miss was a constant flow of stories day after day after day

that told of a country mesmerized by weather, sports, Madonna, serial killers and fashions, what the African journalists called "talking light."

I tell the story because it illustrates what I think is the key to any hope for a long-term health and survival of what we call investigative journalism. Investigative journalism is not the integral part of the daily report of a news organization. It is an addition. It's something special. At the best news organizations, it's considered a jewel in the crown, something to be brought out and admired on special occasions. At most news organizations it's like the appendix. It's a curious but easily disposable appendage. This special nature of investigative reporting was a status to be prized and protected in what now seems like a distant past when Sy Hersh and David Burnham and John Crewdson were adding their special work to an already rich report of hard news of local, state, national and international importance.

But we're in the midst of a communication revolution today. Every day the public confronts at least three different presses. The dwindling traditional establishment press, which sees itself as a custodian of our journalistic values. A rapidly growing tabloid press that panders mindlessly and threatens to squeeze everything else out of television and the periodical magazine market. An interactive radio and television talk press, the shared experience press, which is changing the nature of public affairs information. These presses work in a market-driven society nurtured by an intensive diet of consumption-stimulating images. The public now comes to the media more frequently for experience than for information. For example, we've just completed a general election campaign, which played itself out in part on talk shows where the audience came to participate, to have an experience. Where communications was an end in itself and there was no concern for any context for the information. People wanted to experience the candidates.

Bill Clinton did not answer questions on MTV; he told stories. Stories about his alcoholic father or his drug-addicted brother. The people felt they knew Bill Clinton. That was good enough for them. It remains to be seen if the President Clinton that they elected is the man they thought they knew.

All of these trends mean that the press of tabloid sensationalism and the feel-good press of experience and interaction are beginning to claim more and more of the resources which owners and managers are prepared to commit to the work of journalism. They're claiming the time and the allegiance of a confused, fearful and frustrated public.

In this climate, any journalism which permits itself to become marginalized is in danger. I would argue that the degree to which investigative journalists stay outside the main daily mix of the newspaper or the news report is the degree to which they risk marginalization.

The big stories of recent years in which even the best news organizations failed the public, stories like the collapse of the savings and loan associations, suggest the need to integrate the techniques and approaches of the investigative journalist into the daily coverage of institutions. The big stories we always seem to miss are the stories which, as Gene Roberts says, "don't break but ooze." Stories like the failure or the corruption of institutions. Too often when the public looks to the journalist to help them understand these institutions, they get only more confusion.

No wonder they are retreating into entertainment or the confused self-validation of the talk press. They are flooded with information. They are drowning in facts and pseudo facts. Talk radio, all news radio, all news television, television talk shows, direct mail shopper magazines; there's no shortage and no end of the information available.

Most of the information flooding the system is unconnected with and unrelated to anything. Much of it, maybe most of it, is of no use or importance whatsoever. It's produced as a marketing tool simply to fill time and place. The one value journalism should bring into the information system and the value that accounts for loyal readers and viewers and listeners is that it can be an institution of public understanding and participation. Journalists impose some order on chaos by selecting, from all the information available at a given time, that information most useful and important to the audience, and presenting it in a context that makes it understandable and its importance obvious.

For these and other reasons, it's important that the investigative journalists keep themselves actively, even aggressively, involved in the search for new ways to cover the daily news. There's a fundamental challenge which this search has to address. The challenge is to combat the increasing alienation of our citizens, the growing sense of disconnection with the community. Here the circulation manager can be your best ally. Any circulation manager will tell you that there's a direct correlation between community involvement in stories that affect the daily lives of the readers, and stable home delivery clients.

An approach to investigative reporting which teams investigative reporters with beat reporters, and one which introduces the techniques of investigative reporting into the daily flow of the news, has the greatest hope for long-term survival. Institutions which control people's lives leave tracks by their performance or non-performance every day. I'm not telling you anything that you don't already know when I say that an institution will tell its own story if enough detailed information of that performance is measured day by day. An investigative approach to daily news would allow us to cover public schools on the basis of how the institution works day in and day out, instead of the debates among the school politicians that we now cover. Or the cost factors and the healing rates of individual hospitals or doctors. Or the investment practices of local banks.

I don't know of a single newspaper owner or manager who would leave the future of the newspaper's business interest in the hands of ad hoc decision makers. But in the newsroom, I know of no newsroom which approaches the editorial content of the paper with the same rigor and the same care. I can't think of a single innovation that would offer investigative journalism the kind of input that it should have in the way a newspaper approaches the news or one which would do more to regain the journalist's hold on our role as a press in the public interest and help the people help themselves.

Scott Armstrong

When I came to Washington I came to work for the Senate Watergate Committee. We had subpoena power; we called people in; we questioned them. It all seemed to go real simple. The President of the United States resigned. And I thought, this is fun; I'll stick around and do some of this through the press. I suddenly realized that we didn't have subpoena power in the press, that there were a lot of reforms that needed to take place, and we watched Congress put many of them into place with the changes in the Print Information Act, Access to Information, Sunshine Laws, changes in the openness of Congressional committees; even some changes in the Judiciary.

Twenty years later—and it was 20 years ago that the Watergate Committee was doing its work—those are still not real. They're still not valid. They're still not all nailed down. We've spent 20 years fighting, litigating, perfecting, trying to get people to just preserve records so that we can look at them. We haven't yet looked at Nixon and Nixon's tapes very carefully. We haven't had access to them. My suggestion on resources is that instead of spending what I think we all do, which is 60 to 80 percent of our time, trying to get the information we need so that we can begin analyzing it and begin asking basic questions, we need to work more effectively together to make sure that the government does that for us, and when it won't, that we create within the public-interest communities mechanisms that will create institutional memories that will create access points for us, so that we don't spend all of our energy recreating the same data, the same raw information that we need. I would suggest that much of this can be done if we can impress early on the Clinton Administration with the simple reality that if they begin to release some of this information, if they begin to open up some of these access points, if they begin to issue a new executive order on classification, if they begin to drop some of the restrictions on corporate information that they've collected, that they'll find two things will happen. Number one, we'll stop writing about how people in government are withholding information and what is it that they're withholding it for anyway; there must be something corrupt going on. We'll begin to focus on the information itself. Which will lead us off in two directions. We'll all go back and find out what the last Administration did, and the Administration before that. So that will get half of us off their back.

The other half of us will start concentrating on where the real problems lie, and where we really should be putting our resources, which are the institutions that are really affecting our lives, the corporate entities that really control America. I'm not trying to construct a conspiracy theory, I'm just simply here to say that the military industrial complex is alive and well. In fact, it's the only thing that's driving certain national security policies of this country. It's driving everything else, from health policy to defense policy to education policy at the same time.

The question is, what should we be looking at, what are we missing, why are we missing it. It seems to me we're looking at the wrong institutions in many instances. We have beat reporters at large major dailies that are doing things that are designed to get into each of the departments of the federal government and each of the congressional committees. We're constantly looking at government. We're constantly looking at certain themes within American society. But we relegate to the business pages, in basically a financial reporting function, a tracing of certain market functions and fluctuations in price, the real reporting on the institutions that affect our lives most basically. The ones that are affecting the way in fact our government reacts to us: the American corporation, the international and multinational corporations. I'm suggesting that it's not a coincidence that when you look at the Clinton Cabinet what you find are lawyers who are basically representing these corporations taking many of the significant positions. Whether it's Ron Brown or Mickey Kantor or Jim Woolsey. Or, for that matter, the Attorney General of the United States, who's going to enforce our laws, a former corporation counsel for General Electric. But I've recently been raising questions about Zoe Baird's qualifications to be Attorney General of the United States. The resounding thud when I talk to reporters on this subject is not so much what she's done, but the fact that when you start talking about American corporations, you talk about the General Electric Corporation, it doesn't resonate; it's meaningless to people. There's no recognition that this is a corporation that is the same size, if you rank corporations and nation-states, it falls just behind or above Saudi Arabia, depending on where you rank it. That's a very hard reality for people to recognize. It's an enormously powerful entity, one that should be reported on with more of an institutional memory than we have. This is a corporation that pays hundreds of millions of dollars in settlements several times a year—fines, negotiations, often sealing the records, for basic violations of our environment, corruptions of our contracting systems, and so forth.

Who is the woman who was in charge during the late 1980's, the period when General Electric acknowledges that it had a crisis in this field? The person who was in charge of this, who worked out their system, was Zoe Baird. She was in charge of corporate compliance. She takes credit for having a great corporate compliance program, which I would submit is probably one of the worst among American corporations.

It's a difficult thing to explain to people why this is important, when the corporation itself and the corporation's importance and its effect in people's daily lives, is little understood and little respected and little regarded. By the same token, she's done the same things at Aetna.

My emphasis is that we're looking at the wrong units in government. We're spending too much of our energy looking away from where the real center of power is, away from where the real decisions are made. Not manipulations from behind the scenes. Many of these things are done quite overtly. We're looking at lobbying; we're not looking at something that's string pulling from some great distance. We're looking at the real manifestation of corporate power in America. Yet if we don't follow that story through, it becomes too convoluted, too dull; it's often something that we say is beyond us. Yet if we can't do it, if we don't have the time and energy to do it, who does?

What's the solution to this? I think we have to work more closely. We have to look for institutional connections and ties. IRE has helped do some of this. We need to begin to talk more openly about how to report on these institutions, to exchange information about the successful reports that have been done, and see how generically they can be done more often. We need to support public interest efforts.

People like David Burnham have gone to enormous efforts to put together databases that begin to be models for other kinds of data that have to remain accessible. At the same time we've fought to get some of it done; we find that private interests are beginning to privatize some of these processes. so it becomes more expensive for us to get SEC records. It becomes more difficult for us to look in material that ought to be available to each of us.

I think we have to begin to talk to the public-interest community and talk quite openly and boldly about what needs to be done, what needs to be on the public record and how to get it there. How to reinforce organizations that frankly are doing a better job than the press is doing of defending our own rights. The First Amendment is rarely defended by the press, except by its exercise, which is of course terrific and wonderful. But when it comes to a crisis, it's rarely the press that's filing the lawsuits. It's other institutions that are. And we need to be more supportive of them. It's organizations like the American Library Association that

have, in this town, been one of the key lobbyists that have kept open access to information the reality that it is today, albeit given its limits.

Mary Fricker

I was asked to be on this panel for two reasons. One is, I'm a reporter on a medium-sized daily in a medium-sized town and so I'm the only panelist with that perspective. Secondly, I'm here because I co-authored with two other reporters one of the first books about the savings and loan crisis. We finished our book before President Bush even admitted there was a problem, so that raises a question for us of how come we saw it and others didn't.

I'd like to tell you about some of the experiences we had in trying to get the other media to deal with the savings and loan scandal.

In 1983, my co-author, Steve Pizzo, was the editor of a small-town weekly in Northern California, and he saw looting going on in his local savings and loan. He was a former realtor. So he was really qualified to understand what was happening. There we have some of the reasons that reporters sometimes miss the stories. They're not qualified to understand them. I think one of the ways we can solve that is by networking with reporters from trade journals.

Steve followed the story off and on for a couple of years, but when his reports at the weekly paper didn't accomplish very much, he tried to interest reporters at bigger papers. First he met with reporters from the daily paper where I now work. He explained the issues, and he introduced them to one of his sources. This source had been screwed by the savings and loan, so he had an ax to grind. He was kind of a rough-hewn guy. He was a big-talking kind of guy. He was weird. But he was also right. The reporters decided that they couldn't trust him, and the biggest financial story we've ever had in our county—they never pursued it. That's another reason I think we miss some of the big stories. We're too fussy about our sources. If you're going to check the story out anyway, what difference does it make if he's got of conflict of interest or an ax to grind, or he belongs to the wrong political party?

Well, when that didn't work out, Steve took the story to The San Francisco Chronicle. They loved it. And they did a big story, one-day package, complete with photos; and all the wheeling and dealing and all the gluts that was going on at savings and loan. And that was the end of it. That's another reason I think we sometimes miss the big stories. They didn't try to find out what was going wrong with the system that allowed something like that to happen, and how widespread it was—part of some bigger story. They went for the flash, and they missed the story that oozed, that we've been talking about.

Frank McCullough says, usually the stories we think we missed, are really stories that we covered but we didn't pursue. This is one of the things that bothers me a lot in my own work. I'm so swamped with stories that I write it and I move on and I often don't come back to it.

I remember when IRE had a showcase panel several years ago to address the question, "Why did the major media miss the Iran-Contra story?" Reporters on the major media who covered Iran-Contra were on the panel. It was a remarkable evening, mainly because of the anger and hostility of the reporters in the audience who were furious with the panel. What the panelists said in their defense was this: We didn't miss Iran-Contra; most of us did stories a year or two before the scandal broke. We did stories about revealing that a guy named Colonel North was running this renegade operation over in the White House. But after we ran the stories, nothing happened. There was dead silence. Nobody seemed to care. So we moved on to other things. In other words, they didn't pursue the story. You have to feel real moral outrage to stay with a story. And sometimes I worry that we stop feeling that moral outrage.

Eventually, Steve contacted The Wall Street Journal's San Francisco Bureau, and reporter Greg Hill came out to see him. While the two were sitting in a restaurant over coffee, the president of the savings and loan stopped by the table, and he said, well boys, you going to get me? He laughed, and he walked off. Well, Hill seemed interested in that story. But he never wrote anything about it. When I asked him about that, he said there were three reasons. One was, he became a bureau chief at that time with other responsibilities. I think that's a reason we miss the big stories; we're too busy doing other things. Secondly, the savings and loan was too small for his publication. Thirdly, Wall Street Journal reporters in Washington were telling Wall Street Journal editors in New York that savings and loans weren't in trouble. They were calling bureau reporters like Hill "hysterical." That's another reason I think Washington and New York may miss some big stories. I don't think they respect what the rest of us do.

We're too fussy about our sources. If you're going to check the story out anyway, what difference does it make if he's got of conflict of interest or an ax to grind, or he belongs to the wrong political party?

Another related problem is this—some of the big stories aren't happening in Washington and New York, and the savings and loan thing was one of them. It was happening in towns all around the country, and reporters were writing about it all around the country, but it wasn't happening in Washington. In our industry, journalism doesn't have a mechanism for pooling information that's breaking around the country and funneling it up to the major media. That's a big, big problem. It would help if The Associated Press did a better job of picking up our work, and if major media reporters would hang out at IRE conventions and find out what we're all talking about. Because, as we all know, nothing seems to sink into the national consciousness unless it appears prominently in the major media.

Hill makes another point about his savings and loan coverage. He says, in retrospect, he thinks he should have written his savings and loan stories differently. Early on he was writing overviews about the terrible problems in the savings and loan industry, but he thinks he should have zeroed in on the corruption at a specific savings and loan to get people's attention and show them what was really going on there. And I think that's another reason we sometimes seem to miss the big stories. We write them, but in a boring or in a confusing way. I frankly think that's one of the big reasons the BNL hasn't had a bigger impact than it did.

Certainly you can't say The L.A. Times didn't pursue that story. They've come out with one revelation after another. They've done a great job. But how many times have they stopped to recap, to tell a real yarn that tells it in story form, so

readers can get their arms around it and really get mad?

Well, by this time Steve and I were working on the savings and loan story together, and a trade publication, The National Mortgage News, heard about us, and they sent a reporter out from New York to check us out. Now here was a reporter who listened. We have this tiny office in this tiny town. Papers are piled all over the place; the place was a mess. And we were small-town weekly reporters, no credibility, right? To make it worse, we started telling this reporter the Mafia was looting savings and loans and there was this nationwide network of people who were looting savings and loans. If any reporter had a reason to think that his sources were loony—us, the source is us—Paul Muolo did. But instead he wound up joining us in writing the book; again, I think a testimony to the trade journal reporters.

We also tried to get the national networks interested. And let me tell you the humiliation of begging a "Sixty Minutes" producer to do an important story is pretty awesome. We never got anywhere. For one thing, he wanted us to give him a scoop, something that no one else had, or he wasn't interested. I think papers or networks that won't use an important story because someone else got it first ought to be boiled in oil. My paper's competitor is The San Francisco Chronicle. It's a lot bigger than we are and it's a real threat to us. But when they break a good story, we run it, and I'm proud of it, because our first responsibility is to inform our readers.

Another problem with the networks, I'm sure you all know, was visuals. Savings and loans are so boring, no one will watch. There we have another reason why we miss the big stories. We aren't skilled enough to figure out how to make an important story interesting, or we aren't outraged enough to try.

We did learn one thing from dealing with the national television networks—they steal your stuff. And they don't give you credit. That means they're going to miss some important stories, because local reporters like me aren't going to tell them. Even though my philosophy has always been—I really believe this—to tell everyone everything I know, in hopes of getting a lot of people working on stories that I think are important.

In February 1989 Steve and Paul broke in The National Mortgage News the story about Neil Bush and Silverado. The week it ran, I called The Associated Press business editor in New York to alert him that the story was coming out, because I knew it was important and I was afraid The Associated Press would miss it. Instead of thanking me for the tip, he asked me how I knew about the story. I told him I'd just completed writing a book on savings and loans with these same National Mortgage News reporters. He said, well, then I think you have a conflict of interest; I doubt that we would be interested. I was so stunned, I hung up and I sat there and I just got madder and madder. Finally, I called him back, and I said, I can't believe you said that. He said, well, he might have someone in his Washington Bureau take a look at it, but he wasn't sure he was interested in a story about one of Bush's children. There we have a major problem that I think makes us miss stories. He didn't see the bigger implications.

We did learn one thing from dealing with the national television networks—they steal your stuff. And they don't give you credit. That means they're going to miss some important stories, because local reporters like me aren't going to tell them. Even though my philosophy has always been—I really believe this—to tell everyone everything I know, in hopes of getting a lot of people working on stories that I think are important.

Seymour Hersh

I have a lot of great tips, and you ought to see me try and tell them to The New York Times today. Investigative reporters, I'm sorry to say it, we're the bad guys. We're the people who nobody wants to hear, nobody wants to talk to us. Most of the editors I know are afraid of us, very simply. Because all of us, when you come down deep, we share one thing, which is a strong, profound sense of moral outrage. We articulate it in different ways. But basically we all deal from a moral point of view. And I'm here to tell you—there's nothing wrong with it.

We had a spectacle of the senior editor of The Washington Post [Leonard Downie] before the election, in between sitting on the [Senator] Packwood story, telling us that the way he solved the dilemma of his First Amendment rights versus his right as a citizen was he didn't vote. He thought that accomplished everything.

The job of covering—it doesn't matter what I think. I'm a professional journalist. This is an attitude most of the editors don't share, when they get to be a major editor of a major newspaper—gutless, ball-less, what you will. If you knew some of the stories I couldn't sell over the years, [like] the skinheads right now. The CIA and some of the stuff they do in very sensitive places at critical times. Editors would look at me—I don't have to mention the paper—and say, that's very interesting. And that's the last I hear about it.

So it goes. But we're all used to it. That's the price you pay. And I don't know what the answer is. I'm not terribly optimistic about it.

I think it's a sad thing that Mary said. Reporters write a story once, and then there's no response and they stop. I think somehow the object is to keep on pushing. The problem is, what do you do when you make yourself a pain in the ass and you become suspect? Because, as everybody knows, for some mysterious reason, if you have a point of view in a newspaper room you are suspect. Or if you're a true believer you're dangerous, you're political. That's really crazy. Because it seems to me the only good stories that come out of anything come from people who have a passion about right and wrong, and good and bad. It's a terrible tragedy. It's very tough.

I don't know what the answer is. There's no answer. I think the answer is, or one solution is, a people's revolt. But I don't think that'll work. We can't overthrow the newsrooms. The people that run the major newspapers are just a shade better than the people that run the major networks. And that says something very sad.

Courtland Milloy

America needs investigating. The country is built on principles and ideals that have fallen by the wayside and yet we're still kind of nitpicking around the edges like, except for this little scandal here, this scandal here, everything is all right. That's a fundamental problem. And I think it starts with being closer to people. You can go into my office on any day and look at the expense accounts that reporters, much like yourselves, turn in. They don't take people out. They get with commis-

sioners and bosses and chiefs and mid-level people in hopes that they can get a little nugget fed to them, get a nice little trend story with maybe a little anecdotal lead; quick, accurate with some impact in that glass booth of managers; and in time, be promoted out of this country.

It's an amazing thing. We have today some of the most educated, some of the most high spirited and intelligent reporters ever. You put them in the urban area, they can't find their way from northwest to southeast literally. You take them to Bosnia, and man, there were gunmen and snipers and ... You know? In Yugoslavia, South Africa, I mean, what happened? Well, of course we know what happened. They got an assignment that was valued by the editors. They wanted this story. They spend a lot of money to send people away from here to write about other people's mess. But they don't value it when you're writing about what's going on in their backyard, because it may reflect on where we really live. This room would maybe be the size of some mid-level daily newspaper. And if you cut it, divide it up, you'd have most people out in the suburbs looking for what's going on in our new communities. You know, where is Cheese having his next party, and where is Barney the Dinosaur showing up next? The cities have gone to hell and have been written off. And that's where the stories are. I mean, that's where—you know, in the District of Columbia, with the nation's capital being the murder capital of America—if that is not cause for some daily understanding, I mean a daily crusade about what is going on. Not in black neighborhoods, but what is happening with violence in America.

> This attempt to be objective and to stifle any moral outrage—I think what it does is stifle good investigative journalism.

Our city is defined by The Washington Post essentially as Chevy Chase, Cleveland Park and Georgetown. That's political Washington. And the rest of it is just written off as a place to be plucked for examples of pathology, not for the purpose of public service, but for showing how low can they go. So that people who deal with that can say, wow, we are so much better than that. It's chit-chat conversation. Then it can be packaged nicely and submitted for a prize. A prize. Well, we do have a problem, and the answer is with you all. What is it going to take to make you outraged? What is it going to take to make you a little eccentric, like Mary, like Scott? You really have to be.

Raymond Bonner

The papers I'm familiar with, if you show too much moral outrage, you'll be out. You certainly won't be having a place to express it. I mean, my feeling was you weren't supposed to have any moral outrage. You were supposed to be neutral and "objective." There wasn't room for eccentrics.

I think maybe Len Downie's letter is the extreme, saying you shouldn't even vote. But I think it's really clear you're not supposed to have any moral outrage. I was an advocate. I mean, it's the same thing as saying you've got moral outrage, you care strongly about these things; you can't be objective. Well, what is objectivity? The late Charlie Moore was once accused by Carter when he was running for President, and Charlie was writing some stories about the Calley trial. And Carter said to him, Charlie you've lost your objectivity. And Charlie said, well, Governor, I guess when American soldiers go into a village and shoot up and kill the peasants like they did, yes, maybe I have lost my objectivity.

This attempt to be objective and to stifle any moral outrage—I think what it does is stifle good investigative journalism. Sy says he doesn't have any answers. I don't have the answers. But one thing that really needs to be done is they've got to put reporters on major beats whose job it is to look behind what the government officials are saying. I mean, if you get a place like The New York Times and The Washington Post, The L.A. Times, The Wall Street Journal—any papers that are big enough should have a State Department reporter that covers the State Department; a Pentagon reporter who covers the Pentagon. And the Justice Department. But there's got to be a reporter on those beats whose job it is to not take what the government is saying every day. I mean sadly, government has a history of lying pretty consistently. Therefore, to look behind what the government is saying, to really try to find out what's going on in these agencies. I don't think until the major papers assign somebody that task—have not just an investigative team, but almost one person for every major agency or every place they have a beat, reporting on what the government's saying. I don't think until they do that, I think we're going to continue to miss the big stories.

Georges—How much do we need investigative units?

Fricker—I'm not a fan of I-teams. I prefer to try to think of all the reporters on our paper as investigators. I want editors, as soon as a reporter comes to them with a story that needs more in-depth coverage, to cut that reporter loose and give them the time to work on it. That reporter. And let them be an investigative reporter for a while and do that story. That's the way I'd like to see it handled.

Kovach—Mary's exactly right. One of the fundamental problems that has to be overcome if there's going to be a serious and important future to investigative reporting rather than episodic investigative reporting, is editors who believe in investigative reporting.

Sy Hersh had an amazing record. But he'll tell you, when he took on corporate America he ran into a much tougher editing corps than he had ever seen. If the editors don't sign off on that kind of aggressive reporting, don't accept journalists with moral outrage. I believe [in] moral outrage committed to telling [the truth] as best we can get at the truth. All the moral outrage I've heard from anybody at this table is moral outrage about lies and deception and untruths. How a journalist can be opposed to that, editor, publisher, owner or whatever, I don't understand.

Q.—[Why doesn't the trade press get more respect and attention from the mainstream media for their excellent investigative reporting?]

Kovach—I'd love to meet an editor at a major newspaper who read the trade press. I hate to keep coming back to editors, but I think that's where the problem is. I mean, how many editors are there in this room? [Two people raised their hands.] The trade press finds its way into the major press through good reporters, who read it and network with those trade reporters.

Q.—[How can beat reporters be freed up from daily coverage to do more in-depth work?]

Kovach—We tried Mr. Inside and Ms. Outside before. It doesn't work, so long as the news organization insists on having access to that institution when they need it. So you depend on the inside reporter to get the phone call returned from the Secretary of State, or from the White House, or from the Attorney General. You

don't do that by screwing them. So while your outside person may break a story or two, your inside person is still going to have to keep the lines of communication open for your organization. So inside/outside works a little bit, but it doesn't really work.

I just heard an interesting idea. It's the way television is approaching this business now, as we all see network news beginning to shrink and decline, and more [television] news magazines that do have some pretty interesting investigative stuff. Some pretty corny, some pretty bad, but some pretty good. What they finally decided is the network news is our daily briefing on the news. Let them do that, forget about that and let's invest in a couple of news magazines where we can take two-three important stories and develop them at length, devote the time, put a storyline to it so we get people involved, not just in understanding but in feeling that story. Now if they take the right story, that can be dramatic and important coverage. It's a "60 Minutes" idea played around with a little bit. Just think about what's happening. Twenty years ago, there was "60 Minutes." Ten years ago, there was "60 Minutes" and "20/20." Now there's six of these shows, and before the summer's over, there'll be nine of them. Television sees an opportunity to get into the home, grab people by the lapels, and shake them to look at important stories.

Why couldn't a newspaper treat the A Section as the evening news? Then, instead of having a feature section that's all fluff and bullshit, do two-three really important stories, not just in depth, but with human beings in them, with a beginning, a middle and an end, and really tell that story. It might be a way to find a loyal following. You might even get circulation out of it.

Q.—What's going to be the driving force that will alter the climate into supporting aggressive, progressive reform stories being commonplace instead of being the exception?

Hersh—We really don't have very good ties to the people who are talking about some changes. I don't think it's going to happen. I think what's happened is you're going to see more corporate ownership of the media. The news magazines are terrifically interesting developments. The only reason they work is because they're cheap and they make money. Newspapers, of course, are the last outpost of any progressive thinking. To make those changes would mean maybe to hire some people who could write those stories. And give them the time. That isn't going to happen on a newspaper. They're going to be content.

As far as the trade magazines are concerned, I hope they stay in business, because I remember we used to steal their eyeballs all the time. When I was covering the Pentagon, you couldn't wait to get the defense dailies, just steal everything you could. That's they way it worked. That was my training.

Q.—What evidence do we have, what encouragement do we get from the business side of operations that this stuff sells newspapers?

Fricker—The Philadelphia Inquirer circulation went bonkers while the Barlett and Steele series was running, so I think that's a very strong testament. By the way, my newspaper also ran that series, and our circulation went bonkers. A good investigation can help the bottom line.

Kovach—Lou Ureneck up in Maine, who's the editor of The Portland Herald, has been pushing this idea of judgmental expert reporting. He turns teams of reporters loose on important subjects like the state's workman's comp laws, and after they've done their reporting, they draw conclusions based on the reporting they've done. When they write their stories, they include their conclusions backed up by the supporting evidence. The circulation of the newspaper when they were doing that series did very well indeed. It kept climbing up. Not only did their readers read it; the state government read it. They have now [revised] the laws. It makes a difference, it gains a readership, but then it goes away. If you just do it once in a while you never develop a loyal following. It's like episodic anything—nobody gets used to it. It has to be part of the system. The circulation manager ought to be the best pal you've got on the newspaper.

Q.—I'm wondering to what extent the fault either lies with ourselves, or what's happened to our readers. Is it that we're not hitting these stories hard enough and repeatedly enough, or is it that the appetites of readers have been so sugar-coated that it's almost as if, when they see these stories, well, forget BCCI, give me Madonna. To what extent is it that we have to just keep going at this, or do people really care?

Armstrong—I just see a lack of good investigative reporting. We just need to a better job and more of it. ■

Third World

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Advertising Aimed At Special Niches

If we can't promote consumer advertising vigorously, can we promote it appropriately?

Yes. Some of the papers are already targeted enough to have an audience that is a special-niche market. Banking and business papers, for example. Or papers for the few upscale consumers who travel and should be of interest to the airlines. Perhaps there is a sports audience that need sneakers. A heightened sense of possibilities, a mind set that includes advertising, is something American newspaper people can share.

We can also share concepts and practices of design and ways to get a message across. The use of color. The use of display type. The use of artwork and illustrations—easy in offset.

And in some few instances, is there a market for regional advertising? Could the Francophone nations of West Africa sell jointly? Are there products and services which cut across national boundaries that a representative in Paris or Belgium would find marketable? Can the classified market be developed?

The thought that is hardest for Americans to cope with is the absence of an economic base comparable to ours. We think revenues will grow if only the publishers start selling space; that's an American pipe dream. Sn our focus should be to explore how it is possible for newspapers to survive in their environment. If we listen to the questions on the lips of the Third World editors and publishers, we will find out what they need, and if we are careful and innovative, we should be able to find that some—not all—of our newspaper experience and tools may be available and useful. It takes a wrenching reorientation to see newspapering from such a different perspective. But without clear focus on the economic survival of Third World newspapers, our concern with press freedom and quality journalism becomes a hollow exercise. ■

How Sacred Is Off the Record?

Can a Reporter Set Aside Ground Rules With a Source In Face of an Obligation to the Readers?

By Kenneth Freed

As all good journalists know, one of the sacrosanct rules of interviewing is that ground rules are to be respected. Background is background, sources are protected and off the record is off the record.

But are there cases where the rules can or should be broken? Are there stories so important that a journalist has an obligation to the reader that overrides the agreement with the source?

I was faced with just such a situation while covering Central America. And I broke the rules.

It began with an invitation to lunch. It seemed straight forward enough; I was to have lunch with the new U.S. ambassador to one of the countries I covered. The embassy press officer said the idea was for the ambassador and me to get to know each other informally.

It was not an interview and therefore would be off the record. I said I generally objected to off the record but would accept the ground rules since we wouldn't be talking about substance.

The luncheon—tuna salad sandwiches and soft drinks in the ambassador's office—began innocuously enough. A political appointee, he talked about his relationship with President Bush and how he had made a fortune in oil and real estate. We turned to football. My alma mater had hired away his state university's football coach and the ambassador, a major contributor to the school's athletic program, was still piqued about losing the coach. Then the ambassador looked up. "What do you think about things here? You know, my instructions are to end the drug trade and see that human rights abuses are stopped."

I pulled out my note book, pushed the sandwich aside and began taking notes.

What he had to say was startling and diametrically opposed to the official U.S. line. He charged the country's president with major corruption, promotion of drug trafficking and with overlooking serious human rights violations by the military and some of his closest political allies.

He went on to say that the Presidential candidate from the president's party in upcoming elections was not only corrupt but also the leading drug dealer in the country. "We will use every resource of this embassy to see that he is defeated," the ambassador said, "including the Voice of America."

This clearly was news, but the embassy press officer repeated that everything was off the record.

I left the ambassador's office and asked to see the embassy's expert on drugs. I didn't mention the ambassador's conversation and the drug expert said he would talk on background, that is, with attribution only to "Western diplomats."

He gave me the details of presidential drug corruption. The president not only was being paid off by the drug dealer, the president was also a user himself. To make certain I understood, the official made a sniffing gesture and put his hand to his nose.

Then I asked him about reports that the local military intelligence unit used in anti-drug efforts was involved in serious human rights abuses.

"I hear these reports," the official answered, "and when I do, I just turn my back. These people are too important to me for me to do anything."

I checked out these allegations with other diplomats and various political sources in the country. Everything the Americans said seemed supported. I decided to go with the story, which, without challenge by any editor, was put on the front page of The Los Angeles Times and widely distributed by the Times-Post News Service.

The lead had no attribution, just the assertion that the very forces being used by the United States were also guilty of some of the country's worst human rights violations. I compared the current situation with what went on in Panama under Manuel Noriega.

However, in the body of the story I used quotes attributed to U.S. officials and repeated the statements about the president, his designated successor (who ultimately lost) and the military human rights violations.

The reaction was immediate and almost violent. The embassy couldn't accuse me publicly of violating the ground rules because that would have implicitly corroborated the story. But I was banned from the embassy, the story was labeled a lie with faked quotes and an effort was made to cut me off from other American embassies in the region. The press officer even denied that I had met with the ambassador.

When I sat down to write the story I thought I was faced with three options: I could follow the ground rules and not write. I could write an incomplete story

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using second- and third-hand accounts from other diplomats and local sources or I could write what I knew to be true.

Was I right?

The situation of drugs and human rights was the most important story in the country and what the ambassador and other embassy officials told me was a crucial element. And what they said ran in the face of the official American policy of supporting the president, staying neutral in the upcoming elections and the State Department assessment that both the anti-drug effort and the fight against human rights violations had made serious progress.

However, as I was preparing this article for Nieman Reports I talked to several colleagues and with only one exception they thought I had followed the wrong course.

"You shouldn't have done it" was the verdict of Don Schanche, a recently retired veteran foreign correspondent for The Los Angeles Times. "You agreed to a meeting off the record, and off the record means off the record."

Don Bohning, Latin American editor of The Miami Herald, agreed, sort of. "This is second guessing and he [the ambassador] deserves to get nailed, but I don't think you should have done it the way you did."

The way I should have done it, according to Washington Post foreign correspondent Lee Hockstader "was to go back to the source and ask to ease, if not eliminate, the ground rules."

He told of an instance in which a senior State Department official had told him off the record of developments in Cuba that seemed to contradict official administration statements.

"I went back to [him] and he blew up and accused me of bait and switch tactics." It wasn't until Hockstader said he would pursue the story elsewhere that the source called back and said that he could attribute the story fully and directly.

"I don't see any ethical problem in telling the source that you are going to get the story confirmed by others, even though the original came off the record. But off the record is off the record."

Should I have followed that tactic? I assumed that the ambassador told me what he wanted me to hear, that he wanted to influence my coverage. After all, he did not object to my taking notes nor to my follow-up questions.

Neither did the press officer set off-the-record ground rules when I talked to the drug officer. In fact, the press officer offered his own assessment about the same situation on background.

Even in retrospect I think that if I had gone back and asked for new rules, say background or deep background, he would at best have softened his stand and certainly his quotes, leaving me with no option but to write a story further from the truth.

If I had pursued it elsewhere without reference to the ambassador's comment I could not have come up with the detail and firsthand account available only from the embassy. And, after all, the Americans were key players. No one else could have directly given me their thinking.

Of those interviewed, only Barry Schweid, the long-time chief diplomatic correspondent for The Associated Press, argued that I had been correct.

"It's a tough one. I'm inclined to say never," Schweid said. "But I don't think you broke the rules. You checked it out elsewhere and got it confirmed....He [the ambassador] wanted you to accept what he was saying for his own reasons. He wanted a story, he just didn't want his fingerprints on it."

"Furthermore," Schweid said, "how can anyone expect you to accept off the record if he doesn't object when you pull out a notebook and ask questions like an interview?"

He also argued that nothing is truly off the record. "If it's important a reporter is going to use it some way. It certainly will affect his thinking and his coverage."

Am I engaging in situation ethics, defending the means because of the end? Perhaps so, probably so, but the story was true and it resulted in Congressional pressure on the administration that brought changes in policy, particularly in terms of human rights.

In 30 years of reporting this was the first and so far only time I have faced such a dilemma. At the time, what I did seemed the right thing. But would I do it again?

Frankly, I don't know. ■

The Swamp Root Chronicle

Adventures in the Word Trade

Robert Manning's memoir, "The Swamp Root Chronicle," covers a half century in journalism. Manning was one of the stars who came out of United Press in the 1930's and 1940's. He covered the White House and the State Department, then took a year off to become a Nieman Fellow in 1945-46. After that he covered the newly established United Nations for UP, then became a senior editor and foreign correspondent for Time-Life. He was for nearly 15 years editor of The Atlantic Monthly. These excerpts, reprinted with the permission of the author, deal with his years as Assistant Secretary of State under President Kennedy. The book is published by W.W. Norton & Co.

War and Uneasy Peace in Washington

Whoever it was who said "God takes care of fools and the United States" could have had my case in mind. Before I had finished my last few days at the doomed New York Herald-Tribune and cleaned out my desk, an associate from United Press days called to congratulate me on being considered for a position with the United States government. I told him he was mistaken. No, said my friend, he'd been visited by an FBI agent who was conducting a security check.[1]

The mystery was solved a few days later when a telephone caller identified himself as Ralph Dungan of the White House. He was one of the President's principal talent scouts and wanted to interview me for a possible job in the New Frontier. Dungan said the President was looking for someone to take over the State Department's Public Affairs operation and my name had been mentioned.

What about the fellow who'd been filling the job for the past year? I asked. Well, Dungan said, he just hasn't worked out and is being moved to a comfortable ambassadorial post in Europe. What does that mean, he didn't work out? I asked. Well, said Dungan, he just didn't seem able to do the job in a way that pleased either the Secretary of State or the President. Who's he supposed to be working for? He's a Presidential appointee, Dungan said, so I guess that means while he works for the Secretary of State he'd be wise to please the President as well, since Mr. Kennedy has a very special interest in how the State Department deals with the public. After about an hour of cross- and cross-cross examination, which Dungan had the knack for making relaxing and reassuring, he said he'd looked me over and was satisfied, so if I was interested in proceeding further I ought to travel to Foggy Bottom and be looked over by the Secretary of State.

This was a very different, far less comfortable meeting. Dean Rusk and I had already looked each other over, several years before. He was prominent on the American team at the United Nations that had tried the last-minute maneuver that almost untracked the Palestine partition decision in 1947 and dissembled about it, threatening my job in the bargain.

We exchanged pleasantries and inquired of each other's doings in the years since those early UN days. I had already been told the rudiments of the job—stewardship over a large bureau of some 150 people, a too-small budget of about $2.5 million, and responsibilities that included publishing the several volumes each year

[1] I don't know how reliable or useful or even necessary they are today but the security checks conducted by J. Edgar Hoover's FBI were a cause not just of fear but also a considerable amount of ridicule among persons being scouted for government employment during the cold war days. When many years later under the Freedom of Information act I obtained censored copies from government files concerning me I found the material dealing with the FBI's "security clearance" inquiries to be straightforward and accurate. I was startled though to read in material from CIA files that I had been graduated from Harvard (from which I never graduated) in 1935, when I was age fifteen, and had lived at one period in a street I had never heard of in a distant part of New York City I had never even visited. The remainder of the contents described a subject whose life was so commonplace and uneventful I was glad he wasn't I.

of U.S. diplomatic history, the hand-holding of well-intentioned members of World Affairs Councils and other citizens groups around the country with an interest in foreign policy, running a nationwide speakers' bureau, editing a stream of Department publications, providing Department "policy guidance" to the United States Information Agency, and, most importantly, serving as one of the government's main conduits of information to the public and a very hungry press corps. It was the Secretary of State's and the President's attitude toward that last function that would determine whether a man should consider serving as assistant secretary for public affairs, especially if the man contemplating the job was by now so snakebit he'd not trust even Mother Teresa to cut the cards unless she wore sheepskin gloves. Jack Kennedy's first year as President indicated that he had a healthy attitude toward the information process, and Dungan's stress on that point made that doubly clear. But what about his Secretary of State?

After the small talk, Dean Rusk looked at me gravely. With the remnant of a Georgia accent that still tinged his speech after years of living in Yankee country he asked, "Are you willing to lie for your country?"

That's it, I thought, and moved as if to end this conversation quickly, but as he saw my reaction Rusk intervened with the tiniest flicker of what might have been a smile and indicated that he was just asking a question, not making a proposal.

"No," I said. "And anybody would be a fool to think he could lie to the press even once and still be an effective spokesman. Anyway, it is not necessary to lie." I went on to say that, while it might not always be easy, a government official ought to be able at the worst to say nothing instead of dissembling (a polite choice of word) when national security demanded it or premature babbling would upset a delicate negotiation.

The matter of our unpleasant experience at the United Nations did not come up directly but implicitly I had just alluded to it. Rusk said he was satisfied with my response to his blunt question. That emboldened me to press some other matters before deciding whether this was the right step for me. I told the secretary nobody in the job could serve him or the President well unless he had the full confidence of his superiors AND (I spoke the word in capital letters) unless he was granted full access to the major deliberations and major decisions and was granted clearance to see top-secret and other classified documents and cable traffic. This would require sitting in some of the sudden, impromptu meetings in which many big decisions are made as well as formal gatherings like the secretary's morning staff meetings and many of the exchanges with foreign officials both in Washington and abroad. This would mean also traveling with the secretary to important international gatherings, like the meetings of NATO and the other Western alliances and East-West arms control negotiations.

A spokesman known by the State Department press corps to be out of touch with intimate affairs (today it seems to be called "out of the loop," the way George Bush says he was during his vice-presidency) would simply be bypassed, I pointed out, and reporters would get their information from a scattering of sources, including some with special axes to grind and others who didn't know all the facts. If I could trust him to give me sufficient access to information, then he could trust me to do the right thing and thereby, in Mark Twain's phrase, "gratify some people and astonish the rest." The secretary seemed to think I should take the job. I promised to let him know quickly.

I walked a few yards across the seventh floor to the office of George Ball to take out what the insurance industry calls an "umbrella policy." George had just become, or was about to become, the principal underSecretary of State, number two man in the department. We had seen little of each other since the day of Adlai Stevenson's jolting defeat in 1952, but he greeted me as the kind of friend you make by having hunkered down in a shellhole together during an enemy barrage without whimpering or wetting your pants. I told him of my concerns about access to important information and decisions. Don't worry about it, he said in effect. As long as I'm here you have it whenever you need it.

The assurance that I had the number two man strongly behind me convinced me I should take the job, that I'd find a new excitement and a sense of purpose in working with the shapers of events, no matter how peripherally, rather than being a mere commentator. I signed on with the New Frontier, with the stipulation that I'd return to journalism in two years. So it was back to Washington again.

This was a decidedly image-conscious administration with a heavy macho overlay. Hardly a week passed without gossip column items or newspaper photographs portraying Attorney General Bobby Kennedy scaling Mount McKinley or Secretary of Defense McNamara plunging downstream in a white-water raft, or the President himself catching a touch football pass at Hyannis Port.

Shortly before I took the job, several newspapers ran a picture showing the Secretary of State bowling, about as non-New Frontier an image as one could imagine. Soon after I began working at State the morning papers ran another picture, this one showing Dean Rusk shoveling snow off his sidewalk. A friend telephoned that afternoon to say wryly: "You're doing a great image-building job, Bob. Keep up the good work." Fortunately, Dean Rusk was little interested in personal image. He once described himself as looking "like a bartender." He was the one truly self-effacing high-ranking official in the publicity-conscious administration, a man of unobtrusive modesty and deep loyalty to the President. He zealously guarded the privacy of his family and his own feelings. Though we were to have our differences about what one had to do to achieve it, he encouraged the understanding that my job was not to enhance personalities, his surely among them, but to build an information operation that served the public without harming the conduct of foreign policy.

One of my first and wisest moves was to get in touch with Jimmy Greenfield, who'd been my right-hand man in London. He too had responded to an invitation to experience government from the inside and was serving at the Pentagon as an aide to Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric. Jim was finding his work at Defense less interesting than he had expected, boring in fact, and was happy to cross the Potomac and work with me again, as principal deputy assistant Secretary of State.

Another deputy already in place was Katie Louchheim, an attractive and gutsy lady who was equally at home in Georgetown society, a Democratic party imbroglio, or a conclave of fellow poets.

For most of the bureau's operations a core staff of experienced administrators, writers, historians, and assorted specialists was in place; there was a handful of tired time-servers among them, but most were dedicated and hard-working civil servants who seemed eager to please and to guide the new boss—yet another one!—through the maze of bureaucracy. The big sector, the one that I was given to understand the President felt needed

much improvement, was the operation of the news bureau and the day-to-day channeling of information to a never satisfied diplomatic press corps.

Gone were the days when a half-dozen or so correspondents would cluster around taciturn old Cordell Hull for tidbits of non-news. A band of some two hundred correspondents, American and foreign, were now accredited to the department. They were men and women who mostly did their homework, who could not only smell a half-truth from a block away but knew how to root out the other half somewhere else. Some of the more experienced correspondents, American and foreign as well, knew as much of the background and possible consequences of matters they were covering as the officials who were supposedly experts in them, sometimes more. I knew many of the correspondents. Some, like John Hightower of the AP and Stu Hensley of the UP, I knew from as far back as my own days as a UP correspondent in the forties, others from the more recent days of covering NATO meetings and other international conferences when I worked overseas. With the alert help of Jim Greenfield, who quickly established himself as a cheerful, knowledgeable, and forthcoming source for newsmen, I built early rapport with the State Department press corps. I came to call them, with more affection than chastisement, "the Hounds of Gutenberg," and they in turn chided me as "a poacher turned gamekeeper."

There were times when we quarreled, times when we frustrated each other, times when I couldn't give them as much information as they wanted (and sometimes deserved). There were some among them who were merely headline-hunters, others more interested in writing about what was *going* to happen, who was going to be appointed to or sacked from what job, than in giving the reading public some insight into what *had* happened.

All in all, though, the State Department correspondents were the smartest and least easily satisfied segment of the huge Washington press corps. I respected them and they seemed to return the compliment. I of course had been one of them, and even though I had now crossed the road that earlier kinship certainly helped to make working with the reporters of the news the easier part of a difficult job.

Dealing inside the government with the makers, the protectors, the leakers, and the would-be suppressors of the news was a decidedly different matter. A major part of the problem was, purely and simply, official ignorance. I discovered to my astonishment that from the very top on down, most government officials had only the most elementary knowledge of how journalism works, of its motivations or its limitations, of the myriad ways information gets circulated in an open, democratic society, and of the hopelessness of wishing that the press would just go away. The career Foreign Service in particular seemed to inculcate in its officers at an early stage a hostility to the press that ranged from simple mistrust to outright contempt. The civil servants in the department (as distinguished from the more elite Foreign Service corps) were no less uncomfortable with the information function, and this was startlingly true also of many of the political appointees, presumably sophisticated men who came from "the outside world"—industry, business, law offices, and university faculties—to serve this particular administration. Persuading people with such a mind-set to deal constructively with press and public was close to impossible, so we bent our efforts to persuading them to let us in the information field do it for them. Then there were more forthcoming officials, of two different kinds. The troublesome ones were those appointees in State, Defense, and the White House who liked to deal directly with the press themselves, sometimes in order to push a particular policy initiative or sabotage someone else's, in other cases to polish their own images or tarnish others', or simply to enjoy the sensation of being "in" with certain reporters and columnists. They were a considerable source of embarrassment or irritation to those of us responsible for the flow of information because we were first to be blamed for their frequently inaccurate effusions and then obliged to try to correct them. The helpful kind were those who, even if some did not see it as an obligation, understood the virtue of building a forthcoming information process as one of the principal ways of building understanding and enlisting the support of Congress and of public opinion in general.

Fortunately, this enlightened group included the President of the United States (in spirit if not 100 percent of the time in practice) as well as some importantly placed people on his White House staff, chief among them Pierre Salinger, the press secretary, McGeorge Bundy, chief of the National Security staff, and Kenneth O'Donnell, one of JFK's so-called Irish mafia who was the President's shrewd and sometimes underrated appointments secretary. There was a small handful of similarly enlightened officials at State, most notably George Ball and Averell Harriman, and those famous exceptions to the Foreign Service norm, Ambassadors Chip Bohlen and Tommy Thompson.

By the time I moved onto the scene, in late February of 1962, the Kennedy administration had undergone a year of severe cold war testing. The East-West confrontation in Berlin had deteriorated. Castroism seemed to be threatening much of Latin America. The Soviet Union was infiltrating the heretofore Western preserve of Africa. The President had been hit by the Bay of Pigs disaster in April, a near-crisis in Laos in May, the jolting truculence of Nikita Khrushchev at the Vienna summit meeting in June, the shock of the Berlin Wall in August, the resumption of Soviet nuclear testing in the atmosphere in September. Some of the response was to call up 150,000 reservists, initiate a national program of nuclear fall-out shelters, orchestrate a new arms build-up to close what the President in his election campaign had described (inaccurately, as it turned out) as a dangerous "missile gap," and to resume our own nuclear testing above ground.

It was in this superheated atmosphere that the administration also contemplated one of the most perplexing inheritances from the Eisenhower administration, a belief in "the domino theory" that posited the Communist takeover of all Southeast Asia if the divided country of Vietnam was lost to Communist forces, and the commitment of U.S. arms and military advisors to keep that from happening. At that time, though, in the spring of that second Kennedy year, the President's concern over Vietnam was secondary to his preoccupation with the U.S.-USSR confrontation, Castro and Cuba, and the bloody civil strife in the Congo.

This was equally true of the State Department, where Dean Rusk and his high command concentrated on Europe and sudden flare-ups in places like the Congo while across the river Secretary of Defense McNamara and the military engineered a gradual escalation of the American military "advisory" presence in Vietnam, while the CIA, without bothering to tell State much about it, experimented with clandestine programs designed to infiltrate the Communist network and win the loyalty of Vietnamese in the countryside. There were about six hundred U.S.

military operating in South Vietnam when Kennedy became President. That number was now rising by the thousands (to reach sixteen thousand by 1963), and many of these troops were participating in a growing number of armed confrontations and taking casualties.

Official information about Vietnam, whether it was that circulated within the government or that offered to the public, was coming almost entirely in terms of enemy "body counts" and "captured enemy weapons" from General Paul Harkins and his persistently optimistic military briefers in Saigon or in Washington itself from a swaggering Marine General named Victor Krulak, whose intragovernmental briefings presented us with color slide shows of dead bodies, statistical graphs, and pitiful piles of crude weapons captured from the Vietcong to prove that the enemy was being defeated in Vietnam. Krulak wasn't much bigger than a duffle bag, but he made up for that with a fierce demeanor, like the fellow at the end of the bar who says, "I can lick anybody in the place," and doesn't tempt anyone to dispute him. I wasn't surprised to discover that he was known in the Corps as "Brute."

The main preoccupations of the Bureau of Public Affairs were of course the same as the administration's, particularly the ongoing Berlin tension. There were day-to-day questions pertaining to negotiations at Geneva for East-West arms control agreements, the glacial movement toward European unity, dealings with West Germany's Konrad Adenauer, who was suspicious of any American move that smacked of conciliation with Moscow at Bonn's expense, and with Charles de Gaulle who resented American influence in West European affairs and especially the Anglo-American "special relationship," which he felt demeaned France.

Jim Greenfield and I spruced up the operations of the News Office, which provided each day's noontime briefing to the press, and we found that by pressing hard we could extract more forthcoming material for those briefings than had habitually been provided by the operational bureaus—those dealing with European, Middle Eastern, Far Eastern, African, Legal, and United Nations affairs. We opened a rich new source of background material and guidance for State Department correspondents with the enthusiastic cooperation of Roger Hilsman, who with his deputy Thomas Hughes was then running the State Department's division of Intelligence and Research. INR's staff included experts on just about every country and every corner of the world and was also plugged into the CIA, Defense Intelligence Agency, and the other intelligence-collecting operations of the government. Career people higher up in the department's hierarchy blanched at this heretical mating of newsmen and the governmental intelligence network, but we had Dean Rusk's and George Ball's approval, and Mac Bundy's as well, so they could only grumble and swallow their misgivings.

Dean Rusk's uneasiness with the information function persistently manifested itself. More than once when I traveled with him to Geneva arms negotiations or a NATO ministers' conference he wondered out loud why I wasn't back in Washington "doing your assistant secretary's work." I tried diplomatically to remind him that being on hand to explain and perhaps even understand what he was doing *was* a major part of my work.

Just before landing on our first trip together, for Geneva arms negotiations, I apprised Dean Rusk of a news item and advised him that correspondents might ask him about it at the airport. "Correspondents?" he said. "Why not just tell them to stay away? I won't have anything to say." I told him that was not the way things worked. On our next overseas flight together, the same thing would happen. "Why do they bother to come out?" Rusk asked. In exasperation I said, "Because, Mr. Secretary, you are the representative of the President of the United States and the newspapermen want to be there in case the plane crashes and we all go up in flames." At the terminal, the secretary would respond affably and knowledgeably to newsmen's questions. I was sure, though, the same thing would happen again, that this was only the beginning of a long and difficult educational process.

More than anything else, it was the President's interest that made the work exciting and, more to the point, made doing the job possible. Usually that interest was conveyed through Pierre Salinger and our frequent meetings in his office, other times by way of a call from Mac Bundy or one of his assistants, but sometimes the President himself was on the other end of the telephone line. One night at suppertime he called to ask about an unpleasant development in Berlin and instructed me that he wanted it handled in "a quiet tone of voice."

Like Presidents before him and since, Kennedy often was infuriated by news leaks, even when the object of the leak was of limited significance. One morning at seven o'clock one of the ingenious White House switchboard operators tracked me down at the pay phone alongside the St. Albans tennis courts and the President came on the line. "I suppose you're out there loafing with the likes of Bundy, Rostow, and others [he was right] when you all should be at work," he said sarcastically, and then complained angrily about a story about a forthcoming U.S. position in the United Nations that had leaked into that morning's New York Times. He wanted to know before the day was out who had leaked it. The leaker could have been any one of a couple of hundred people or even more who were familiar with that particular—and not very weighty—matter. When I called him at midday to confess that I could find no clue as to who the culprit could be, Kennedy interrupted to say with a laugh, "Never mind. I found the son-of-a-bitch right here in my own nest." As in most such cases, the matter had already ceased to be important.

At one point Salinger passed the word that the President thought I should myself deliver the daily State Department briefings; he was increasingly bothered by the "cold war rhetoric and confrontational tone" that he ascribed to Lincoln White, who had been handling the briefings for more years than most could remember. His tenure in the news office stretched back to Cordell Hull's time. I argued that the several hours required each morning to prepare for the briefings would keep me out of the high-level meetings at which important decisions were being made or discussed and thereby undermine my general credibility.[2] The President ordered instead that I replace the much-admired Linc White with a new face. This task I approached with deep reluctance and a sense of guilt, but Linc gracefully accepted a diplomatic assignment in Australia and the opportunity to get onto a superb golf course almost every afternoon. This created the opportunity to bring a respected Foreign Service officer, Richard Phillips, into the role of the News Office's daily briefer and to promote as his assistant and eventual successor an equally intelligent, equally unflappable

[2]In 1977, when fellow journalist Hodding Carter became President Jimmy Carter's assistant secretary for public affairs, I strongly advised him to avoid the daily briefing task for the reasons cited above. Hodding refused my sage advice and soon thereafter, with his handling of the Iranian hostage crisis, became a national celebrity.

News Office supernumerary named Robert McCloskey as the back-up briefer. Both earned the respect and confidence of newsmen and government officials alike, accolades rarely granted by both sides to those who labor in that no-man's land between them.

An occasional breakfast at the White House was yet another part of the job. Preparations for the Presidential press conferences began late on the day before, when Arthur Sylvester and Dix Donnelly, my opposite numbers at the Defense and Treasury departments, and the information chiefs of most departments gathered in Pierre Salinger's White House office. Each of us brought a briefing book listing questions we thought might be thrown at the President next day, together with factual material and suggestions as to what the President might usefully say—or should avoid saying—about each subject. We discussed those for an hour or so, then Salinger delivered the briefing books to the Oval Office for the President's bedtime reading. Breakfast next morning was the occasion for an intimate and often entertaining drill session. The regular participants were usually Vice-President Johnson, Dean Rusk or George Ball, sometimes both, Mac Bundy, Ted Sorensen and his deputy counsel, Meyer Feldman, Pierre Salinger, and myself. Sometimes Robert McNamara would attend, as would other cabinet secretaries now and then, when a matter of concern to them was afoot, as was the case for Secretary of Labor Goldberg on the morning of the steel price confrontation.

When time came for the news conference, Pierre would sometimes plead: Mr. President, this *time please* don't call on Sarah or May. Then Kennedy would stride out before the press corps and TV cameras in the State Department auditorium, pluck at his suitcoat while straightening his shoulders, read a statement or two, and invite questions. On the several occasions in which I participated in that singularly American ritual I don't remember a single question of great import for which the President had not prepared himself. There were, though, some lesser questions that no one had anticipated; almost all of them were asked either in the brassy voice of Sarah MacLendon of Texas or from beneath the turn-of-century Ma Kettle-style hat of May Craig of Maine. John Kennedy simply could not keep himself from calling on those two women whenever they stood up, and more times than not they confounded him with inquiries from the far outfield, questions about obscure happenings in the Texas Panhandle or the coast of Maine. JFK was a polished and frequently entertaining performer in his news conferences, more deft and effective than any President since FDR, and under much more difficult conditions. His success was only partially due to careful preparation; the task was made easier by the Washington press corps's habitual failure to organize its questioning and take constructive advantage of the rare opportunities to grill the President of the United States.

Since the Bay of Pigs and the building of the Berlin Wall, nothing had happened that deserved the label "crisis." As autumn came and politicians began jockeying for the 1962 congressional elections, some Republicans, notably Senators Kenneth Keating of New York and Homer Capehart of Indiana, were indulging in scare talk that the Soviet Union was installing missiles in Cuba, only a short leap from American shores. Where they were getting their information, or inspiration, we did not know. Arthur Sylvester at the Pentagon and I at State sought—and got—assurance from higher authorities that the senators were talking through their hats. As recently as mid-September the combined U.S. Intelligence Board had looked into such rumors and concluded that the USSR would not consider making Cuba a military base. The scare talk persisted but the department was so calm in mid-October that Maggie and I traveled to Maryland's Eastern Shore for a rare long weekend, a reunion with old friends. We'd hardly gotten there when Jim Greenfield telephoned to say, "Something's going on and you'd better hurry back." I asked him for details and he said ominously that he could not say anything more on the telephone.

We rushed back to town. I learned that the President and the highest officers of his government, only twelve men in all, were in urgent conference at the White House. The CIA had irrefutable photographic evidence to show that the Russians had indeed begun building missile launching sites in Cuba and seemed also to be building a submarine base and stocking airfields with I L-28 bombers.

The crisis meetings had been going on for four days and the major decisions about the U.S. response had been hammered out by that Saturday, October 19, when Pierre called Sylvester and me to a meeting at his Virginia home and said that we were expected to sit in on the remaining deliberations. We had missed some very high drama, but there was plenty of tension and suspense remaining as the emergency group called "the Excomm" (for executive committee of the National Security Council) pondered how to execute the President's final plan. The debate had ranged from a proposal to do nothing, on the valid assumption that the number of missiles installed in Cuba would do little to alter the balance of power, to proposals to bomb the missile sites out of existence, to invade Cuba and replace Castro's dictatorship with a new government. The relatively peaceful decision was to blockade the Soviet ships bringing the missiles to Cuba and wait for Nikita Khrushchev to make the next move. The more drastic steps, and steps even more drastic than those already discussed, still had to be contemplated if Khrushchev dared to challenge what we discreetly called our "quarantine" but which was in fact to be a naval blockade.

Secrecy was essential over that weekend, lest Moscow be alerted in time to prepare countermoves, perhaps in Berlin, perhaps in Western Europe, who could be sure where? By Monday, Washington was thrumming with the sense that something serious was happening. The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* had fairly well established that the Soviets were installing missile sites in Cuba, but Kennedy himself (Salinger and I learned later) prevailed on their publishers and/or editors to suppress their stories. Scotty Reston and Walter Lippmann got some special treatment from George Ball, a confidential briefing on Monday afternoon. They kept the confidence and the line was held until the President made his speech that evening revealing the crisis to the world. Leaders of all our NATO allies had been notified in advance, but we were fairly certain that no hint of the nature of the American response had leaked to the Soviet Union.

I was ordered to arrange a mass press briefing at State for all accredited White House, State Department, and Defense correspondents, to coincide with the President's speech. George Ball told the crowd of perhaps three hundred correspondents what was going on; Roswell Gilpatric from the Pentagon showed slides of the CIA's U-2 photographs of missile sites being cleared and launchers installed. I had orders to keep the doors closed until the briefing was finished so that no one could scoop his and her colleagues. This dismayed the European correspondents. A Frenchman braced me at the door, on the verge of tears. It was already deadline time in Paris. A British

correspondent, two from Germany, one from Italy piled up behind him, bathing me in looks of supplication. "Don't give me away," I said, unlocking the door, then quickly closing it behind them. What the hell, we had already told our allies' governments what was happening; why shouldn't their people know as well?

Now the entire world knew that a superpower confrontation was on the way. The next days were even more suspenseful than those that preceded the blockade decision. The U.S. government had to prepare for the worst. As I sat in on those preparations—silently and at the far side of the packed Cabinet Room—and observed the exchange of doom-shaded messages between the Premier of the USSR and the President of the U.S., I experienced a strange sensation. Perhaps I was badly out of focus, but I just could not believe that we were on the verge of war, nuclear or otherwise. Several of the participants in the debate, including Robert McNamara, were of the opinion that Soviet missiles emplaced in Cuba would not make any real change in the East-West military balance. Yet here were brave and intelligent men, the verymost leaders of the most powerful nation in the world, gloomily contemplating the possibility that one man with little but a psychological gambit, a propaganda flourish, to gain would spark a nuclear holocaust.

The one man, of course, was Nikita Khrushchev. He was leader of a country that possessed, according to reliable intelligence at that time, three hundred strategic missile warheads to America's five thousand. Here the Talmudic intricacy of the nuclear confrontation came into play: Many if not most nuclear "experts" viewed the ratio of three hundred Soviet missiles to five thousand American missiles as "parity" of sorts because of the destructive power of even one missile. But even if this debatable deduction was accepted in Washington, how could we assume it would be so accepted in Moscow, even without the Soviet paranoia factor? There, it almost certainly had to be looked upon as a sign of massive American superiority. True, Khrushchev's weapons if launched were sufficient to kill tens of thousands of Americans and perhaps cripple many more. But at that same moment ours would be wiping all his people from the face of the earth. When Khrushchev chose to insert Soviet nuclear capability only ninety miles off our shoreline he surely risked the possibility of conflict. How great was that risk? However great—or small—the threat all but dissolved, it seemed to me, when the President eschewed a violent response and made instead the admirable choice of a blockade. That had left the choice squarely and solely up to Khrushchev and his military chiefs.

Khrushchev's most important message during the increasingly emotional Kremlin-White House exchanges of that week was a passionately personal one that came by back channel and could only have been written by himself. It made obvious what his choice was. "Only lunatics or suicides, who themselves want to perish and to destroy the whole world before they die, could do this," he told President Kennedy. The President and the men who sat with him in those White House deliberations were surely not so lunatic as to start nuclear war over an enemy maneuver that would not seriously affect the military balance. Khrushchev was an impetuous, even reckless man, but was he a lunatic, a would-be suicide? That emotional, earthy back-channel letter from Khrushchev was the work of a very sane man who knew he had gone too far. Ergo, the missile crisis, while certainly dangerous, had not really brought us to the brink of nuclear Armageddon.

I felt that the world had probably come as close, perhaps a lot closer, to war several years before, during Russia's blockade of Berlin in 1948 and 1949 and the threatened one in 1959. There was at least as great a chance then of a misstep or accident that could have exploded into conflict that would have made inevitable a Western nuclear response to attack by overwhelming Soviet conventional forces. I was certainly not inclined to intrude these counterconclusions into the ritual of self-congratulation that followed the peaceful passing of the missile crisis. Such reflections were little short of heresy if not blasphemy in euphoric New Frontier circles, but wrongheaded as it might have been that is how I felt. Nothing in the mythology that was subsequently generated by both American and Soviet participants in the crisis,[3] nothing in the torrent of commentary, analysis, and postoperative psychoanalysis by pundits, politicians, and academicians that followed in later years caused me to change my mind.

City of the Wagging Jawbones

The poet Carl Sandburg, who called Chicago "city of the big shoulders," would have had to call Washington, D.C., the city of the wagging jawbones. So when the passion for secrecy collided with the passion for disclosure in that town, disclosure almost always won, though often with ragged results.

There are, of course, the exceptions that make the rule. The Cuban missile confrontation was one of those exceptions. The news media penetrated but did not violate the secrecy imposed by the White House in the few days between the

[3]The mythologizing process was formalized in a series of meetings beginning in 1987 at which American, Soviet, and some Cuban officials who had participated in the 1962 missiles confrontation exchanged information, traded theories, and praised each other for having avoided war. During the latest of those conclaves in Havana, a Soviet general named Anatoly Gribkov maintained that the Soviets had actually sneaked not just the rockets but short- and medium-range missiles complete with nuclear warheads into Cuba without detection by U.S. reconaissance and that Soviet officers in Cuba had been given authority to launch the short-range missiles if the Americans invaded Cuba. This was the same Soviet bureaucracy that earlier sent to its new "ally" in the equatorial country of Guinea tanks that were winterized for service in frigid Siberia. But logic suggests that if the Soviets were going to all the trouble of sending missiles to Cuba they would have sent their warheads as well. There was in fact some post-crisis evidence that a few nuclear warheads were in place and ready to be "mated,"or in some instances already "mated," to rockets.

Still American intelligence during the crisis period detected no sure sign of missile warheads on the ground or on Soviet ships leaving Cuba after the Russians bowed to the blockade. We have little more than the boast of a Soviet general thirty years later that deadly warheads in profusion as well as rockets were sneaked into Cuba, and his far more questionable claim that Soviet commanders on the scene had authority to shower them at will on the U.S. mainland if there was even a hint of an American effort to invade Cuba—an effort, incidentally, the United States had no intention of mounting.

John Newhouse, the most authoritative American journalist writing today about the armaments and the geopolitics of the nuclear age, was present at that Havana conference and when he sized up General Gribkov's performance and measured his claim against earlier, more believable information from Moscow, Newhouse implied in an impressively detailed report for The New Yorker that Gribkov was something of a show-off and blowhard who left Newhouse and some others "feeling suspicious and very skeptical." That was not the case, however, for Robert McNamara and some of the other former American officials present. News reports portrayed them as startled and impressed by the general's boast and accepting it at face value. We had come "even closer"to nuclear Armageddon than he had believed at the time, McNamara was widely quoted as saying. Another who attended the conference, the estimable historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., wrote in the New York Review of Books that, while they did not square with the easier testimony of a far higher-positioned Soviet official, Gribkov's unsupported claims should be presumed to be "right"because Gribkov had been on the scene and the rest of us had not been.

Manning's Maxim, for what it's worth: When participants in a dangerous confrontation tend to see it as more threatening than it was this makes the defusing of it—and the defusers—seem more heroic than they were.

government's verification of the Russians' Cuban missiles gambit on October 16 and President Kennedy's disclosure of the blockade response on the night of October 22. Some reporters, as has been related, learned approximately what was about to happen but in what they correctly believed to be the national interest refrained from printing or broadcasting what they knew. In the tense days that followed, with the world waiting for Moscow's response, the media clamored for more information than they were getting. For example, they wanted to put reporters and cameramen at the U.S. base in Guantanamo and aboard ships sailing out to the blockade, and they sought forbidden information about air and ground deployments that were the prudent preparations for an unfavorable Soviet reaction.

All commentary about the crisis was being carefully orchestrated by the President and the Excomm, with Arthur Sylvester handling military matters at Defense and I dealing with the diplomatic at State. We were not exactly verbose in our briefings, in part because though we knew what was happening at our end we knew no more than outsiders what the Russians were planning to do. Denied the fuller access they desired, the media people were in a grumbly mood when Pierre Salinger, on the President's orders, asked them to heed voluntarily a twelve-point set of guidelines that put a variety of mostly military matters off-limits for the duration of the crisis.

The mood of the press darkened when a New York City congressman, a beneficiary of a risky White House program to brief members of the Congress on the progress of the crisis in the naive expectation that they would all keep their mouths shut, immediately called a press conference to announce what he had been told—that the U.S. Navy blockaders had halted their first Soviet ship. The tanker *Bucharest*, carrying no suspicious cargo, was allowed to proceed. Correspondents were understandably infuriated to be scooped by a publicity-seeking congressman.

Matters got even worse when Arthur Sylvester in an unfortunate fit of candor said in response to newsmen's complaints, "... In the kind of world we live in, the generation of news by the government becomes one weapon in a strained situation. The results, in my opinion, justify the means." Then a short time later he said, or caused himself to be quoted as saying, "... It is inherent in our government's right, if necessary, to lie to save itself when it is going up in nuclear war. This seems to me basic." Art Sylvester was a seasoned newsman with a bluff, open manner and a kind of spunk and forthrightness that made him an effective spokesman for Robert McNamara and the Pentagon. He also had a lot of common sense but must have left it home at that sensitive time; his choice of words was about as helpful as was Marie Antoinette's when she said, "Let them eat cake" or the commander of the Light Brigade on that fateful day in the Crimea when he shouted "Charge!"

Sylvester's statements really got the Hounds of Gutenberg to baying and snarling. "Weigh those words," the Washington *Star* said. "Their meaning is truly sinister .... The result is that Mr. Sylvester and his superiors, from this time on, are suspect .... " Matters did not stop there. Now it was the President's turn to poke a stick at the aroused hounds. Kennedy had been alarmed by stories emanating from unnamed officials at State and Defense that he felt violated the crisis guidelines. "How can we expect the press to cooperate with us," he told Salinger, "when people at Defense and State put out information we are asking the press not to publish?" The President was provoked into an unwise move.

Through Salinger, Kennedy ordered Arthur Sylvester to require all Pentagon officials, military and civilian, to report in detail the substance of their intercourse with members of the press or to have an information officer sit in on every press interview. Secretary of Defense McNamara endorsed this procedure with inordinate enthusiasm. The President ordered the same procedure to be applied at the State Department. I protested that this was unnecessary, that it would not stop news leaks, that it would bring down more condemnation on the administration and on the President personally.

Salinger, while endorsing the imposition of the procedure at Defense, supported my argument that it was both unwise and unnecessary for State. We were on the verge of winning it, I believe, until the substance and some of the precise wording of a classified cable from UN Ambassador Adlai Stevenson to Secretary of State Rusk that had arrived at the State Department early one morning were carried on the AP wires even before Rusk had had time to read the cable. This was too much for the secretary and the President. It gave them the extra resolve they needed to impose at the State Department a modified but still restrictive news procedure.

On White House orders all too readily endorsed by the secretary, I circulated throughout the department a memorandum stating that officials who granted press interviews, in person or by telephone, should file a simple notice of that contact with their respective bureau information officers. The memo pointedly omitted the Pentagon requirement for reports of the substance of the meetings and the requirement that third parties sit in on interviews. I used the occasion to emphasize to my State Department colleagues, thinking especially of those who, given their hostility to journalists, would welcome this memorandum, that it was their duty to meet with and to deal forthrightly with the press as the public's representatives. There was no way of disguising, however, that this procedure would be interpreted by the press as an effort to inhibit exchange between State Department officials and journalists, and that it might be seized on by some officials to do precisely that. I was against the procedure but not entirely without sympathy for a central justification for it. Under the pressure to devise the least objectionable practice, I became convinced, and so stated, that a point of important principle is involved. In the conduct of the public business for which he is responsible, the Secretary [of State] of course has the right to know what his policy officers are doing in this regard; whether, for example, they are paying sufficient attention to this important aspect of foreign affairs. It is equally necessary that the Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, who is charged by the Secretary of State with responsibility for informing the public, has the right to know and to examine the flow and pattern of relations between the department and the communications media.

In nongobbledygook this meant: Who's the Spokesman around here, anyway?

Jimmy Greenfield and I knew that of course the memo would be leaked to the press, and even agreed as to which office was most likely to curry press favor by leaking it. We traded guesses about how long it would take to happen. "No more than a day," I said. "It won't take that long," Jimmy said. He won. In little more than an hour from the moment the memo was distributed I received a call from a State Department correspondent to whom it had been handed asking me to explain "this new effort by the administration to gag the press and manage the news."

"It's not that at all," I responded. "The

memo clearly encourages officials to keep the press well informed." "Bullshit" he explained, and went off to write the first of a deluge of stories charging the government with managing the news.

Thus, out of the overly candid words of Art Sylvester and the President's effort to interfere with the normal information process was born John Kennedy's "news management" flap. Serious as it seemed to those of us caught up in it, the event was really no more than a nuisance, a short-term embarrassment, but an unpleasant one all the same.

If it did nothing else, all that furor may have had one longterm effect, to help fix the missile crisis even more firmly in legend as an eyeball-to-eyeball flirtation with nuclear war. Other than that, the news controversy was simply a noisier-than-usual episode in the ongoing process by which a democracy tries to conduct its international business in a basically undemocratic world. Wrestling with that pesky privacy versus disclosure conundrum was what I was hired to do. The best way of dealing with it, I found, was to apply a simple rule of thumb:

Once an American policy has been clearly enunciated by the government to the Congress and to press and public the government is entitled to interludes of privacy in which to achieve or further that policy. On the other hand, the government has no right to use privacy—secrecy—in order to alter or retreat from a publicly enunciated policy or sneak in a new one. The longstated, widely accepted Monroe Doctrine, for example, would be more than sufficient justification for developing in secret a plan to keep Soviet missiles out of Cuba. Escalation of the American military advisory role in Vietnam might qualify as a borderline example of abuse of privacy, since the government was not altogether owning up to its true nature. (To carry my point, I move forward in time to a much more clear-cut instance of the abuse of secrecy to alter policy that came many years later: the devious Reagan Administration efforts to trade weapons to Iran for the release of American hostages in contradiction of righteously declared Reagan policy, and to provide arms to Nicaraguan Contras in direct violation of congressional legislation.)

That rule-of-thumb served very well for most circumstances. For a variety of reasons growing out of the delicacy of negotiations or the secrecy practices of other governments with whom we were dealing, public on-the-record briefings and press conferences frequently limited an official in how much he could say and how he could say it. So the bulk of the information we imparted about the workings and complexities of foreign affairs was delivered through one-on-one, not-for-attribution meetings between various officials, frequently the secretary and undersecretary themselves, and a correspondent, or in so-called "background" sessions with groups of correspondents. At international meetings like NATO ministers' sessions or Geneva disarmament talks, or at times of sudden events like violence in the Congo or a coup in Argentina, I or one of my associates normally would give public on-the-record briefings confined generally to the basics and then provide considerably more detail on a not-for-quotation "background" basis in private meetings with American correspondents and selected representatives of the foreign press. This "background" process served both government and public, but sometimes it was (and still is) sanctimoniously assailed at editors' conventions or by academic inquests into the evils of government as a form of manipulation and the source of too many unattributed quotes from officials who do not want to be held accountable. Every once in a while some editor would announce that his correspondent was henceforth forbidden to participate in such meetings, but usually within a few weeks the correspondent was back and eagerly filling his or her notebook.

Now and then some official might abuse the process to float a trial balloon or sabotage a rival's undertaking. Occasionally a newsman would violate the semiconfidentiality of it. But the background briefing had long been and would continue to form the very blood bank of the Washington news process. More times than I can count in more places than I can remember—in a crowded hotel room in Geneva, the backroom of a taverna in Athens, a commodious suite in the Crillon in Paris or the Excelsior in Rome, a discreet corner of a saloon in Saigon, in a chartered press plane following the President and Secretary of State overseas, a multimillionaire's villa in Palm Springs, at private luncheons with correspondents in Washington hotels or in my own brown-and-brindle, government-issue office at Foggy Bottom—I confided to correspondents much if not all of what they needed to know in order to write about the event at hand. For closed conference sessions or private meetings between American and foreign officials in which I participated, I drew mostly on my own notes. At these international gatherings spokesmen for other governments were doing the same thing, so most of the group at my briefing had already heard, or would hear shortly, what other delegations wished to convey and could compare it with what I had told them.

For the day-to-day process at home, dealing with a variety of developments in many places, I drew on information provided by my superiors or from the cable traffic and the pertinent position papers and memoranda, some of which I had to worm out of reluctant officials. Much of this material was, of course, classified ("Next they'll be classifying the signs on the restroom doors," an associate said one day), but I'd learned from old pros like Chip Bohlen and Tommy Thompson when I was on the other side of the street that there were discreet ways of disregarding this when it was obvious that the material deserved to be in the public domain. Common prudence dictated (how the late Bobby Baker would laugh to see me use that phrase for which we at *Time* chided him several years before) certain precautions in discussing classified information with reporters or editors:

Never show to another the actual document itself, especially a cable whose only reason for classification might be that its wording could provide clues to the government code from which it was deciphered. Always paraphrase, usually for the same reason or in order to improve on clumsy prose. Always take account of the source of the material; some American diplomats were superb reporters (reporting, after all, was supposed to be one of their prime functions) and at the other extreme were some who rarely put matters into reliable context. Don't trust anything emanating solely from the CIA.

The procedures here described were widely practiced, and long had been, at State, Defense, and the White House, amply supplemented by news sources on Capitol Hill and in many other parts of the government. For some odd reason, such otherwise sophisticated people as the President of the United States, the secretaries of state and defense, and some of their most trusted aides could not absorb this reality. Long after the Cuban missile flap they still fancied that with only a bit more discipline from government officials and more "loyalty and patriotism" on the part of journalists the

flow of news could be made sublimely amenable to the people in power. Every time a leak bothered the President or some other higher-up, the finger of blame pointed first to the Bureau of Public Affairs, the last agency with reason for leaking. In some cases even the FBI would be called in to track down the scoundrel. I recall no case in which the G-men found their man. Overreaction to leaks was a waste of time and emotion that could be better directed at more serious matters so, with a great deal of help from Jim Greenfield, I composed a ten-page primer called "Mechanics of News Reporting." We sent it to George Ball on the understanding that his endorsement when he passed it on would encourage his high-ranking colleagues—perhaps even the President—to read it. The covering note said:

1. We "flap" too much about individual news stories and exaggerate their potential impact on the conduct of our work.

2. We must avoid restrictive practices or attempts at "control" that would not solve the problem of leaks and would almost certainly produce consequences harmful to the Administration, and the President in particular.

3. We have simply got to grow up and learn to live with the practices of free journalism in a free society.

The primer went on to describe in detail how intelligent reporters comb not only the State Department but foreign embassies and privy legislators and aides on Capitol Hill for the tips and fragments that fall into place as legitimate news stories. It described how, for example, a reporter might on one day learn the name of the next ambassador to India from Chairman William Fulbright of the Senate Foreign Relations committee, range over an array of important negotiations at lunch with the committee's extremely well-informed staff chief, discuss Laos with a CIA officer across the river at Langley, learn over cocktails from the nervous German ambassador about what happened in the latest four-power ambassadorial meeting dealing with Berlin. Before the day was out he might even get a chatty call from a White House staffer with a bit of news to peddle.

Besides foreign embassies and the Congress, the memo went on, people at the Pentagon and CIA received most of the pertinent cables, position papers, and other documents dealing with State Department business and they participated in much of the policy-making and policy-executing activities. No fewer than 105 copies of that troublesome (but relatively unimportant) cable from UN Ambassador Stevenson to Secretary Rusk, for example, were distributed to individuals in various parts of the government before it was conveyed on the same morning to an Associated Press correspondent.

If the Congress is the Comstock Lode, the White House is the Federal Reserve Bank for Washington newsmen, especially those with the biggest reputations and most important news outlets. If I have too many volunteer Assistant Secretaries of State for Public Affairs to help me, Pierre Salinger suffers the ailment a hundred fold by comparison .... There is a most intelligent understanding there of the importance and value of the communications media and ... this awareness translates itself very broadly through the White House staff into an active practical application of this understanding. In a few words, there is very steady traffic between reporters and White House officials during, after, and before office hours. The White House cachet enhances the importance of a source in a newsman's eyes; even a lower echelon member of the relatively small group around the President speaks with more seeming authority than some relatively high-ranking officers in other parts of town. When a White House staff man talks, even casually, about what is (or might be) on the President's mind, he may think he talks only as a man, but to the reporter he often sounds like the Delphic oracle.

The memo was intended to be educational, but admittedly it was self-serving, too. We hoped it would protect from naive restrictions and even help enhance the program that Greenfield and I were constantly pushing to make the most knowledgeable State Department officials more comfortable with the press and more forthcoming. "A Department officer who is good enough to deal tactfully with foreign diplomats ought to be able to deal equally tactfully with an inquiring newsman." I could not be sure how many in the intended audience would bother to read the primer or whether it would have any long-term effect, but for a while there was some diminution of fulminations about leaks. In the stubborn nature of things, that would not last. I suspect that with only some changes of the names of the players the primer and its good advice would be as applicable in today's Washington as it was then—and as readily ignored by high officials. ■

Committee Named to Choose Fellows

A committee of three journalists and three members of the academic community will select 12 journalists from the United States for 1993-94 Nieman Fellowships. Their selection will be announced in May. The committee is chaired by Bill Kovach, who is former Editor of The Atlanta Journal and Constitution, former Washington Bureau Chief of The New York Times and Nieman Fellow '89. Members are:

Anne Bernays—Novelist; Jenks Professor of Contemporary Letters (with Justin Kaplan), College of the Holy Cross; formerly on the faculty of the Harvard Extension School.

Ellen Hume—Senior Fellow and Adjunct Lecturer, Joan Shorenstein Barone Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

Pam McAllister Johnson—President and Publisher, The Ithaca (New York) Journal; member of the Nieman Foundation's Advisory Committee.

Doug Marlette—Editorial Cartoonist, New York Newsday; Nieman Fellow '81.

Nicholas T. Mitropoulos—Executive Director, Taubman Center for State and Local Government, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

Paul Solman—Business Correspondent, MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour; Nieman Fellow '77.

In a separate process, approximately 12 international journalists will be chosen as 1993-94 Nieman Fellows. Their selection also will be announced in May. ■

SPRING READING

A Street-Smart Reporter Looks at the American Press

Media Circus: What's Wrong with America's Newspapers
Howard Kurtz. Times Books 1993
464 pages $25.

BY KATHERINE FULTON

Howard Kurtz has reached down in his gut and let loose with a battle cry that will resonate in every decent daily newspaper reporter within earshot.

"Less than 20 years ago, print reporters were on top of the world, hailed by Hollywood as the disheveled icons of a rogue profession," writes The Washington Post's media reporter in "Media Circus." "Now, in the blink of an eye, we are obsolete, ridiculed, fighting for survival. It is a time for boldness, for risk-taking, for once again reinventing the daily newspaper. Otherwise, we are history."

From Watergate heroes to Gulf War whipping boys—how could it have happened and what can be done about it? This is Howard Kurtz's subject as he attempts to trace newspapers' fall and chart their path out of the wilderness. Serious reporters, beset on all sides, will applaud a book-length analysis of newspapers' failures written from a street-smart reporter's point of view. They will also find plenty of disturbing news.

Katherine Fulton left a daily newspaper to help found The North Carolina Independent, an alternative weekly published in Durham, because she was disturbed by the trends Kurtz outlines. After editing the paper for the last 10 years, she's using a Nieman year to think about what she's learned.

Kurtz urges his colleagues to stop merely moaning about lost readers and dying newspapers and look at how journalists have inflicted much of the damage on themselves. "For too long we have published newspapers aimed at other journalists—talking to ourselves, really, and to the insiders we gossip with—and paying scant attention to readers," he argues, capping the book's central thesis.

Some editors and publishers have been saying much the same thing for years, of course. What's different here is that an experienced reporter challenges other reporters to get beyond sneering at their papers' responses to readers' needs and desires.

If journalists can face the "radical surgery" that's required, he says, they can reclaim the craft they love from short-sighted publishers who count beans and mindless editors who count words.

Hemmed in by his job at a major daily, Kurtz lacks the thoughtfulness of mainstream media critics like Newsweek's Jonathan Alter and the entertaining nastiness of alternative critics like The Nation's Alexander Cockburn. But he does what good newspaper reporters often do: tell good stories in a colorful way.

Kurtz records the media's role in the rise and fall of Donald Trump—and the celebrity culture of the 1980's. He skewers the media's performance covering the HUD scandal, the decay of the cities, the savings and loan crisis and the Persian Gulf War. He reflects on the seductions of power for White House reporters and the power of seduction as a gossipy subject for political reporters. He documents the rise of what he calls "pink flamingo journalism"—the dumbing down and jazzing up that has changed the face of practically every American newspaper since USA Today debuted a decade ago. He's at his best, I think, when he goes inside newspapers for a tough-minded chapter on newspapers' own racial problems and how they affect coverage.

"Media Circus" is part a memoir of Kurtz's own career, part a chronicle of the changes in American newspapers and part a critique of media performance. The resulting mix yields a series of entertaining mini-reports rather than a sustained narrative or a compelling argument. Still, anyone concerned with how journalists have performed during the last decade will find "Media Circus" an interesting, and at times inspiring, read.

What I found most interesting was something Kurtz surely didn't intend: "Media Circus" unwittingly exemplifies its central complaints. What's wrong with American newspapers is also what's wrong with this book.

It takes a little work to figure out exactly what Howard Kurtz thinks are the central problems with American newspapers. The major complaints, as best I can distill them, are these:

Newspapers value drama more than substance. "Our real bias is a bad-news bias," he writes. "We love conflict, emotion, charges and countercharges."

This journalistic culture hypes attacks and crises, while ignoring solutions and success because "they're not news." It rewards reporters who chase mini-scandals and love to play gotcha', while disregarding major trends. It plays into the hands of controversial figures who know how to manipulate the press, and the resulting coverage often exacerbates existing tensions. It overvalues what's new and exciting to bored journalists and undervalues coverage of serious but boring problems in readers' lives. And it ensures that complex social issues rarely get attention until an important or colorful figure personalizes them, or a crisis arises.

Newspapers' competitive instincts are archaic and wasteful. Reporters value getting it first over doing it well, even when newspapers usually can't get it first anymore. Then, once someone else has broken a piece of a big story, one of two things happens: It's ignored by other papers because they didn't get it first, or, they finally agree to publish what they already knew because someone else has legitimized it as a story. In other words, the major frame of reference for newspaper journalists is what other journalists are doing, not what readers may need or want to know. This often leads to a silly herd mentality that's the opposite of the desire for real scoops. In an era of tight resources, thousands of reporters still breathlessly repeat each other while covering major events. Everyone is so afraid of missing the action on the latest media stampede that every leak and every minute development is covered as if it were important. Readers, drowning in information from many sources, find it easiest to tune out, or just check out the headlines on television. Meanwhile, newspapers ignore other important stories because they would be too expensive to cover in depth—at least until they become the next sexy media event.

Journalists have been seduced by power. A profession once defined as adversary has become part of the élite, as remote from potential readers as the other "important" people that end up on the front page. The glitz and glitter of the big stories and big names draw attention; plus they're relatively easy to cover while feeding the journalist's sense of self-importance. At the same time, few reporters can find the time to read boring audits that often turn up news years before it becomes trendy, or to hit the streets and listen to people. The goal is to end up on television yourself, not do a better job than the nightly news.

Objectivity is obsolete. Journalists have become trapped by a professional ethic that makes them fear angering anyone and prevents them from writing the truth as they know it. "He said/she said" formulas achieve a surface balance without giving the reader any help figuring out what's really going on. Relying on experts and deferring to authority plays into the hands of public officials while robbing readers of the skepticism journalists should be providing. It's as though a whole profession seems determined to show all the trees and ignore the forest. Figuring out what the trees add up to would be opinion, and therefore bias, and therefore taboo. "We have become bland purveyors of fact, polite packagers of bureaucratic news," Kurtz writes. "No wonder people are turned off."

The question is, how to get old readers back and attract new ones? The problem, of course, has as much to do with demographic shifts, technological advances and lifestyle changes as with journalists' performance. But to the degree that newspapers can take better charge of their own fate, market-minded editors and publishers have been trying to fix the problem in recent years. Kurtz concludes that they have done more harm than good when they have gotten too far away from what newspapers do best: detailed, in-depth news coverage you can't get anywhere else.

"The blunt truth is that tinkering and half-measures will oo longer do the trick," he writes. "There is a cancer eating away at the newspaper business—the cancer of boredom, superficiality, and irrelevance—and radical surgery is needed."

Howard Kurtz is certainly not boring, and I couldn't agree more with his major complaints. Yet his book ultimately feels unsatisfying because he is so caught up in the newspaper diseases he's attempting to diagnose and heal.

At one point, he quotes a reporter who was trying to get beyond conventional journalism to capture some of the complexity of the L.A. riots: "Notebooks in hand, we are historians on the run, asking the obvious, repeating the answers and wondering—after the story is done—if we really understood what it was all about..."

As I read that quotation, I realized that Kurtz himself was a "historian on the run" who didn't fully appreciate the meaning of the story he was telling, or the significance of how he had chosen to tell it.

Here's a book that argues that journalists talk too much to themselves instead of talking to and listening to readers. And yet readers are absent from "Media Circus." We don't hear their voices, or their solutions. We don't really know why readers say they are turned off by newspapers, only why Kurtz thinks they are. Kurtz has written an extremely inside book, with detailed looks inside certain stories, aimed, clearly, at journalists. Throughout the book, with rare exceptions, he refers to journalists and newspapers as "we." I found him using "you" only once to refer to consumers of news, and he rarely stops to explain the cultures of newsrooms, as he urges newspapers themselves to do.

Here, too, is a book that complains about how journalists are seduced by drama, colorful personalities and power. Yet that's exactly how Kurtz reports on the media itself—the colorful stories, the big personalities, the big papers, the big failures. We don't learn much about the problems of smaller papers, or watch how they cover stories. We do hear a lot about The Washington Post and The New York Times . We also hear a lot about Donald Trump and Bill Clinton and Al Sharpton—and very little, for instance, about the astonishing reader reaction to The Philadelphia Inquirer's series "What Went Wrong" during the 1980's. What does it take to do the kind of reporting this series exemplifies? Why didn't somebody do these stories years ago, when

the country was still in the process of digging the hole we now find ourselves in? Kurtz doesn't explore these questions, in part I think, because investigative reporters who crunch numbers aren't colorful, and the scandal they uncovered wasn't a dramatic event.

Finally, here's a book that complains about the limits of objectivity, about how timid reporters cover the trees and miss the forest. Yet Kurtz hasn't gotten much beyond these limits himself. A reader has to work to add his stories up and try to figure out what they mean, because he hasn't done the hard, slogging work of thinking through the problems he outlines. He spends all his energy telling the "bad news," as most newspapers do. Then, having told his dramatic, detailed stories, he finally gets around in the last chapter to a quick, breezy set of solutions that hardly begin to address the problems he's outlined.

Kurtz wants the whole newspaper to be more like the sports pages, where writers call 'em like they see 'em, where heroes are hailed and goats are kicked. He wants more passionate writing and more individual voices. Indeed, the majority of his specific suggestions involve freeing writers to be funny, to make people mad, to touch people where they live, to challenge authority and generally to have a whale of a time. He also tips his hat at papers becoming better visually and finding better ways to connect with their communities.

I hear this litany, and I want to say, "Yes, of course. It's about time." If newspapers suddenly began following this advice, they'd publish less "pseudo-news" and discover more real stories.

But there's a problem here, too. Kurtz has failed to challenge the journalistic culture that drives reporters toward drama, conflict, bad news, pack journalism and an emphasis on getting it first rather than doing it right. In other words, he's guilty of proposing more of the half-measures he derides.

How, for starters, will making the whole newspaper more like a sports page wean journalists from an obsession with conflict and color in order to turn their attention more often to substance? Sports pages, of course, are loaded with conflict and color. Every game is a conflict.

Kurtz doesn't seem to have thought this problem through. Nor does he get beyond a superficial discussion of other key questions, when he addresses them at all. How can reporters resist the pull of the cultural forces at work on them? How, exactly, do newspapers avoid falling for the glitz of the Trump real estate empire and instead uncover the next savings and loan crisis in the making? Don't reporters have to examine their own behavior more closely?

What does abandoning objectivity really mean? What would it look like, day in aod day out? Why do citizens seem determined these days to get rid of the "media filter," as it's come to be called? Is more opinionated journalism what readers really want?

How would newspapers have to change if they truly cared what readers thought more than what other journalists thought? What would it mean—beyond traffic graphics and news you can use—for newspapers to become more relevant to readers? How would the definition of news have to change if newspapers took readers seriously when they complain about too much "bad news"?

What are the lessons of big event stories like the Gulf War? What purpose is served by the vast quantities of information newspapers churn out when they chase the media herd, information that few people, even the papers' own reporters and editors, ever read? Can newspapers use their resources more wisely and meaningfully for readers?

"Radical surgery" for newspapers requires that questions like these be asked. Kurtz has done many things well here, but in the end it's simply not enough to report thoroughly, write colorfully, and then gather together a bunch of stories under a circus tent.

"Our dismal performance over the past decade contains some important lessons, if we are smart enough to heed them," Kurtz concludes. "We need to spend more time thinking about our shortcomings rather than chasing after the next fire truck."

It's a shame he didn't heed his own advice. ■

About Journalism

Giant Steps: The Story of One Boy's Struggle to Walk, by Gilbert M. Gaul, St. Martin's Press, 182 pages, $19.95

Waging Peace II: Vision and Hope for the 21st Century, edited by David Krieger and Frank Kelly, The Noble Press, 217 pages, $12.95

H.L Mencken: My Life as Author And Editor, edited by Jonathan Yardley, Alfred A. Knopf, 450 pages, $30

China at the Crossroads: Reform After Tiananmen, by Steven M. Goldstein, Headline Series of the Foreigo Policy Association, 127 pages, $7.50

The Growth of Media in the Third World: African Failures, Asian Successes, by William A. Hatchen, Iowa State University Press, 136 pages, $14.95

Mass Media in Greece: Power, Politics, and Privitazation, by Thimios Zaharopoulos and Manny E. Paraschos, Praeger, 240 pages, $45

A Fierce Green Fire: The American Environmental Movement, by Philip Shabecoff, Farrar Straus Giroux, 352 pages, $25

Expanding Free Expression in the Marketplace: Broadcasting and the Public Forum, by Dom Caristi, Greenwood Press, 192 pages, $45

Wang Shiwei and "Wild Lilies": Rectification and Purges in the Chinese Communist Party, 1942-1944 by Dai Qing, edited by David Apter and Timothy Cheek, M.E. Sharp, 214 pages,

Choice in Public Education, by Timothy W. Young and Evans Clinchy, Teachers College Press, 192 pages, $17.95

Murder, Courts, and the Press: Issues in Free Press/ Fair Trial, by Peter E. Kane, Southern Illinois University Press, 121 pages, $12.95 ■

A British Publisher 1: A Combination of Ego and Greed

Murdoch
William Shawcross
Simon & Schuster 492 pages
$27.50

By Bill Woestendiek

"Incessant, brilliant, intuitive, invincible, unstoppable, phenomenal, powerful." Words used to describe Al Neuharth? Bill Hearst? Joseph Pulitzer? Lord Beaverbrook?

No. The subject of this exhaustive, sometimes exhausting, sometimes entertaining biography of an extraordinary—by any standards—individual is Rupert Murdoch, the man who would be—or would like to be—the "Citizen Kane" of today's world of information and entertainment, perhaps more politely described as "infotainment," or more crudely as sleaze.

William Shawcross' "unauthorized" biography of the man who, like him or not, has become one of the most powerful, controversial and richest media figures of our time is a frequently fascinating and occasionally boring tale of perhaps the one person who most exemplifies the combination of ego and greed that dominates the journalism world today and the practice of buying, selling, merging and closing newspapers with little regard for the people who produce them.

"Murdoch" is a controversial business-journalism book, and one can debate the kinds of business involved, be it dirty business or clean business. In this case, it is usually both. The book is most fascinating, at least to a former editor, when it tells of this brilliant entrepreneur's wheeling and dealing with people, less so when it details the perhaps more important and involved wheeling and dealing with finances by a man who is not quite Superman, a man whom some consider a super publisher (although I hope not by most journalists' standards), a man who would like to be the czar of the communications world (he still has a long way to go).

Shawcross's book, unauthorized or not, does provide a good look at a most unusual man to whom in addition to the adjectives above could be added manipulative, two-faced, crude, devious, ambitious and treacherous. As the author chronicles Murdoch's life story from his early days in Australia, his meteoritic rise in the profession through Australia, England and finally the United States, he provides a disturbing picture of the man and his ambitions.

He also provides a good play-by-play, dollar-by-dollar description of how Murdoch teetered on the brink of losing everything before being saved mainly by the brilliant heroics of a young Citibank vice president, Ann Lane, a key player in a relatively bit part in this long-running drama.

One may get the feeling—or at least I do—that Shawcross, as have so many people over the years, may have succumbed to Murdoch's unquestionable ability to charm snakes (or non-snakes) out of the trees and out of their businesses. This is not a fawning biography and gives the reader a fairly accurate picture of this man, who as he traveled the road to success while switching from a young Leninist at Oxford (some doubted his convictions) to a strong later-years supporter and friend of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher (some questioned his convictions again). But I believe Murdoch's biographer could have been more objective and less apologetic for some of his behavior.

If Murdoch charmed his biographer, it would be easy to understand. The list of talented journalists this strong disciple of Marshall McLuhan's "time has ceased, space has vanished" theory has wooed and won and then cast aside is remarkable in itself. Just to cite a few examples of how he charmed both men and women as he broadened his empire from Australia to England to the U.S. and eventually, Hollywood, leaving behind a trail of broken promises and broken relationships:

• Dorothy Schiff was publisher of The New York Post. Always susceptible to charming men, Dolly met Murdoch out in the Hamptons on Long Island (Where so many wealthy or less-than-wealthy celebrities have met over the years) one weekend in 1974. She sold him her newspaper in 1976, saying: "Rupert Murdoch is a man of strong commitment to the spirit of independent, progressive journalism." Murdoch said he was "very happy" that Dolly agreed to stay on as a consultant.

• Clay Felker, publisher of New York Magazine and a friend of Murdoch's for many years was told by Murdoch that he (Felker) was the most brilliant editor in America. That was in early January, 1977. Before the end of the week Murdoch owned New York Magazine and Felker is quoted in the book as saying: "Rupert Murdoch's ideas about friendship, about publishing and about people are very different from mine."

• Tina Brown, fiancee of Harry Evans, brilliant editor of The Sunday Times in London (on Murdoch, after he had invited Tina and Harold to his Eaton Place Apartment in London): "I had to admit I liked him hugely...he seemed robust and refreshing. The truth is that although he'll be trouble, he'll also be enormous fun."

Harry Evans, a month later, accepted the job of editor of the Times of London, just purchased by Murdoch. Evans later wrote: "Every editor, and many a politician who deals with Murdoch thinks that they're the one who is really going to change him...'This time he really means it. He really loves me. He'll really marry me....' [Murdoch] has this fatal capacity to instill the confidence in you that you and he have a special, exclusive relationship. It's a wonderful con trick."

The list goes on and on. It is a shame

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A British Publisher 2—Cold and Calculating

Lord Beaverbrook—A Life
Anne Chisholm and Michael Davie
Alfred A. Knopf, Publisher;
589 pages, $30

By Joe Hall

In a 1952 cover story, Newsweek calculated that British press baron Lord Beaverbrook was selling more papers per day—five million—than anyone else in the world. Through the 1950's the circulation of his major newspapers, The Daily Express and Sunday Express, continued to climb. How did he do it? Are there any lessons for today's embattled publishers and journalists seeking ways of stopping the hemorrhage of newspaper readers?

For a journalist, this is in some ways a frustrating biography. Its focus is a detailed account of the extraordinary, manipulative role played by the brash Beaverbrook in British political life in the first half of this century. It devotes little space to the immense, but controversial, contribution he made to British popular journalism. While we are invited to peek through the keyhole and witness his active sex life with society women and actresses, we are only teased with clues to the reasons for the popular success of his newspapers.

These hints are scattered throughout this impressively researched book, which is rather less flattering than the biography written 20 years ago by Beaverbrook's close friend, historian A.J.P. Taylor.

Beaverbrook started his life as Max Aitken, son of a Presbyterian minister in eastern Canada. He left school at 16 and became a multi-millionaire by his 30th birthday through a series of shady financial deals, which the book documents in engrossing detail.

Having moved to England and bought The Express, Beaverbrook spelled out the publishing philosophy he stuck to for the next 40 years:

"...when a newspaper shareholder has received a good return on his investment, any additional profits should not go to increased dividends, but should be devoted to improving the newspaper for the benefit of the reader and of the advertiser who uses it.

"It follows that I believe that The Daily Express should not pay its maximum possible dividend until it is a *perfect* newspaper. Anyone who does not agree with that conception should not invest in The Daily Express."

As this biography points out: "...he did not see his papers as moneymaking machines. Through his substantial Canadian investments he had enough for his own needs, and if he needed more he made it outside the Express—for instance by buying and selling a cinema chain."

Certainly he poured money into his stable of newspapers, which included the more sophisticated London Evening Standard. He spent a fortune chasing scoops, hiring the best talent available and paying the top salaries in Fleet Street.

But before journalists raise a glass to toast this paragon of a publisher, they should recall the other side of Beaverbrook's remarkable energetic nature. He was without scruple in using his newspapers to promote himself and crusade for pet causes.

In the 1930's he was an isolationist and an appeaser. As late as 1940, he believed Hitler could be bought off. He was anti-socialist when postwar Britain elected a Labor government, anti-Marshall Plan, opposed to independence for India and against decolonization in Africa. He was pro-British Empire, long after it had expired.

So why would so many talented journalists work for such a tyrant? The conservative publisher frequently charmed left wing journalists into joining his staff. But high salaries weren't the only attraction. Once he got them aboard, Beaverbrook would often keep them with a string of pay hikes, loans and gifts of money.

The book does not tell us, but, piecing together the evidence, it seems one of the great attractions for Express journalists was being part of a well-heeled winning team, staffed with more than 50 photographers, prepared to spend whatever money it took to beat its competitors. It cannot have been influence. Its readers regularly ignored the paper's political bombast on election day.

One of Beaverbrook's editors said he found peace of mind by simply accepting the publisher as in reality his editor-in chief. Another editor wrote cynically in an autobiography after leaving The Express, that editors had, after all, the freedom of agreeing with Beaverbrook.

He was arbitrary, difficult, brilliant, ruthless, racist, Machiavellian. He swung from generosity to meanness.

Several times this biography tells us he was a great journalist, but gives few examples of how this manifested itself in his newspapers.

This is a very readable account of a calculating Canadian who elbowed his way into Britain's ruling circle and stayed there for decades. His newspapers gave him clout. To learn more about what he gave his newspapers and British journalism requires another book. ■

Joe Hall, Nieman Fellow 1993, was a reporter with The London Evening Standard in the mid-1970's. He was most recently city editor of The Toronto Star.

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that Murdoch, who truly understands and knows newspaper operations, has used so much of his time and money and endless energy doing things that so many of his purer colleagues in the news business think are the wrong things. They, to be sure, are purer but Rupert is richer.

Murdoch is now in Hollywood where he once again has defied many of the experts by creating a successful fourth network to which he has brought his special "yellow" color to TV journalism ("Current Affair," "Most Wanted") with great success. And once again he has parted company with the person he wooed into partnership, the real creator of the Fox network, Barry Diller.

There can be no ignoring this man, regardless of how much you dislike or disrespect what he does. Jim Squires, former editor of the Chicago Tribune and a man most knowledgeable in the infighting in journalism today, has called Murdoch a "genius." One of Murdoch's former colleagues has called him a "rotten bastard."

Pay your money, take your pick. But hold on to your wallet. And let's hope he never becomes the czar. ■

A German Professor Looks at the U.S. Press

Zeitungs-Umbruch. Wit sich Amerikas presse revolutioniert.
(The Newspapers' Upheaval. How the American Press Revolutionized Itself)
Stephan Russ-Mohl
Argon Publisher, 1992, 213 pages, $ 11

BY MARTIN GEHLEN

German literature about the U.S. press has been practically non-existent. For more than six decades, since 1927, the only book ever published on the subject was Emil Dovifat's "The American Journalism;" needless to say, this volume by the former professor for newspaper science in Berlin is hopelessly outdated. The gap has now been closed by a new study by Stephan Russ-Mohl, professor for communication science in Berlin. His book gives not only a broad and detailed overview of the current developments in the American press, it is at the same time interesting and entertaining. Russ-Mohl offers a description and critical assessment of the "revolutionary" trends in U.S. journalism during the 1980's and at the same time shows parallels to and differences with the German press. Therefore the book is addressed to not only a limited number of media-specialists, but also to a wider range of readers interested in American affairs and, given the model-effect of the U.S. for Europe, in the potential future of German print media

According to the author, during the last decade, U.S. newspapers experienced dramatic changes caused by a "slowly spreading disease," namely the shrinking number of readers, especially young readers. "Amongst those in their teens and twenties the willingness to read newspapers has reached an historical low-point," Russ-Mohl writes in reference to David Shaw's recent studies. Or as James Burgess, publisher of The Wisconsin State Journal puts it: "We are competing against the non-readers." In other words, the papers are fighting a losing battle to win the time and attention of American TV viewers. However, guided by marketing experts, their reaction to the constant and massive challenge of the electronic media is, according to Russ-Mohl, basically an adaptation: they trivialized their articles, avoided long and more complicated background-stories and replaced more and more hard news by soft news. All these trends towards "infotainment," viewed by some newspapers as the most promising therapy against the erosion of readership, is best seen in the national paper "USA Today," the controversial, as well as most famous, product to come out of the American print-media business of the 1980's.

In addition, Russ-Mohl gives an overview of the ongoing economic build-up of powerful newspaper-chains, which own 73 percent of all newspapers and which control almost 80 percent of the total daily circulation in the country. One of the results is that 98 percent of the nearly 1,650 existing papers enjoy a monopoly in their town or region without significant competition.

To complete the grim picture he paints about the American press, the author describes the growing influence of public-relations agencies on the daily business of journalism. According to U.S. media experts, not less than 150,000 PR-employees are now feeding 130,000 journalists in the country, offering strategically distributed newsbits on all kinds of issues as well as complete stories for them to plagiarize.

It should be noted that Russ-Mohl's book lacks deep reflection about how the political system in the U.S. profoundly influences the organization and profile of the American press. For example, a presidential democracy with a fragmented executive branch, a weak and unstructured party system and powerful pressure groups that use the dependency of politicians on private fund raising, produces an altogether different set of political problems than do European parliamentary systems with their coalition governments, strong party organizations and harsh party discipline. This difference can explain the emergence of the so-called character issue dominating the U.S. campaign coverage far more than the comparable European election coverage. To a certain extent this is a result of the democratic system in the U.S. allowing previously unknown and unprofiled individual candidates with perhaps meager public service records to gain access to important political positions. In contrast, the careers of most European leaders are built up by long-time engagements in various positions within the political parties and therefore the candidates are not only well-known, but also their candidacies are in effect decided and promoted by inner-party constituencies and not by primary elections.

Moreover, the book misses a chapter describing the influence and position of serious weekly magazines in the United States compared to, for example, the influence of those in Germany. These media are especially vulnerable to trends toward entertainment, amusement, light news and 90-second soundbites. Good and profound weekly papers can only survive if they make a contribution exceeding the quality of the daily coverage. This can take the form of an agenda-setting position in the political field, like that of the German magazine Der Spiegel, which the daily papers follow; this can also take the form of long and detailed background articles about all aspects of social and political life. In other words, the additional evaluation of weekly-journals in the U.S. would have given further indications of the possible future of print journalism in the country. ■

Martin Gehlen, Nieman Fellow 1992, works for Der Tagesspiegel in Berlin.

Celebrating the New South With Humor

Even White Boys Get the Blues.
Doug Marlette. Times Books. 1992. $12.95 pb

BY JANE DAUGHERTY

Kudzu (kud'_zu) - 1. a prostrate Asian leguminous vine (Peuraria Thumbergiana) used widely for hay and forage and for erosion control. 2. the wittiest cartoon strip now being published in the U.S., commercially eclipsed by Doonesbury, Shoe and others with more apparent universal appeal, but savored by connoisseurs of wry humor, Southern and non-.

Like the ubiquitous vine, Doug Marlette's Kudzu cartoon strip gets its ticklish tentacles into most corners, social and emotional, of the New South.

Marlette pierces the Southern facade as only a Southern can. With subtle yet unflinching use of mirrors, he holds the inhabitants of Bypass up for close inspection. His view has something to offend everyone and he doesn't apologize. But Bypass is a place of mirth, where caricatures of people we all know, drawn kindly, almost lovingly, for all their peculiarities. Bimbos, brothers, televangelists, all are fair game, but Marlette's humor is wry, not mean.

Novelist Pat Conroy says it better than I ever could in the introduction. "Marlette has created the first comic strip that is Southern in its nature, temperament, and design. When you read 'Even White Boys Get the Blues,' you are solidly placed in the New South in all its fullness and ludicrousness and its stumbling and hilarious attempts to fit into the modern world.

"Marlette writes and draws about the South as though it were not a major crime to be Southern. Sometimes newspaper editors in the North and the West use this as an excuse not to run the strip. Even though Marlette's characters are as original and universal as those of Charles Dickens, he has harmed himself by remaining true to his Southern heritage. If he wrote about Bypass, America, instead of Bypass, North Carolina, he would be syndicated in every newspaper in the country. But Kudzu is Southern by nature and preference, and so is Marlette."

In person, Marlette talks about "faux bubbas"—I've been away from home so long, I thought he was saying four bubbas—until he went on to define them as "one generation away from the trailer park" and admitted, "I'm one."

Well, hell, there's one in the White House now, so maybe this book and Marlette's strip will get the attention it deserves beyond the 300 newspapers who buy it today.

Certainly, Conroy's right about those who dismiss Kudzu as not having broad enough appeal (my own newspaper is one) but I suspect a larger part of the problem is that Marlette does not resort to the stereotypes of Southerners most cherished by Yankees, which, like those in "Streetcar Named Desire" and "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" are engaging, but hardly up to date.

Marlette recognizes that humor comes out of pain, but how can you not grin when he explains his own roots, "I came out of small Southern towns so backward that even the Episcopalians handled snakes"?

His is humor that's great to wake up to, humor that makes you muse, "there but for the grace of Will B. Dunn go I."

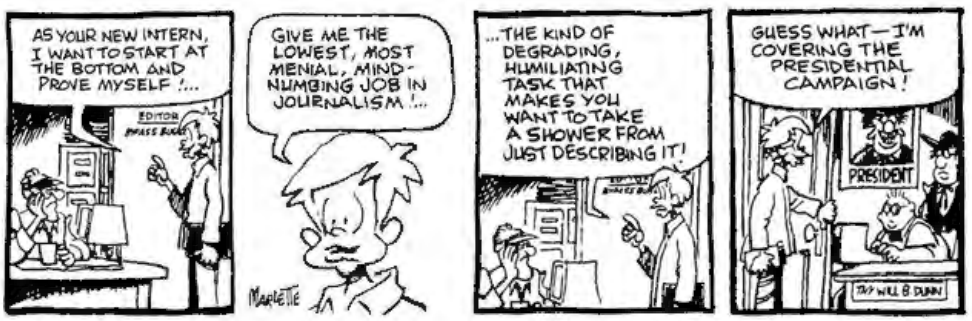
Consider some memorable lines from the characters who inhabit Bypass:

• Doris, a chocaholic, smart-mouth parakeet—"We parakeets are soooo boring. I wanted to do something to distinguish myself...like fly nonstop around the world...or find a cure for cancer...so I decided to get my beak pierced."

• Our hero, aspiring writer Kudzu Dubose, plagued by acne and a no-chest-hair complex—"People think I'm crazy for wanting to move to the city ...Do you think I'm crazy, Doris? Naaa... Doris doesn't think I'm crazy, do you, Doris?" (Doris to herself: "For wanting to move no ... but needing approval from parakeets is troubling...")

• Unflinchingly uncompassionate, televangelist, full-immersion-baptizing Preacher Will B. Dunn—"I should start charging for baptizing lawyers. They always leave a ring around the baptismal pool!"

The book is better than flyin' South and headin' for your favorite crab shack—and it's a whole lot less fattening. ■



Jane Daugherty, Nieman Fellow 1984, is Associate Editor for Projects at The Detroit Free Press. She once had a prenuptial agreement that she would never have to live north of Charlotte, NC. In 1991, she and her staff won the Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Awards Grand Prize and the Sidney Hillman Foundation Prize for "Workers at Risk" an investigation of deaths and injuries in manufacturing plants.

The Four Levels of Great Reporting

Terror in the Night:
The Klan's Campaign Against the Jews
Jack Nelson
Simon & Schuster 304 pages $22

BY WENDELL RAWLS

When I was a young reporter at The Nashville Tennessean almost 25 years ago, Jack Nelson came to town for The Los Angeles Times to report on the first day of cross-town school busing. Not being entirely familiar with the city, its neighborhoods or the history of the situation, he elected to ride with me and a photographer to a variety of schools.

That first day was remarkable only for its lack of incident. But throughout the day and later at dinner, I received a crash course in reporting from a man who was already growing into legend. Of the myriad things he imparted, one made an indelible impression and came to mind as I read his most recent—and remarkable—book, "Terror in the Night, The Klan's Campaign Against the Jews."

Nelson's advice, actually more a credo than a description of his own work was: keep copious files on every subject you report, including every note on every article, published or unpublished, and keep every name and telephone number and never throw any of it away because you never know when you'll need them."

I'd already had some indications the people have a way of knowing about more than one thing. But Nelson's book is testimony to the kind of reporter he was talking about being that night in Nashville. The reporting exhibited in "Terror in the Night," displays both. the depth and range of the truly great reporters of which there are precious few in America. It shows that the ultimate in reporting advances through at least four levels.

First, at its base, the most important reporting is beat reporting. When it is done well, it keeps our citizens well informed about daily matters. And good beat reporting demands honesty because the reporter must return to the beat each day and face the people who have been quoted or misquoted, the people whose knowledge and information has been used accurately or inaccurately, the people about whom the reporting was in painstakingly honest detail and insight or in shoddy thin cheap-shot laziness. That explains why the strongest beat reporting, performed by experienced, high-quality reporters and editors, is done at the best newspapers; and why the weaker, but more recently trendy, newspapers have shallow, naive at best, reporting.

Second, but equally important, good beat reporting develops the kind of sources that lead to running stories, more articles that provide greater continuity of coverage and connection of issues and institutions and public officials—and finally to the need for deeper explorations and investigations of all three.

Jack Nelson was, for all intents and purposes, covering the civil rights beat in the South for The L.A. Times in the late 1960's and early 1970's. At the time, very few journalistic enterprises—The New York Times, United Press International and Newsweek among them—were also covering the "beat." Nelson's intensive, unrelenting coverage led a Meridan, Mississippi, police chief to call him in the early morning hours to report the breaking story of a police-FBI action against a Ku Klux Klansman who had been about to bomb the home of a Jewish businessman. That call led to a running series of page one pieces about the incident and about the involvement of the KKK in other bombings. Such reporting naturally led to the multiple interviews of a huge and disparate number of people on all sides of the issue and incident in question.

Too often today, newspaper editors and reporters are quickly satisfied with giving each side its "say," insisting that is enough to discharge the journalist's obligation. Such a lazy position ignores the fact that there are several sides to every story, and that each side should be fully examined in the search for the truth. Nelson's exploration of all sides turned up policeman who were uncomfortable with what they had done, FBI agents who seemed to come down on both sides of the law, Jews who were racial bigots, Southern Baptists who believed in racial equality. That produced more stories.

And it gnawed at his reporter's soul. And that gnawing, along with a continuing compilation of sources and information and experiences, led to the third level of beat reporting—the investigation. Nelson tended his sources like an avid gardener. They continued to produce pieces of a puzzle that didn't come

Wendell Rawls, a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter and editor for The Philadelphia Inquirer and The New York Times, is now writing and producing motion pictures and living in Atlanta.

together until months later. But his continued digging led him to a couple of undeniable conclusions. First, that the federal, state and local governments were deeply involved in the deadly entrapment and ambush of its citizens, the most egregious denial of basic constitutional rights and secondly, that some of the best people in Mississippi including lawyers (officers of the court) and clergy and (dread of every good reporter) some of his best and most reliable sources were involved in the treachery and cover-up. Several would eventually feel burned by his truthful reporting and writing. A few *were* positively affected by his disclosures. Some were unforgiving.

Among those was J. Edgar Hoover, the director of the FBI, which had been so prominent in using private, secret money to arrange a murderous ambush of his fellow citizens. He was incensed that Nelson would write the stories and that The Los Angles Times would publish them. He pushed Nelson to the top of his enemies list. His personal attacks on Nelson were withering; his accusations would have been career threatening, had Nelson worked for an editor less courageous and dedicated to the pursuit of truth than Ed Guthman. Even with Guthman's and Nelson's steadfastness, Hoover's blackballing of all other L.A. Times reporters across the country from access to FBI information and contacts finally led the newspaper to insist that Nelson write about subjects and events that did not involve the FBI.

But most importantly, all the pressures notwithstanding, the reporting did not stop. And now, 20 years later, Nelson, having maintained relationships with his sources and still armed with his files and notes and addresses and phone numbers, takes the investigative process one step further to the fourth level, a first-rate book that ties everything together and puts it all in personal institutional, political and historical perspective. Great reporting has served its primary function; the public's right to know remains intact—and we are always better off knowing. ■

De Facto Governor of Alabama in 1960's

Taming the Storm: The Life and Times of Judge Frank M. Johnson Jr. and the South's Fight Over Civil Rights. Jack Bass. 512 pages, Doubleday. $24.95.

By Ray Jenkins

From 1956 to 1962, the languid little Southern backwater city of Montgomery, Ala., whose proudest boast hitherto had been that it was "the Cradle of the Confederacy," produced three of the major newsmakers of our time.

One—Martin Luther King Jr.—is now honored with a national holiday. Dozens of books have been written about him, including two recent biographies which won the Pulitzer Prize.

A second—George C. Wallace—likewise has been the subject of exhaustive examination, including Marshall Frady's exquisite little 1968 portrait "Wallace" and a soon-to-be published biography by a noted Southern historian.

But the third member of what might be called this symbiotic triumvirate has never become a household name in America, even though he was the one to give a semblance of legal order to the resolution of the vast dispute and confrontation between King and Wallace—or, as the title of this work suggests, to tame the storm. It cannot be said that Frank M. Johnson Jr., who was the Federal District Judge in Montgomery during the *sturm und drang* of the years of Wallace and King, was entirely a prophet without honor. He was featured on the cover of Time magazine in 1968 and the accompanying article called him "one of the most important men in America." A decade later, he was featured in a front-page profile in The Wall Street Journal by the newspaper's sapient Southern correspondent, Neil Maxwell. He was also the subject of an adulatory biography by Robert F. Kennedy Jr. in 1978, and in 1981 a respected Southern historian published a fine account of Johnson's career as a district judge which remained in the relative obscurity of a university-press book. And last year, Frank Sikora, a Birmingham News reporter who covered Johnson for many years, published a crisp, carefully edited series of retrospective interviews with Johnson that constitute something of an autobiography.

But all that said, it remained for Jack Bass (Nieman Fellow, 1966) to give us the most comprehensive—and I suspect, definitive—account of Johnson's life and seminal work. Will this book elevate Johnson to status of popular recognition now enjoyed by King and Wallace? Alas, it is unlikely. Bass's exhaustive account is, to be sure, rich in anecdotal detail about Johnson's personal history, including absorbing tales about hill-country ancestors with quaint names like "Straight Edge" and "Crackshot." But in the end legal decisions simply lack the turbulent energy of the rhetoric of King and Wallace. While "Taming the Storm" will receive close and appreciative attention from the civil rights community and the legal community, it is more likely to bewilder the average reader with its arcane detail in the dynamics of the law.

From the start, Johnson's appointment as federal district judge in Montgomery—a position which, up to that

Ray Jenkins is the retired editor of the editorial pages of The Baltimore Sun and a 1965 Nieman Fellow.

point, had been regarded as a sinecure for politically well-connected lawyers seeking prestigious retirement—was cloaked in ominous controversy. The Montgomery Advertiser, the dominant newspaper of the district, made it clear the preferred candidate was a prominent local "Eisenhower Democrat." But the state's two influential Senators, Lister Hill and John Sparkman, quietly sent word to Herbert Brownell, Eisenhower's Attorney General, that they preferred an authentic Republican to a Democrat in drag.

Even so, Johnson was welcomed with a guarded grace, even by the arch-segregationist Alabama Journal. But fate lost no time in asserting its own course: Johnson's investiture took place in the fall of 1955, only days before Rosa Parks defied the city's bus segregation law and set into motion the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The following year, Johnson, joined by Federal Appeals Court Judge Richard T. Rives, who would come to stand like a mighty cliff behind Johnson in the civil rights maelstrom that lay ahead, declared the bus segregation law unconstitutional. It was the first application of the Supreme Court's school desegregation to another area of public facilities, and Montgomery recognized the decision as the harbinger of things to come—a complete dismantling of "the Southern way of life," the common euphemism for cradle-to-grave segregation. The reaction in Montgomery was swift and ferocious; Johnson soon had to accept as a fact of life round-the-clock protection of Federal officers.

Doubtless reflecting a journalistic generational gap, Johnson's decisions generally received fair and accurate coverage in the news stories by young reporters covering his court, but editorialists and columnists of virtually all the large dailies were dubious at best, hostile at worst, to Johnson's decisions. In the weeklies, the commentaries routinely crossed the line from polemic to personal abuse—often as bad as the political attacks on Johnson by George Wallace, who once suggested that the judge should be given "a barbed wire enema." (At this point, truth-in-reviewing requires that I say that Jack Bass was exceedingly generous to me in quoting columns and editorials supporting Johnson's decisions.)

But as the civil rights issues abated, the state newspapers' attitudes changed markedly as Johnson enlarged *civil* rights into *human* rights and began to define minimum standards for conditions in state's wretched mental hospitals and penal institutions. The judge was more often praised than damned for these decisions.

By the end of his 23 tumultuous years as a district judge—in 1979 he was elevated to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals—the range and scope of Johnson's power over the political institutions of Alabama was truly breakthtaking. He came to be called "the real governor of Alabama." This troubled Johnson, and in a much-quoted speech he spoke of "the Alabama punting syndrome"—meaning the tendency of legislators and public administrators to "punt" the most difficult political problems to the federal court. But regardless of whether Johnson overreached with his judicial power or whether the state abdicated its constitutional responsibilities, the fact remains that in the end Frank Johnson was the de facto federal governor who took up, in the 1960's, where Reconstruction had left off in the 1870's—and finished the job with unflinching courage. The distinguished Yale law professor, Owen Fiss, put it accurately when he called Johnson "the John Marshall of federal district judges."

I have one quibble with the book. A major episode in Frank Johnson's life was the closeness of his appointment to the United States Supreme Court. When Hugo Black retired from the court in 1971, Johnson quickly emerged as the first choice of most of the major players to succeed the great libertarian justice from Alabama who had served for more than three decades on the high bench. President Nixon instructed Attorney General John Mitchell to initiate the customary background investigation, and Chief Justice Warren Burger was so certain that the appointment was a fait accompli that he called Johnson to shore from a deep-sea fishing trip to tell him he was going to be nominated.

But the appointment was abruptly aborted when Alabama's three Republican Congressmen objected on the grounds that the appointment of Johnson, still highly unpopular in Alabama, would damage them politically. The politically sensitive Nixon swiftly dropped Johnson from consideration, and nominated instead a less controversial Southerner, Lewis F. Powell of Richmond.

Bass gives this important drama just five paragraphs. Most of the principal figures are still living, and yet we learn little more than was generally known at the time. About the only new information we learn is that, some years later, one of the Congressmen personally went to Johnson to confess that he and his colleagues had gone directly to the attorney general to protest the appointment. The Congressman abjectly apologized and said that "if I had it to do over today, I wouldn't do it."

It is of course the duty of the biographer to report what was, not what might have been. Yet it requires no great leap to speculate how different the decisions of the Supreme Court over the last two decades might have been had Hugo Black's successor been a bold and imaginative legal innovator like Johnson rather than a cautious centrist like Powell. Many close decisions involving affirmative action, the death penalty, the rights of prisoners, the rights of homosexuals, to name a few, very likely would have gone the other way. It seems to me that the possibility of a "Justice Johnson" calls for more illumination then we get in "Taming the Storm."

But if Jack Bass does not accomplish this problematical task, at least he has given future scholars a most solid basis on which to formulate their own judgments. ■

The Puzzling Case of Eight Connecticut Valley Murders

The Shadow of Death:
The Hunt for a Serial Killer
Philip E. Ginsburg
Charles Scribner's Sons $20.

By Yvonne Daley

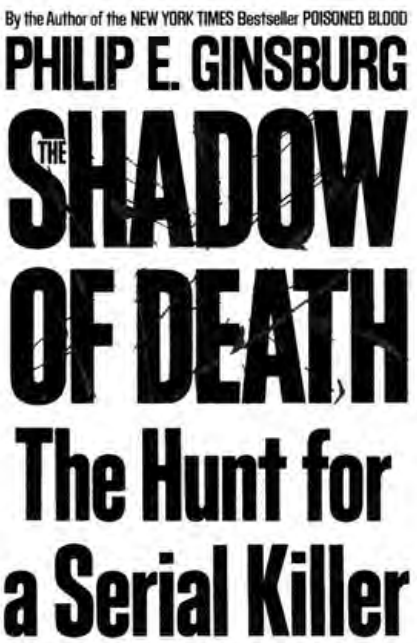
"The Shadow of Death," is yet another story in the true crime genre to follow Truman Capote's "In Cold Blood." Like Capote's masterpiece, which was, incidentally, formative in Philip E.Ginsburg's development as a writer, "The Shadow of Death" provides the reader with a compelling narrative and the grim details of a series of senseless murders.

In this case, the murders remain unsolved and residents of the neighboring Vermont and New Hampshire managed for a time to maintain a bucolic innocence and sense of immunity from violence despite rising incidents of murder and mayhem.

Thus, this book is simultaneously the story of those who were murdered, an account of police efforts of police to solve the cases and the history of a rural Connecticut Valley area losing its ability to deal with most anything life dishes out through the typically Yankee combination of community togetherness and self-reliance.

As Ginsburg puts it, "The idea of a person who could kill again and again, randomly, without motive, had once belonged to other places, other people's lives. Once the people of the valley had lived with an innocent confidence that theirs was a place of rare peace in an ever harsher world. And now, events were taking shape that would destroy [that confidence] forever."

Ginsburg manages nicely the complexities of the eight murders and one attempted murder that form the center of his story. He convincingly presents information that supports his theory that most of these unsolved murders were committed by one or perhaps



several serial killers. There is the proximity of the crime scenes and the locations where the women's remains were found. Autopsies later reveal that the victims were stabbed and that there were similarities in the patterns of the knife wounds.

Police officers involved in the investigation don't necessarily agree with Ginsburg's conclusions, but none dismisses the possibility that he could be right either.

As Hartford (VT) Chief of Police Joseph Estey, put it, "probably if you were to ask a dozen offices who worked on the homicides, you'd find a dozen theories on how many are connected. There probably is a case for suggesting strongly that some are connected, but not all of them."

The book is highly readable, if a bit melodramatic on occasion. For the journalist who covers the violence beat, it's useful reading because it puts detectives' jobs in perspective. Ginsburg is adept at showing the human side of the police officers investigating these nine crimes, and three other solved murders, as well as demonstrating the economic, legal and political constraints under which police must do their job.

Reporters frequently have a kind of adversarial relationship with the police. It's not unusual for police to withhold information reporters want and often feel they have the right to know. A good reporter often does his or her own investigative work, gathering information like a detective trying to solve a crime. The cops often resent this, especially when information they are trying to keep secret ends up in the newspaper or the stories make them look incompetent or callous.

While it's true that some law enforcement officials are derelict, Ginsburg makes a convincing case for why police withheld information in some of the killings, a perspective that journalists could apply to their own experiences.

Here's an example. In explaining why police were cautious about linking several previous murders of young women with the stabbing death of Eva Morse, a victim whose heavy-set body and lesbian leanings made her seem different from the other victims, Ginsburg writes, "For a detective, keeping an open mind

Yvonne Daley is a staff reporter for The Daily Herald in Rutland, VT and Vermont correspondent for The Boston Globe. She covered some of the Connecticut Valley murders.

was a useful work technique. The longer you waited to commit yourself to one theory, one suspect, the longer you put off blindness to other possibilities. It gave you a better chance of seeing other useful things when they came before your eyes. Everyone could describe a dozen leads that had looked like sure things, a dozen suspects who had looked guilty as hell, until other facts had produced the real culprit from somewhere else."

There's also a good message there or the overzealous reporter, looking to solve a crime and name the perpetrator before police have brought charges or named a suspect—not to suggest that sometimes the journalist does figure it out before the cops.

If there is a fault in the book, it lies in Ginsburg's excessive praise for police. He said in an interview that officers were quite helpful, often providing him with documents and details that weren't part of the public record and one wonders whether his praise reflects his debt.

In dismissing the possibility that any reasonable person might question why a suspect hadn't been found sooner, he writes, "The detectives had plumbed every source of public information, interviewed every available friend or associate, explored every tip, and tracked down every rumor" and "Police had done everything they possibly could."

Journalists know not to use words like never or always. The nagging truth is that these crimes remain unsolved, begging the question of whether more could have been done to solve them, or could be done now. Several family members of the victims believe the police could have done more and the book would have benefited from their views.

There are many places, however, where Ginsburg excels. The story line is compelling in part because of the time spent researching the lives of each victim. Reality adds tension to the plot because, in all but one case, there is a considerable amount of time between disappearance of the victims and discovery of their remains. Ginsburg uses this time to tell us much about the victims and their families, making these slain women real to the reader, not just more statistics in the history of violent crime.

We get to know Bernice Courtemanche as the nice 17-year-old girl who worked part-time at a nursing home and was so considerate she hitched a ride to her boyfriend's house so as not to bother anyone. That consideration turned into a fateful mistake. She disappeared on her way to the boyfriend's; her bones were found two years later on April 19, 1986, in a stream flowing through deep woods, near Claremont, N.H.. Courtemanche had been murdered.

Likewise, the reader gets a sense of Ellen Fried, a young woman who left a destructive relationship to complete her education and enjoy the things she loved most—simple living with nature, without locks on doors. Her skeletal remains were found about three miles north of where Courtemanche's remains had been found.

And we can empathize with the struggles of Eva Morse, a heavy-set woman who struggled with her sexual identity and the burden of being a single mother, only to end up dead also, her bones found in the woods of Unity, a town that bordered Claremont, nine months after she disappeared on July 10, 1985.

Ginsburg presents several hypotheses for why the murders appear to have ended with the last attack on Aug. 6, 1988, on Jane Boroski, who survived despite multiple stab wounds. These hypotheses further the readers' understanding of the criminal mind, particularly that of a serial killer. And, they also illustrate how little is really known about how a serial murder thinks and operates.

In a telephone interview, Ginsburg said that the killer may have moved from the area, frightened by the fact that Boroski could identify him. It's also possible that, given the psychological problems the murderer undoubtedly has and the lifestyle he may lead, that he may be in jail for another crime,or have died violently, in an accident or by his own hand.

John Philbin, a Springfield, Vt., psychologist who provided the police with a constantly evolving portrait of the kind of person who would commit such crimes, has a theory that is suggested in the book, although not developed fully. Philbin says that a person who would be capable of random killings may have been committed the crimes as part of a perverted form of sexual maturation. If several unsolved murders in the region dating back to 1968, 1978 and 1981 are linked to the homicides of Courtemanche, Fried and Morse, a kind of pattern emerges of a ritualistic killer whose first victim bears no overt sign of sexual assault and whose last victim bears signs that the killing may had ended the cycle.

Other fascinating aspects of the book include a good deal of information on how pathologists can determine cause of death by studying remains. Because New Hampshire, the penny-pinchingest state in the union, had no resident medical examiner, several of the victims' remains were sent to Dr. Henry Ryan, a pathologist in Maine, for investigation.

Among the talents Ryan has developed is the ability to estimate how long a body had lain in the woods by the height of the new growth emerging between the bones. He also knew that the plant shoots would be well-established before the bones sank into the ground. Bones dragged off by animals would probably be no farther off than 200 feet from the skeleton, he told Ginsburg.

Ginsburg says he left the objective stance of the journalist—he is a graduate of Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism and a former reporter for The Providence Journal-Bulletin—behind to write the book. "I share the frustration of the police. I came to feel the unsolved crimes left a little hole, a need that goes unfilled for the families and the community as long as the crime goes unsolved," said Ginsburg.

He says he hoped that the book might pry some new information out of a reluctant witness. "Wouldn't it be wonderful if the book led to solving any of these crimes," he said. ■

Where Journalism, History and Literature Meet

Today Is Not Like Yesterday
Ted and Nyna Brael Polumbaum
Light & Shadow $22.50

BY HENRY RAYMONT

Not long ago a Chilean official impressed a Boston audience with a glowing account of his country's economic upsurge. Part of the credit was due, he explained a bit sheepishly, to Gen. Augusto Pinochet's ability to enforce the stern austerity program he said transformed the country into the pioneer free market economy of Latin America.

Not content with stopping just short of outright praise for Pinochet, the official went on to dismiss as "unfortunate" the brutal repression and political violence of the Pinochet era. Considering that the Pinochet regime had forced the official himself into exile, such a mild characterization of the calamities Chileans suffered in the hands of the military suggests a bad case of historical amnesia.

In the question-and-answer period that followed, the audience wanted to learn more about trade, investment and tourism prospects for U.S. corporations and individuals. Nobody seemed interested in the conditions of Chile's poor after the military dismantled the social programs instituted by the deposed leftist government of president Salvador Allende. As tends to be the case when Latin American speakers come to town, no reporters were on hand. They might have raised some questions about Pinochet's sordid past and how it was perhaps being glossed over with rosy pictures of a more promising present.

Santiago, at the May 1, 1991 workers holiday rally. ©TED POLUMBAUM

One is often led to wonder if, except for a handful of journalists and human rights activists, most Americans, especially the bankers and businessmen, have chosen to suppress the facts about Allende's overthrow and remain silent about the persecution and murders of the military or of their own government's complicity. To its shame, the Nixon Administration had done its level best to assist the Chilean military in overthrowing Allende, a message not lost to Pinochet as he plotted his coup.

That was then and this is now and today even the media has largely displaced the human and institutional lacerations that are the legacy of the military dictatorship with the economic accomplishments of the post-Pinochet era. A recent Wall Street Journal headline testified to this tendency: "Free Market Model: Chile's Economy Roars

Henry Raymont, Nieman Fellow 1962, long a New York Times correspondent in Latin America, has just completed a book on U.S.-Latin American relations from Roosevelt to Clinton for the Twentieth Century Fund and is working on a study on press coverage of Panama for the Joan Shorenstein Barone Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy at the John F. Kennedy School, Harvard University.

as Exports Take off In Post-Pinochet Era." We are of course known to be a country with little memory for history. Yet it is equally true of the American tradition that from time to time there appears a writer, a reporter or a photographer with a sense of history and a yearning for justice to help put things in perspective.

That is the refreshing thrust of a photographic essay by Ted Polumbaum and Nyna Brael Polumbaum "Today is Not Like Yesterday: A Chilean Journey." The Polumbaums are a photographer-writer team based in Cambridge, MA., who traveled extensively in Chile and evidently formed close personal connections with people from all walks of life; they also developed a manifest empathy for the suffering and hopes of their subjects.

But this book is not simply a testimony on behalf of Pinochet's victims—the poverty-stricken workers and peasants, revolutionary students and intellectuals who were cruelly repressed by the military regime. It could be said that "Today is Not Like Yesterday" falls into a class George Kennan once called "that small and rarely visited field of literary effort where journalism, history, and literature (in the sense of *belles lettres*) come together."

These pictures and interviews speak more clearly than the statistics Chilean officials advance to promote their country to U.S. audiences. The Polumbaums are, in the most literal sense of the term, contemporary chroniclers. Ted Polumbaum, who was assigned by Life to cover Allende's campaign, shot most of the 90 photographs collected in the book during the first two years of the Allende government, between 1970 and 1972. They reflect the exultant and hopeful mood Allende's victory generated, especially among the workers and students. In 1989 and 1991, the authors revisited Chile, seeing some of the same people they had interviewed two decades earlier, this time assisted by their Spanish-speaking daughter Judy, a professor of journalism at the University of Iowa.

The title of the book is taken from a poem written in prison by Ramon Riquelme:

> Today is not like yesterday
> That is certain, brother
> We have become old waiting for the roses;
> to return and fill the air with their luminosity,/
> but the great wave will come over us and with each blow to the rocks/
> new seeds will be born/
> to build the house.

Riquelme, who came from a well-to-do family but preferred to live and work with the homeless in a shantytown, was tortured before serving three years in prison. In 1989 he told Mrs. Polumbaum: "I recovered but for those with me who were tortured and died, there has to be justice. The guilty must be prosecuted fairly, without the humiliations we suffered. My spirit can't seek vengeance."

The Polumbaums photograph and write as concerned witnesses, not just as outsiders but with an admitted involvement in the fate of Chile and its people so that in a sense they also succeed in reporting from the inside. In a candid introduction they write:

"The Chile we remember, a poor and isolated land of drams and desperation, has become an outstanding success in the international marketplace....For us, it all started in 1970 with the election of Salvador Allende as president of Chile.

"...We found friends in shantytowns where gifted people were struggling, with some success, to create organized communities from the chaos of joblessness, homelessness, alcohol and prostitution.... We also understood the seething resentment of the middle classes—people just like us—whose money was declining in value even as they lined-up for dwindling supplies of necessities, from chickens to toilet paper."

That there are dangers in this kind of "engaged" reportage is obvious; and the authors are well aware of them. Their judgment about Allende and his followers was not uncritical; nor could one say that the admiration was unjustified. These were indeed, for the most part, sorely tried people: squatters and miners who supported Allende were rounded up and held in concentration camps; activists who wanted to build a more just society were jailed and tortured, the lucky ones having been forced into exile.

Although the Polumbaums are clearly sympathetic to Allende, they acknowledge the latter's blunders and the unbridled zealotry of his more radical supporters. For example, they correctly assessed the last year of his government (1972-73), recalling its "increasing opposition stridency, government blunders, uncontrolled peasant land seizures....and growing power of the military."

At the same time, the reader is reminded how quick the U.S. media were to stir suspicion and fears about Allende, a physician and former minister of health and a lifelong socialist. When he entered the election campaign in 1970, Time magazine ran a cover story under the banner "Marxist Threat in the Americas." The New York Times, presumably unaware of Washington's covert efforts to prevent the socialist president from coming to power, wrote "U.S. Yawns at Chile Vote."

One of the first photographs of this handsomely published and well designed book captures the elated faces of thousands cheering and showering confetti onto Allende's inaugural motorcade; but on the next page we see a grim Allende attending the funeral of Gen. Rene Schneider, the army chief of staff killed by a group of putschists with CIA connections.

But most of the photographs are about the ordinary people the Polumbaums befriended during their first trip and then revisited. There is the story of Cecilia Bernal, who is shown twice; in 1971, the smiling activist in "Little Havana," one of the many urban shantytowns that thrived during the Allende years. In 1991 she is portrayed as a matronly, still radiantly smiling woman wearing a University of Toronto sweater, standing besides a van she drives on week-ends to sell coffee and ice creams. The sweater is a memento of her dozen years of exile in Canada before she returned vowing, "I'll never leave Chile again."

Mr. Polumbaum saves some of his best work for rural squatters and miners, showing them in mass demonstrations and family portraits in their humble homes. A mother mourning her missing son in a squatter settlement in Temuco; a miner paying a farewell visit to the destroyed cultural center of the Lota copper mines pointing at a mural paying mute tribute to a martyred country.

There is Miguel (El Mickey) Jarpa shown shouting in a "Popular Unity" demonstration; he was shot by Pinochet's secret police in Valparaiso a year after going into hiding. There is the white-maned, austere figure of Clotario Blest, an intellectual labor organizer of the Christian Left who in 1972 warned, "Let's have no illusions. The right lies and it conspires against the people." He is next seen sitting in an arm-chair outside his bedroom in Franciscan monastery, his gaunt face framed by a white beard; the 1989 photograph was taken shortly before his death.

There are also images suggesting reconciliation. Oscar Garretón is shown three times: in 1972 as Allende's assistant Minister of Economy playing the guitar at a party celebrating the first anniversary of the nationalization of the Lota mines; in 1973 his photograph appeared on a government wanted list, published on the front-page of El Mercurio, and in 1991 he is shown as President Aylwyn's chief of Santiago's Metro system, "arguably the best subway system in Latin America, certainly the cleanest."

The book is handsomely printed and designed by a small Cambridge publisher, Light & Shadow, run by Natalia Gabriel, a poet. A farewell of sorts to this loving journey is reflected in the caption of the book's last photograph, depicting a boy and a girl sitting on curbstone kissing, next to a faded street drawing of a hammer and sickle:

The 1990's in Chile appear to be the end of the line for rule by bayonet and an end as well to the emblem of the hammer and sickle. The early years of the decade have been marked by an orderly transition from dictatorship to democracy, but the future is by no means certain. ■

The Ombudsmen Report

By Richard Harwood

Carl Jensen at Sonoma State University in California has invented an interesting (and self-promoting) publicity operation underwritten by the taxpayers. He puts out through the university's PR office a list of the year's 10 "most-underreported stories" as compiled by a panel Rush H. Limbaugh would not invite to lunch: Noam Chomsky, et al.

He also sponsors a "Junk Food News Competition"—the year's 10 "most overreported stories," which are selected by the nation's Ombudsmen. Their 1992 choices reveal them to be serious types who are not impressed by the life styles of the rich or famous:

Dan Quayle's misspelling of "potato" tops the list. That may have some relationship to the fact that ombudsmen spend half their lives explaining the misspellings of potato and other words that occur daily in their own newspapers. They are sick of the subject.

Madonna is the runner-up. Her picture book, "Sex," was thought to have been grossly overpromoted. Arthur Nauman of The Sacramento Bee was appalled at the space his paper devoted to the subject—reviews by three separate critics, news stories and his own column. "The more I go on about this," he wrote, "the more I contribute to the hype."

The bronze went to the Murphy Brown-Dan Quayle fuss over family values, whatever that means. The remaining seven overdone stories all involved celebrities—Fergie and Diana, "the naughty wives of Windsor"; Woody Allen and Mia Farrow; Gennifer Flowers; the "Barbara/Hillary cookie bake-off;" the Elvis stamp collection, and Michael Jordan and the Dream Team.

It's probable that most of these tales will not merit so much as a footnote in tomorrow's histories. But that is true of most of the stories we print. The lead piece in The New York Times I'm reading today says the Clinton administration is going to check the nanny status of all presidential appointees to determine if their employment and treatment of nannies has been legal. What weight will that be given when histories of the late 20th Century are written ?

We give "junk food" to readers, we often say, because that is what they want, meaning that we "pander" to popular interests and to a public taste that is basically vulgar. Yet studies by The Times Mirror Center for the People and the Press suggest that the gatekeepers of the mass media may have a limited understanding of the interests and tastes of the masses they presumably serve.

The most intense public interest in any news story of the last six years was recorded in July, 1986 when 80 percent of American adults "very closely" followed the explosion of the Challenger space shuttle and its aftermath. Second in intensity (73 percent) was the San Francisco earthquake of 1989; third was the Rodney King verdict and subsequent riots in Los Angeles (69 percent); fourth was the little girl trapped in 1987 in a Texas well (69 percent).

In the middle range of popular interest, the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the Supreme Court decision on abortion in 1989 were followed "very closely" by 47 percent of the people. In the six years the center has been doing this work, eight stories ranked at the very bottom of its public interest scale, meaning 5 percent or less. They were:

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Last year's scandals in the British Royal family (5 percent), the civil war in Yugoslavia (4 percent), the firing of Pakistani Prime Minister Bhutto (4 percent), the separation of Prince Andrew and Sara Ferguson (4 percent), the breakup of Woody Allen and Mia Farrow (3 percent) and the separation of Tom Cruise and his wife (2 percent).

This tends to vindicate the judgment of our ombudsmen but not entirely. They put Dan Quayle and "potato" at the top of their junk food list. But there was, in fact, a decent amount of legitimate public interest in Quayle. Stories about his qualifications for the presidency in 1991 were "very closely" followed by 26 percent of the nationwide sample. That's not a lot on the face of it. But interest in that question was equal to the public interest in the historic nuclear disarmament agreement reached last month between the United States and the Soviet Union. And it exceeded the interest in President Clinton's cabinet choices, the pardon of Iran-Contra figures by President Bush and the breakup of the Prince Charles-Diana marriage (only 11 percent).

These numbers suggest something else: that news judgments—with emphasis on the word "news"—are far more subjective than we like to admit and that the junk food we serve up very often reflects the tastes of editors more than the tastes of that "vulgar" public to which we supposedly pander.

Another survey has come along that bears slightly on this question of "professional" and "amateur" news judgments. It was conducted by Henry McNulty of The Hartford Courant. He posed four hypothetical questions for his readers and put the same questions to the principal editors of The Courant. Here's how it came out:

Case 1: A politician tells an obscene joke at a public meeting. Some in the audience walk out. The reporter relates the incident in his story, including the joke. "In editing the story [do] you delete the joke because you consider it inappropriate for your newspaper ?"

One third of the readers and 11 percent of the editors would have deleted the joke. The rest would publish it to explain the walkout.

Case 2: A reporter and photographer produce a story on an unmarried, teenaged couple who have produced a child. The story tells of "their sorrows and their joys." You fear that the story makes teenage parenthood "look too appealing." Would you have it redone to emphasize "mostly the problems?"

None of the editors and only 10 percent of the readers would have the piece redone.

Case 3: You get a wire story about an "Overground Railroad," which is a network that would help women get abortions if Roe v Wade were to be overturned. The story is "neutral" on the abortion issue but contains the organization's phone number. Would you publish the phone number as a public service?

More than half the readers—53 percent—said they would. But only a third of the editors—32 percent—agreed; the other two thirds said they would use the number if the subject of the story were "non-controversial." But abortion is too "hotly debated" to qualify.

Case 4: A bank is robbed and your photographer gets a good shot of a witness talking to police. You decide not to use the picture because the witness could be endangered by the bank robbers who are still at large.

Among readers, 87 percent agreed with that decision; so did 78 percent of the editors.

Case 5: The 20-year-old son of the local school superintendent is arrested on morals charges involving a 17-year-old girl. Do you delete the reference to his father because "he is in no way connected to the arrest and...to report the family connection would be unfair."

A third of the editors and nearly two thirds of the readers agreed with that decision.

My fixation with numbers brings me to Gordon McKibben of The Boston Globe who has done his annual report on large and small errors, misstatements, lies and other imperfect material that appeared in The Globe last year and were dealt with in the corrections column.

The first significant statistic is that 83 percent of all errors were committed by newsroom staffers, not by sources, the wire services or the production departments. Of 587 corrections and clarifications, only 11 were attributed to production, 23 on the wires and 64 on sources who supplied "erroneous information."

The metro staff was the most error-prone and was held responsible for a plurality of all reported goofs; national and foreign 14 percent were second on the shame list. Sports, blamed for only 3 percent of the errors, had the best record, followed by Living/Arts, 4 percent.

Reporters were guilty most often, although they did better than the year before. They were blamed in 1992 for 224 mistakes, almost 30 percent fewer than in 1991. Next in the line of culprits was the editing staff, with 97 fouls.

Overall, The Globe had a better record in 1992 than in 1991. It printed one fewer correction, "a rather puny trend,"McKibben noted, "but at least it's in the right direction."

In the course of the year, he received about 5,000 calls and letters from the customers in 1992. The most complaints he received involved stories about a former priest, James Porter, who was charged with molesting numerous children over the years. The Globe was accused of anti-Catholicism in its coverage and because of the volume of the coverage (93 stories through mid-December) was accused of harassing the church. That is not surprising in a big Catholic town such as Boston.

McKibben's reports remind us that newspapers are in the precisely the position of politicians. They don't know whether five or 10 calls or complaints are the tip of an iceberg or an ice cube. They are subject to the same pressure groups, the same special interests, the same lobbyists. Is the "voice of the people" we hear or is it the voice of a handful of pressure artists ?

Larry Fiquette of The St. Louis Post-Dispatch became a punching bag for various "animal rights" critics of a story about sled dogs competing in a weight-pulling contest and another story about a woman who raises monkeys and chim-

panzees as if they were children. Disgruntled callers described the dog-sled piece as "appalling", "sick", "sadistic" and "cruel." The monkey piece was denounced for describing an environment that would turn the animals into "dysfunctional" creatures.

This is a constant problem for ombudsmen. It is impossible to produce a newspaper that offends no one. The headline from a column by Gina Lubrano, reader's representative of The San Diego Union-Tribune, asks: "Did we forget Pearl Harbor?" San Diego, like Washington, DC., is a big military town. Every year veterans of World War II take umbrage at papers that do not properly note the Pearl Harbor anniversary on December 7. They also take umbrage at the fact that many newspapers, without fail, report extensively every August on the anniversary of the nuclear attacks on Japan.

In Orange County, Calif., people of Palestinian origin objected to a piece in The Register illustrated by photographs of a Palestinian girl herding a sheep and of a boy riding a donkey. These pictures, it was said, stereotyped Palestinians, many of whom are urban professionals.

Others flayed the paper for polling and reporting on the presidential voting intentions of various ethnic groups—blacks, Vietnamese and Hispanics. Ombudsman Pat Riley agreed with the critics: "Was race an issue in the presidential race? Not that I know of, and no candidate could do much about any racial problem anyway."

In Norfolk, Va., Charlisle Lyles, the public editor for The Virginian-Pilot and The Ledger, took on a very sticky task. She tried to explain to readers why the papers had decided to change their obituary practices. Henceforth, it would no longer print without charge the standard obituary, which is essentially a brief biography including the names of surviving relatives, organizational affiliations and so on. Under the new system you had two choices: you could get a "free funeral notice that gives essentials only, such as name and funeral date." Or, for $2.37 a line, you could get the traditional obituary and the "freedom to include a variety of information that readers have long requested." The traditional obituary—about 30 lines on average—would now cost about $77 but if you were well-heeled you could buy all the space you want, presumably a full page if that seemed appropriate.

The advantages of a paid obituary, Ms. Lyles wrote, are many:

"Families of the deceased may now add to the list of survivors, distant relatives including those now deceased, pets, friends, longtime companions, such activities as skiing and Sunday school teaching and, if desired, the cause of death. Colorful language such as 'beloved' and 'dear' is welcome...Gay and lesbian readers have long felt left out in the cold by a [policy of the newspapers] that limited mention of relatives to those of blood or law. All that changes with paid obituaries."

Reaction from readers was essentially negative. What happens if you can't afford to pay? "Time, experience and creativity," Ms. Lyres responded, "may bring a solution."

John Sweeney, public editor for The Wilmington, Del. News Journal, had a sticky task himself.

The paper's fashion section stripped across the top of its section front a picture of a young lady wearing a man's suit. The locale for the photo was a men's room; the background was a row of urinals.

There were many complaints from readers, especially women, about bad taste and the "demeaning" of women. One woman said, "I'm 74 years old and the first time I saw a urinal was in your paper on Monday."

The section's editor, Valerie Bender, was not fazed by the critics:

"Fashion is meant to be fun, avant garde, trendy. Considering that the story was about women wearing men's suits, we thought the juxtaposition of a woman in a place where only men go would be appropriate."

Of course, and so it goes in the exciting, fun-filled world of the American ombudsman. Sweeney was asked, "Can I trust the press?" He replied with great candor and wisdom: "Why should you?" ■

RESPONSE

JOSEPH ALSOP'S MEMOIRS

To the Editor:

One of the staff drew my attention to a review of Joe Alsop's memoirs. (By Betty Medsger in the Summer 1992 issue.)

Joe Alsop was a complex and ornery fellow, someone who entered my life at the age of 13 as my stepfather. He was, as his memoirs don't try to hide, eventually obsessed by Vietnam. He was also, as Medsger points out, enamored with JFK. He made no attempt to disguise these facts.

There is also some truth in Medsger's remark that "In spirit, Alsop died when John Kennedy died in 1963." That, at least, is part of the carefully orchestrated public persona. And, in this respect, Adam Platt and the Norton editors were sensible to curtail Joe's original manuscript. (The rest of it unpublished, was a little too self-pitying.)

But what saddens me about Medsger's review is its mean-spirited tone:

The title is snide and silly: What's interesting and unique about Joe Alsop is what he did with the job/opportunity for over 40 years, not that he got it through a family connection. There was or is nothing remarkable about this.

The sub-heads reflect this attitude of spite: "Angriest Hawk/Obsessed by Vietnam"; "Limited Contact With the Poor"; "An Old Man, Frozen in Past," etc. To say these are shallow is an understatement.

To surmise that "most of Alsop's friendships were related to his work" is also superficial reading and, incidentally, wrong. He had friends from all walks of life, some from the Orient, some from southeast Washington, some from his academic life (i.e. "From the Silent Earth" or "The Rare Art Traditions," 15 years in the writing, etc.), classmates of mine and so on. The fact

that he had 18 godchildren is a pretty good clue to the depth and range of his personal relationships!

I find myself defending him, when that's not my purpose. The truth is that Joe Alsop was a much larger, more magnanimous, and infinitely more

fascinating man than perhaps the book and certainly this review suggest. For example, his dimension as a scholar is never touched on, his qualities as a Renaissance man never hinted at. For that matter, what was it that attracted Kennedy to him - just a media tool? I sincerely doubt it.

The lowest remark in Medsger's review is the term "blackmail" with respect to forcing Eisenhower to take action against Joseph McCarthy. Yes, of course it was blackmail. Let me suggest to Medsger that Joe and Stewart Alsop risked a great deal more than "lost income" because of their stand. That, for instance, is a dimension Eric Sevareid did not forget in his last tribute to Joe on public radio. Without even trying to put the term "blackmail" in the historical context it belongs, the word raises grossly unjust questions about the appropriateness of the Alsop tactics.

Joe Alsop was no saint, and never pretended to be. But to define him as a by-product of wealth, or an old man frozen in the past, even just based on his memoirs, demeans the quality of aoything I might have expected from a Nieman publication. Of the many book reviews I've read of this book, some scathing and none uncritical, none has so far reached the level of superficiality of Medsger's.

William S. Patten
Publisher
The Camden (ME) Herald

A Weekly Editor Looks Back

By Gillis Morgan

• When you write an editorial, write it clear, concise and to the point. Always try to stir the thoughts of your readers. Don't ever get personal, try to offer a solution to a problem, and always try to provide leadership.

• Newspaper reporters should explain the news. You might have to move away from objectivity to do that.

• The most significant point is to give the moderates in your community a voice. The moderates always hold the key to the leadership in your community. Give them a chance to lead, and they will.

These three points about newspapering come from Neil O. Davis of Auburn, Ala., now 78 and retired. From 1937 to 1975, Davis was editor and publisher of The Lee County Bulletin in Auburn.

In 1941, he was the first weekly editor to be named a Nieman Fellow.

His talent and leadership as an editorial writer were clearly defined in 1975 when he retired. Millard Grimes, then a competitor as publisher of The Opelika-Auburn News, wrote:

"Neil Davis was a loyal national Democrat and a Southern liberal when it was not easy to be either in Alabama. And through nearly four decades he was an editorial voice often raised against the prevailing political opinion in his county, state and region. Some might say that Davis has mellowed in recent years but actually the South merely caught up with a lot of positions he advocated years ago."

Neil O. Davis

As early as 1941, Davis's Bulletin took positions that did more than stir the thoughts of his readers in Alabama. In that year he advocated poll tax reform.

One of his long-standing opponents, Hamner Cobb (now deceased), editor of The Greensboro Watchman, referred to The Bulletin's position on the poll tax and wrote that people supporting such reform are nothing more than "scalawags." In response, and in keeping with his practice not to get personal on issues, Davis listed the "scalawags" supporting poll tax reform—the Parents and Teachers Association, the missionary societies, professional clubs and civic groups.

This "scalawag" anecdote was drawn from a thesis, "Editorial Policy of the Lee County Bulletin—1937-1951," written in 1952 by Paul L. Mussleman, a graduate student in history at Auburn University.

Over the years, Davis's editorials have been reprinted in The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Louisville Courier-Journal, The St. Louis Post-Dispatch and The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

His editorials always cut to the heart of the matter and were always on a professional level. In his retirement article about Davis, Grimes wrote that there are those who would say that Davis's editorials showed that he had no use for George Wallace. The truth is, however, that Davis always criticized what Wallace represented more than Wallace as a person.

How effective was Davis's approach to journalism? According to Dr. Wayne Teague, state superintendent of education, Davis and The Bulletin played a strong role in the desegregation of the

Auburn city school system during the 1969-70 school year.

Teague, who was city school superintendent in Auburn at the time, said The Bulletin provided the tone of reason and the force of logic that gave the community a strong base on which to "do the right thing."

"It wasn't just one editorial," Teague said. "It was the spirit of the newspaper over the years and the thoroughness of the coverage."

Auburn's population was about 20,000 at that time, and The Bulletin's circulation was about 4,000. Davis wrote the editorials. His wife, Henrietta, now deceased, was news editor, as well as reporter. Graham McTeer, now deceased, was managing editor and reporter.

During the months leading up to desegregation, Teague said The Bulletin provided wide-open coverage of how the school board would accomplish desegregation through a transportation system to achieve racial balance—about 65 percent white and about 35 percent black.

"Neil was often called Alabama's Ralph McGill during this time," Teague said. "He caught the devil...because there were a lot of people who were violently opposed to integration."

Teague said people from other communities, who had serious problems with desegregation, said Auburn had an easy time of it because the city was dominated by the faculty at Auburn University, a land-grant school. The university's influence was helpful, Teague said, but there were plenty of people who opposed integration. He emphasized that it was The Bulletin's news stories and editorials that gave moderates the force of logic they need to deal with extremists.

As early as 1950, The Bulletin was recognized as a newspaper that was fair in dealing with racial issues. In that year, The Bulletin received the "best editorial" award from the National Editorial Association for its "intelligent approach to working out better community understanding of the Negro in its midst. It did not report on polemics, but placed its appeal on American justice." The award stressed Davis's priority of reaching the moderates within a community through balanced news coverage and editorials that provided leadership.

In covering Auburn's desegregation experience, Davis said that he, his wife and his managing editor didn't really have to make a grand design for coverage. "We were just three like-minded newspaper people who covered the news as it happened."

If there were protests about the school board's decisions, he said The Bulletin just handled them in a dignified way. "It wasn't sensationalized. Henrietta was handling the news...and she did it in a very unexcitable way. Very matter of fact. She didn't go around town asking all the segregationists what they thought about it. She just reported what the superintendent and the board were doing."

During these years, Neil and Henrietta got ugly telephone calls in the middle of the night. "These calls were not from rednecks," Davis said. "You could tell that these were people of privilege. They would start drinking at a party and after they had enough to break down their reserve, they would call." For the most part, he said, he and Henrietta would just laugh about it, and in a lot of cases they could figure out who made the calls.

In reflection, Davis said the one thing he is pleased about is that he was able to discipline himself and not write editorials when he was angry.

"During those years," he said, "I remember writing the first couple of paragraphs....I would stop and read them, then wad them up and throw in the waste basket...and start over...because I was getting personal...and I was preaching....You know when you first sit down to write...and you're so agitated...about the political leadership...and then I'd say 'O gosh' how stupid can you be...but you have to fight against it and you know this as fully well as I do....It's not writing for the Pulitzer prize committee."

Davis always maintains that an editorial writer should stick to the point and strive to lead the readers to a solution. "What good does it do if you write the best editorial....I mean the very best of writing if it doesn't provide the leadership your community needs?" he asked.

Davis is enjoying his retirement even though he hurt his back in a fall a few years ago. He worked hard in physical therapy to be able to get around. He attends programs at Auburn University, including a recent discussion about the landmark Supreme Court libel decision, Times v. Sullivan, that included two other Nieman Fellows—Anthony Lewis, columnist for The New York Times, and Ray Jenkins, who has recently retired as editorial page editor of The Baltimore Sun.

Davis also attends the annual meeting of the John Popham Seminar in Atlanta. Popham was a New York Times correspondent who covered South in the 1960's during the civil rights era. The seminar is an annual meeting of journalists who covered civil rights in Southern states.

Last year, seminar members presented Davis the Popham Seminar Award. He is the second person to receive this award. The other was Harry Ashmore, the Arkansas editor who gained fame in the 1950's for his editorials during the efforts to integrate the public schools in Little Rock. Ashmore was also a Nieman Fellow in 1941.

As a loyal Democrat, Davis was happy with the election of Bill Clinton as president, and the success the Democratic Party experienced in some Southern states even though the Republican ticket won in Alabama.

Over the years, The Bulletin won numerous first place awards from the Alabama Press Association for best editorials, best news coverage, best design and general excellence. Sprinkled in the old files among these awards, however, are numerous "soul awards" that an editor might appreciate even more. These are the letters from readers, personal notes to Neil Davis, thanking him for taking a stand on a tough issue and for saying those things that ought to be said. ■

Gillis Morgan is an Associate Professor in the Journalism Department at Auburn University.

NIEMAN NOTES

1958

Former New York Times columnist Tom Wicker is the recipient of a Distinguished Achievement in Journalism award from the University of Southern California. This year marked the 32d annual presentation of the awards, which are sponsored by USC's Journalism Alumni Association.

Wicker also is a spring-term Fellow at the Joan Shorenstein Barone Center for Press, Politics and Public Policy at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. His research proposal: "Is there more tension between blacks and whites today than in 1954, and if so, why?"

Another of our "missing" Nieman Fellows has been located, courtesy of George Chaplin, Editor-at-large for The Honolulu Advertiser. Chaplin spotted an item in The Washington Journalism Review that reported that Bill McIlwain, senior Editor of The New York Times's 31 regional newspapers, plans to leave at the end of the year to become a writing coach. After spending the 20 months traveling to Times-owned newspapers, McIlwain says he's developed a five-day program for reporters and editors to improve their skills. "With appropriate modesty, I call it 'The McIlwain Magic Three-Stop,'" he says. During his 49-year career, McIlwain has been executive Editor of The Sarasota Herald-Tribune and Editor of Newsday, New York Newsday, The Boston Herald-American and The Arkansas Gazette.

1962

Eugene Roberts has received a Distinguished Alumnus Award from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Gene, now a journalism professor at the University of Maryland at College Park, was Executive Editor of The Philadelphia Inquirer for 18 years. During that time the paper won 17 Pulitzer Prizes, including two gold medals for public service and three for investigative reporting. The UNC awards, established in 1971, are presented to those who have "distinguished themselves in a manner that brought credit to the university."

1967

Dick Stewart, retired from The Boston Globe, writes that he and his wife, Pat, have sold their house in Topsfield, MA and moved to Moss Creek Plantation in Hilton Head, SC, where the cold and snow no longer impede Dick's golf game. His new address is 103 Toppin Drive, Hilton Head, SC 29926. Dick and Pat celebrated Christmas in the sunny South with a visit from half of Dick's family, and are planning to spend next Christmas up North with the other half.

Philip Meyer, William R. Kenan Jr. professor of journalism and mass communication at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, has been named to the Knight Chair in Journalism. The new professorship was created in 1991 after the School of Journalism and Mass Communication won a national competition for the $1 million endowed chair funded by the Knight Foundation.

"Phil Meyer is one of the best-known and most respected individuals in mass communication research in the world," said Dr. Richard Cole, dean of the school. "He was a pioneer in social science journalism."

The school conducted a national search for the position, which focuses on basic research. Cole said the professor holding the Knight Chair will play a leading role in setting the national and international mass communication agenda by conducting research and sharing the findings with students and professionals through courses and other special activities.

Meyer went to UNC in 1981 as a Kenan professor and has helped shape the Carolina Poll, a biannual North Carolina public opinion telephone poll conducted by the School of Journalism and Mass Communication and the Institute for Research in Social Science.

He is president of the World Association for Public Opinion Research and serves as consultant to Knight-Ridder Inc. and USA Today. Meyer is the author of several landmark texts, including "Precision Journalism: A Reporter's Introduction to Social Science Methods," "Ethical Journalism: A Guide for Students, Practitioners and Consumers" and "The Newspaper Survival Book: An Editor's Guide to Market Research."

James R. Whelan, Adjunct Professor in the University of Maryland's College of Journalism last semester, was honored recently by Finis Terrae University—one of Chile's leading private universities. At a ceremony at the Santiago-based university, Whelan was inducted as an associate professor—the first such honor the university has ever conferred—for his "untiring devotion to the truth in the field of communications and journalism on a world scale." While in Santiago, Whelan addressed 300 women journalists from five South American countries for the First Congress of Women Journalists of the Southern Cone. Whelan's newspaper credits include serving as the founding Editor/Publisher/Chief Executive Officer of The Washington Times and

prior to that as Editor of The Sacramento Union, Editor-in-Chief of the Panax Newspapers, and Managing Editor of The Miami News.

1977

Mel Goo writes from Tokyo:

"I came to Tokyo about two years ago to work at The Japan Economic Journal, a tabloid. It was interesting to take part in its conversion a year-and-a-half ago to a broadsheet, The Nikkei Weekly. The newspaper is published by Nihon Keizai Shimbun, Inc., Japan's counterpart to Dow Jones & Company. Though the timing is uncertain because even Japan is in an economic slump, the aim is to turn the weekly into an international daily. The Nikkei Weekly already is printed not only in Japan but also in the United States and Europe. I am currently paired with Japanese editors in handling the newspaper's economy and finance sections."

Mel can be reached at The Nikkei Weekly, 1-9-5 Otemachi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyn, 100-66, Japan.

Jamil Mroue moved recently from London to Washington, with his wife, Wadad, and one-year-old daughter, Kenz. Jamil is starting a publishing venture to print an English-language weekly newspaper concerned with Middle East and Islamic affairs. He has been negotiating with American publishers to form a partnership for this venture. For six years he was Editor of the only Pan Arab daily newspaper, Al Hayat. Jamil can be reached at 703-243-1763; fax - 703-243-4199.

1981

Doug Marlette of New York Newsday was awarded the $3,000 first prize in the 11th annual Fischetti Editorial Cartoon Competition sponsored by Columbia College, Chicago. Doug won for his cartoon contrasting a figure wearing a hooded white robe labeled "Duke" with Pat Buchanan, labeled "Duke Lite." The competition is named in honor of the late Pulitzer Prize-winning editorial cartoonist John Fischetti, and annually honors 10 people whose work is judged to be representative of the best being done by professional editorial cartoonists in the U.S. and Canada. Doug also won the competition in 1986.

1983

"Giant Steps," by Gilbert M. Gaul, was recently published by St. Martin's Press. The 192-page book chronicles the first six years in the life of Gil and Cathy Gaul's son Cary, who was born with spina bifida. Publisher's Weekly called "Giant Steps" "poetic and often moving," adding that there is much to be learned from the account "about medicine, marriage, parenting and the resilience of children." Cary, now nearly seven, is a first-grader in the Cherry Hill, N.J., school system, and an incredibly determined, curious and feisty child, his parents report. Two-time Pulitzer Prize-winner Gil writes about medical economics and health policy for The Philadelphia Inquirer. Cathy teaches art at Haddonfield Friends School, where soon-to-be 12-year-old son Greg is finishing up sixth grade and doing well.

Gilbert Gaul and his son Cary

Karl Idsvoog, special projects producer for WCPO (Channel 9) in Cincinnati, has won the Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Award in Broadcast Journalism for Medium Markets for "Made in the USA?". Karl explains:

"Made in the USA?" documents how the Florence, KY plant of Mazak, a Japanese company, imported machine tools, relabeled them as "manufactured in the U.S.A.," and then sold them to the United States Government in violation of the Buy America Act. What's more, the government had been aware of the violations for years and did nothing about it. WCPO's I-Team did.

Karl was producer/writer, Jeff Keene was videographer/editor and Clyde Gray was the reporter. The team also helped Mike Wallace and "60 Minutes" produce its version of the Mazak story, which ran last fall. Following WCPO's report, both the House and the Senate introduced measures to strengthen the penalties for violation of the Buy America Act.

The duPont Awards Ceremony was held on January 28, 1993, at the Low Memorial Library at Columbia University in New York City. Idsvoog also won a duPont award in 1979 for "Clouds of Doubt," an hour-long documentary on the effects of open-air nuclear testing, co-produced with Lucky Severson.

1986

Freedom of the press is still on shaky ground in Panama, says Roberto Eisenmann Jr., Publisher of La Prensa, the largest of Panama's three daily newspapers. Despite the U.S. invasion three years ago, and the subsequent departure of Manuel Noriega, the laws of press control remain on the books. "They're not currently being applied, but they could be at any time," Eisenmann reports. "These are horrendous laws—censorship, closure of the media, and jail for slander and libel—and all the threats come from the government."

Eisenmann "became obsessed" with Panamanian politics during the regime of Omar Torrijos, and "dedicated myself full time to overthrowing the dictatorship." During the reign of Torrijos and his successor, Noriega, Eisenmann was beaten, arrested, and sent into exile in Latin America and the United States. Today La Prensa has a circulation of around 37,000—more than three times that of its closest competitor—and racked up profits of $1.2 million in 1991. "La Prensa is really an independent newspaper, tolerant of all opin-

Nancy Lee

Dorothy Wickenden

ions, contrary to the typical Latin American newspaper that is born as an instrument of a political party or interest," Eisenmann. said in an interview with Editor & Publisher. "Economically we're doing very well."

1987

Nancy Lee has been named Picture Editor of The New York Times. Nancy will head a 70-member department of photographers, editors and support personnel. She joined The Times in 1980 as an Assistant Editor, became Deputy Picture Editor in 1989 and served as Acting Picture Editor for more than a year. Previously she was a copy editor and Graphics Editor at The Plain Dealer in Cleveland. Lee has won awards for her work in graphics from the Society of Newspaper Design, the Art Directors' Club of New York, the American Statistical Association and the Newspaper Guild.

Mediafax, the brainchild of Fernando Lima, is, according to The Christian Science Monitor, Africa's first newspaper distributed by facsimile and is giving meaning to "the public's right to know." Lima, currently with Mediacoop in Maputo, is a former employee of AIM, the official Mozambique news agency. Mediafax Editor Carlos Cardoso says that Mediafax, which has set a trend toward investigatory journalism, is "seen as the free press in Mozambique.... What we are doing is both new and dangerous...It is not easy in Africa to uncover corruption. It is a violation of cultural norms to go and talk about people openly." Mediafax comes out three times a week and has about 300 subscribers. The paper, written in Portuguese, costs the equivalent of $15 a month for individuals, $50 for businesses and institutions and $150 for donors.

1989

Dorothy Wickenden has been named Senior Editor for National Affairs for Newsweek magazine. For the last 15 years Dorothy has been with The New Republic, first as Managing Editor and recently as Executive Editor.

In announcing her appointment, Newsweek Editor Maynard Parker said Dorothy was "a skilled and sensitive editor who is a great catch for us. We're delighted she's joining us with what I think is the strongest national staff in the business."

Before joining Newsweek in July, Dorothy will take three months off to finish working on an anthology to be published by New Republic/Basic Books next year. "The book will be an iconoclastic history of liberal thought in 20th-Century America as presented by writers for The New Republic from 1914 to the present," Dorothy explained.

Wickenden has written about national politics and social issues, and has reviewed fiction and non-fiction for The New Republic. She has also written for The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, and The Wilson Quarterly.

The International Women's Media Foundation honored four journalists with their 1992 "Courage in Journalism Award." One of the recipients was Catherine Gicheru, who was cited as "Bravest Woman Journalist in Kenya." The award is given to journalists who have "demonstrated extraordinary qualities in pursuing their craft under difficult or even dangerous circumstances." Catherine, a reporter and Acting City Editor with The Nation in Nairobi, "has constantly placed her life in danger by pursuing stories critical of her turbulent government," the foundation said.

The awards ceremony was held in New York City on December 1 at a luncheon, and Nieman curator Bill Kovach was there to present Catherine with the award—$2,000 and a Steuben crystal sculpture symbolizing freedom and courage. The other journalists honored were Kemai Kurspahic and Gordana Knezevic, the Editor-in-Chief and Acting Editor-in-Chief of the Sarajevo daily newspaper Oslobodenje, and CNN photographer Margaret Moth, who covered the war in Bosnia. Barbara Walters also received the first IWMF Lifetime Achievement Award.

1990

Dave Denison reports that things have gotten very busy since December, when he became the new Editor of The Arlington Advocate in Arlington, MA, just west of Boston. With a staff of three, Dave finds himself wearing many hats and doing the work of several people. Dave came to the Nieman Foundation from The Texas Observer. He was freelancing for magazines and newspapers and stringing for The Boston Globe when he was tapped by The Advocate. He says he likes working for a small paper like The Advocate because the work brings him in closer contact with people in the community.

The following article was called from a lecture Vladimir Voina, who writes a syndicated column and lives in Maine, delivered at the University of Nevada-Reno.

Although a student of American politics all my life, I got my first chance to observe a presidential race only last year. In 1988, my application for a journalistic trip to America was rejected by the KGB. I continued to be *neviyezdnoy*, or "not eligible for travel abroad," even on the fifth year of perestroika. Only with the help of American journalists and the Nieman Foundation, which invited me to be their first Fellow from Russia, could I make, at the age of 53, my breakthrough to the New World.

To me, American democracy, even with imperfections, is still the most perfect creation of the human mind (or the Lord's Providence depending on one's faith). In observing the '92 election campaign I have only reaffirmed my belief in this democratic process.

I came to this belief not easily and it did not dawn upon me all of a sudden. For two decades I had been working, as editor, for USA, a monthly magazine published by the influential Kremlin's think tank on America, the USSR Academy of Sciences American and Canadian Studies Institute. I joined this magazine in January 1971, when it was one year old, and I grew old with it. I participated in covering, from Moscow, five American presidential campaigns.

USA was quite an unusual publication in the USSR. Subscribing to it had never been easy because the Party Central Committee did not want our magazine to be read by the man in the street. Its role was rather to inform the establishment, academia, the more sophisticated professionals, to supply them with a picture of American life as wide and true as the limits of the propaganda department could tolerate.

We had to pay for this "semi-openness" by publishing from time to time some reactionary stuff, the soup of the day articles on the bourgeois democracy in America, which ignored the working class.

Other magazines and newspapers lied shamelessly, while our half-truths were accessible to only the chosen few. The general idea of the Soviet press was to create the picture of where, roughly speaking, millionaires, sitting in the White House, in the Senate, in government, were serving other millionaires, the bankers and corporation executives, ignoring the will of the voters. Each president favored some special interests that had brought him to power.

Traditionally, Moscow's coverage of American presidential campaigns had always favored the Democratic Party. Even though it was usually a Republican president who found an accord with the Kremlin, not a Democratic one, Moscow still treated the Republican Party as its worst enemy—anti-labor, anti-Soviet, racist, reactionary, a heartless millionaires' party. For Russians, the Democrats, bad as they were, had inherited the legacy of FDR and JFK that better suited the interests of the American people. The Democratic party was the lesser of two evils, and, consequently, a better choice for the Kremlin.

But not in 1992. Both the Russian press and the public were pro-Bush. Betting, formerly prohibited, flourished before the elections, with the great majority of wagers placed on George Bush. Russians could not understand why Americans would reject the winner of both the Persian Gulf War and the Cold War. And don't Americans enjoy the highest living standard in the world? When you've got it good, don't look for something better, Russians say.

Radical reformist ideology in Russia today has become associated with the capitalist dream of America's business world on the Right. America's socialist Left is nearer to the state programs of Soviet Russia's staunch ultra-right Communists. In post-Communist Russia the liberal message is poorly understood. "We've had enough of that welfare redistribution system," Russians would say. "Why do Americans now wish to repeat our mistakes?"

Though the idea of a newcomer in the White House, be it Clinton or Perot, was not liked by Russians, Moscow newspapers tried not to take sides and covered the campaign without bias. Yet noticeably little space was devoted to the campaign. Combined, all reports and stories in all Russian newspapers on the 1992 race, would amount to less space than one section of The New York Times.

Immediately after the election Vek, a new journal for business circles, praised Bill Clinton as a "self-made man" and explained, not without irony, his appeal to the Russian heart. According to the article, Mr. Clinton's concern about the American middle class "seems good to us Russians." His stand on economic health for all, including the poor, "warms the souls of our beggars." His many women? "Even if a lie, it's a sign of vitality." The rumor that, "He'd had some affairs with the KGB?" "Who hasn't?"

This time there were no bad guys or good guys in the Russian press. Nobody's wishful thinking connected Russian national interests with any one candidate. No one said what's "good for us is good for America." America was not criticized for its "lack of democracy," for the similarity of its party platforms, for "Big Money coming to power," etc.

Russian newspapers eagerly published analytical stories written by American authors, including prominent experts on Russia, even those who fled from the Soviet Union. People like Dimitri Simes from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, hated before but much respected now, were asked to share their views on how the elections would influence Russia's progress. What's important is that Mr. Simes's view coincides with that of Vladimir Lukin, the Russian Ambassador to the U.S. printed in the same issue of Moscow News: "Our progress or retreat will define American reactions and the future of our relations." In this sense, Mr. Lukin stressed, not the Clinton administration, but Russia itself will carve out the path for America's policy towards this post-Communist country.

Now some personal reflections of my first presidential campaign.

For me, to experience the richness and magnetism of this fantastic festival, this unique show/competition/trial, meant going through a real culture shock. It is the quintessence of this country and its people, naive and sophisticated at the same time. It combines art and communications, sports and entertainment, high styled polemics and dry political pragmatism, small everyday concerns and great dreams of America's glory in the third millennium, scientific discoveries and childish games—all this and much more. How difficult it is to be a politician here! America is a very professional country.

Backing only one of the candidates, each newspaper has to be fair to his rivals. Objectivity is something unheard of for journalists in Russia, where no publication tries to hide its bias.

While the press was watching over the battle, there were people watching over the press, counting its scores, praising its victories and ridiculing its excesses and mistakes. If the press is a real policy-maker here, public scrutiny does not allow it to go far out of control.

The amount of research and the speed of electronic data processed during the

campaign also struck me as something unreal. No doubt, using this data, policy planners in each presidential team are equipped with a better knowledge of how to attract each individual group of voters. Every independent analyst has all the information he needs to draw his own conclusions too. Pollsters measure the public mood with great precision and it is so easy to learn what candidates think and do. It is one thing to read about these wonderful political races, sitting in a Moscow newsroom, and quite another thing is to see here how this mechanism works.

My disappointments? I think "negative advertising" is not the best achievement of democracy, or of good taste. Freedom should not be used to call candidates bad names; instead, it should be used to proclaim serious principles. And it seems to me that TV commercials are not the best tool to gain serious public support. Only Ross Perot could buy hours on TV paying from his own pocket. If the other candidates had no chance to follow his lead, why spend millions (partly of taxpayers' money) on ultrashort and meaningless ads? There are many other ways to learn candidates' messages, much more effective than Advil-style commercials. To me, creating subconscious, irrational images and stereotypes with the help of these all absurdly short and senseless ads amounts to no more than provoking saliva in the mouths of Pavlovian dogs.

But, thanks God, I've seen all this!

1991

Kabral Blay-Amihere, Publisher/Editor for the Independent in Accra, Ghana, has just been elected president of Ghana's journalists' association.

Betty Bayé won a third-place award in the "Best of Gannett" writing competition. Bayé writes editorials and columns for The Louisville Courier-Journal. The honor was for a collection of her columns.

Raj Chengappa writes from New Delhi that despite the recent troubles in India, he is doing reasonably well. Along with putting out a special issue on the earth summit at Rio, he was promoted to Features Editor, a post that allows both reporting and directing a team.

Tim Giago, Publisher of Indian Country Today, married Lynn Boensch, vice president of the Piper Jaffray investment firm, in Rapid City, South Dakota, last December 27. Lynn is from the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. They will be building a home on the reservation in the spring.

Tim recently became a columnist for the Knight Ridder News Service.

1992

Seth Effron has started a new news service called The Insider. In a fax message he described how it happened:

"Following the 1992 elections, I decided my future was somewhere else than with The Greensboro News & Record, where I'd been covering state government and politics since 1985. Some generous friends offered to help me launch a distributed-via-fax news service covering North Carolina government and politics—concentrating mainly on the state legislature for start. No sooner did word quietly get out about my decision to quit The News & Record and start the new service, than I received an unexpected call from The News & Observer, Raleigh's daily newspaper. At a lunch with a company executive, I discovered the paper was anxious to get into the alternative delivery of news and information. The company liked my idea and it appeared to be a good guinea pig for their plans. A few days later another firm expressed similar interest.

"One thing led to another, and in rather quick order, I went from making plans on survival on a single income, to becoming Editor of The Insider, North Carolina State Government News Service, and an employee of the News & Observer company.

"The service is produced five days a week, delivered before 7 a.m. to all subscribers via fax, and has me working from about 7 a.m. until midnight on an easy day. At times I feel like the 1990's answer to the old pioneer editors. I handle sales, marketing, reporting (there is an assistant editor, too), editing, production and distribution. And let me tell you, after a day when the fax computer decided to turn into "2001's" HAL, dealing with circulation complaints is no thrill!

"A week after initial publication, with seven editions produced, there are more than 25 subscribers at between $995 and $1,200 per annual subscription....The daily report includes a news summary from my own reporting and from other news sources (newspaper stories, TV, and radio), a listing of all bills filed for introduction the previous day, status of each bill (that's updated daily), and a week-at-a-time look at all committee meetings scheduled in the legislature along with meetings of state government boards and commissions.

"My new work telephone numbers and addresses are: The Insider, P.O. Box 191, Raleigh, NC 27602. Phone: 919-832-8358; fax: 919-829-3532. Home phone and address remain the same."

Isaac Bantu, a 1993 Visiting Fellow at the Harvard Law School's Human Rights Program where he is studying the continuing conflict in Liberia, reports joyful as well as sad news.

He and Charlotte are happy to announce the birth of a daughter, Quabah Cleanweh Bantu, on December 23. She joins a sister, Tanneh Edith, who is four years old and in preschool, and a cousin, Kpannie Gboagar, who is 10 years old and in the sixth grade. The Bantus reside in Lynn, Massachusetts.

In January, Isaac received news of the death of his father, Johnson G. Bantu, who was killed when he and several others were caught in fighting that erupted in Nimba County in northeastern Liberia. Rebel forces under Charles Taylor controlled the area and were attempting through bombing to frighten citizens into joining a special people's militia. Due to the difficulty in getting medicines and proper care, Mr. Bantu died of his wounds. He was 65 years old and was a deacon with the Mid-Baptist Church in Nimba County. ■

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Two Fellows From Early Nieman Classes Are Dead

Edward M . Miller and Volta Torrey, members of two of the World War II Nieman classes, have died. Miller, of the class of 1942, died in a Tualatin, Oregon, hospital on February 16. At 89 he was believed to have been the oldest living Nieman Fellow. Torrey, of the class of 1940, died last November in Palo Alto, California, where he had lived since his retirement. He was 87.

EDWARD M. MILLER

Ed Miller was born, reared and educated in Oregon and spent most of his working life on The Oregonian. Following graduation from the University of Oregon in 1926, he became a reporter on the paper, specializing in automobile and travel writing. In 1933 he became Sunday Editor. After his 1941-42 year at Harvard as a Nieman Fellow he was promoted to Assistant Managing Editor. In 1965 he was named Managing Editor, a position he held until his retirement at the end of 1970.

"Ed Miller was probably the most innovative newspaperman I have known," Robert C. Notson, who as Editor of The Oregonian named Miller as Managing Editor, said. "His enterprise developed and maintained the quality of The Oregonian. He was eager, pleasant and loyal. His humor eased many stressful periods. He inspired the best in others."

William A. Hilliard, the present Oregonian Editor, noted that "Mr. Miller was always open to the ideas of others. He had humane qualities that endeared him to the entire newsroom."

His journalism awards included one in 1970 from the Associated Press Managing Editors for developing and writing a newsroom management guideline.
In addition to his journalism, Miller worked to develop the Portland Zoo. He was a member of the commission in 1957 when the new Portland Zoo was built and was instrumental in building the Zoo Railway.

In a letter to the Nieman Foundation, his daughter, Patricia Rein, said that for the family the Nieman Fellowship "was the proudest and most prestigious award" of his life. In addition to Mrs. Rein, Miller is survived by his second wife, Charlotte, and his son, Edward A. ■

VOLTA TORREY

Volta was an editor with a special interest in science. Volta, named for the inventor of the battery by his father, a distinguished electrical engineer, was born in Eddyville, Iowa. On graduating from the University of Nebraska in 1926 he joined the staff of The Lincoln (NB) Star, soon going to The Omaha World-Herald. Like many editors of his day he moved often. After a turn at The Chicago Tribune, he edited features for The Associated Press in New York, then went to The New York Herald Tribune and the experimental newspaper PM.

His interest in science led to a 12-year-assignment at Popular Science. In 1951, he became Editor of Popular Science, after holding the post of Managing Editor for many years. Torrey joined the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1956 as Director of Television in the News Office. In 1959 he became the 10th Editor-in-Chief of MIT's Technology Review, a job he held until 1966. The space administration lured him to Washington to be publications manager of its Technology Utilization Division. In 1976, Torrey retired from NASA to devote himself to freelance writing and editing.

A past president of the National Association of Science Writers, he received in 1969 the Charles L. Lawrence Award from the Aviation/Space Writers Association. He contributed to Atlantic Monthly, Saturday Review, Physics Today and other magazines and was the author of "You and Your Congress," many government publications and "Wind-Catchers: American Windmills of Yesterday and Tomorrow," published in 1976.■