

# NIEMAN REPORTS

THE NIEMAN FOUNDATION AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Vol. XLVIII No. 4 Winter 1994

FIVE DOLLARS

## Judgmental Journalism



### The Lace Curtain

Gender Bias in the Media – The Other Side of the Story

By Armin Brott

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

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

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AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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# Focusing Our Values

*For Journalists, Values Are Like Stars to Sailors—We May Not Be Able To Touch Them But We Are Lost Without Them*

*Following is the text of Bill Kovach's speech at the National Press Club in Washington October 27 on the occasion of the presentation by Pennsylvania State University to Nieman Reports of the 1994 Mellett Award for media criticism.*

Nieman Reports came into being as a result of a leak. It was launched on February 1, 1947, in anticipation of the publication of the final report of the commission on freedom of the press—the first national commission to systematically study the American press. Because the commission's study had been funded by \$200,000 of Henry Luce's money, it was to be first published in his own *Fortune* magazine.

But, one member of that commission was the Harvard scholar and poet Archibald McLeish, the first Nieman curator in 1938. He gave an advance copy of the final report to Louis Lyons, his successor.

Among other things, that commission deplored the fact that there existed no regular mechanism by which the behavior and work of the press could be critically examined and discussed—so Louis Lyons and his Nieman Fellows created Nieman Reports. Although he wasn't able to use the leak to beat *Fortune* into print, Louie was able to use the new publication to begin a critical assessment of the commission's work.

In the first issue he also described the Report as a publication with "no pattern, formula or policy except to seek to serve the purpose of the Nieman Foundation to promote and elevate the standards of journalism...." Nieman Reports, Louie Lyons believed, could

serve the purpose of the foundation by stimulating debate on questionable standards and practices in journalism.

In that spirit I would like to talk tonight about some present standards and practices in American journalism which I believe are in need of attention, discussion and debate. One is journalistic, the other economic.

Let me deal first with the journalistic trend to encourage in the newsroom a broader and much more aggressive adoption of the values of entertainment—urgency, brevity, celebrity, action and conflict—in the organization and presentation of information which may have neither a necessary narrative line nor an immediately recognized drama.

Since the Dead Sea Scrolls were written, great stories of courage in adversity, news of important events, personal profiles, adventures, legislative hall and courtrooms were all fashioned with these tools of story telling. But much of the information which citizens of a self-governing democracy demand and require from their news providers today do not lend themselves to such treatment.

By constantly trying to remake journalism into an entertaining medium of information we buy ever more deeply into the notion that the *form* is paramount—*content* secondary; into the notion that a thing is or is not newsworthy to the extent it has those attributes. In television this is expressed in the question: "what's the picture in it?" It has become the first and last question in discussions of whether a story is worthy of the nightly news.

This attitude accounts for the torrent of attention paid the O.J. Simpson murder case. Coverage which pushes out of newspapers and off of radio and televi-

sion hundreds of other reports. It has already helped minimize coverage of the mid-term national elections.

This focus on immediacy presses us to rush to judgment on complex issues—to oversimplify, misunderstand, or even fail to see important trends.

The kind of trends Gene Roberts, Managing Editor of *The New York Times*, calls news that oozes—like the white flight to the suburbs. Or the dangerously seething black and white alienation in Los Angeles which exploded with such violence in the beating of Rodney King and its aftermath.

This compulsion to scratch the itch of immediacy makes journalists lousy carpenters. At their best journalists construct windows through which the citizen may see and understand the world.

Breathless journalists in a hurry build windows which distort as often as they clarify—the kind of windows from a carnival house which show a failed and then a resurrected candidate and President Clinton several times over in confusing sequence. It is as if there is no memory of the danger of early rushes to judgment by which history warns us. No memory of, say, Harry Truman. Propelled, stumbling and confused into office, he compromised with Russians then opposed the Russians. "Over his head in foreign policy," everyone muttered, journalists loudest of all. But before his first term ended, he had put forward the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan—two policies which shaped the world for the next three decades.

Entertaining news imposes a narrative line on every story pushing simple, straight reporting further and further into the margins of journalism. The

*Continued on Page 11*

# Judgmental Reporting

*Across the Land Writers Are Going Beyond Objectivity  
And Analysis to Express Their Feelings*

BY JOHN HERBERS

**D**uring the great Southern racial struggles of the 1960's, the late Homer Bigart filed a story in which he wrote that the courthouse at Philadelphia, Miss., where the sheriff and staff were accused in the kidnaping and murder of three civil rights workers, was surrounded by "rednecks and peckerwoods." According to local community beliefs the crowd was instead made up of irate citizens out to protect their sheriff from undue "outside interference."

Bigart, one of the great reporters of this century, was in the waning years of his career and liked to play games with his New York Times copy editors who had ironclad rules—often maddening to reporters—on what was not fit to be printed in *The Times*. But the story was on deadline. Some sentry fell asleep at the switch and Homer's mischievous characterization got into the first edition, causing an uproar in the newsroom. The next edition carried blander, more *Times*-like language.

Now, move ahead 30 years to the present. Assuming the same circumstances, including the raw racism that so offended Bigart and the absence of a "redneck" lobby to claim unfair treatment, it is not unlikely that his language, star reporter that he was, would have gone through all editions without a ripple.

Bigart's description was no more gratuitous than language that appears daily on the front pages of newspapers across the land under the guise of objective straight reporting, to say nothing of the gush of opinionated "news" that flows constantly from television.

Judgmental journalism is welcomed

by many reporters because it gives them freedom of expression they never had under strict standards of objectivity. In the 1970's, a prominent editor, frustrated by lack of imagination and dullness in the daily report, was heard to remark that he welcomed the rare copy that sounded as if there was a real person at the typewriter. The new freedom certainly accomplishes that objective, whatever the consequences might be.

Since the 1960's American journalism has undergone a sea change, of which "judgmental" reporting—the move beyond analysis into allowing reporters to inject their own feelings or exercise narrow selectivity of subject matter in much the same way that has long been standard in sports writing—is one aspect.

A major reason for the shift to judgmental reporting after many years of holding to the ideal of objectivity in most news is obvious. Newspapers and news magazines are having to serve a generation of people raised on the visual images of television who do not like to read, have short attention spans and are easily bored by long renditions of serious events, no matter how crucial those events might be to society. In constant competition with television for audiences, many editors feel compelled to challenge television head-on: make the news shorter, punchier, less ambiguous, entertaining and, if needed for extra spice, opinionated.

News writing is now far different from what it was earlier in this century when long, stodgy columns of gray type



*John Herbers, Nieman Fellow 1961, was the national correspondent for The New York Times before his retirement in 1987 and previously was the paper's deputy chief of the Washington bureau, assistant national editor, and a reporter covering national politics, the White House, the civil rights movement and social trends. He also taught journalism at Princeton and the University of Maryland, was a columnist and a writer for Governing magazine and is currently a member of the National Commission of State and Local Public Service.*

were in vogue for papers of record, which felt obligated to print everything related to government and public proceedings and to do so with as much objectivity as could be achieved. Much of this was a reaction to the flamboyant journalism of prior years when news stories were routinely shaped to support editorial policy or an editor's biases.

The ideal of ultimate objectivity, however, began to change in the 1950's when the news writing establishment found itself manipulated and embarrassed by the late Joseph R. McCarthy. The papers repeatedly printed his charges of Communists in high places, most of which could never be proven, in the news columns without evaluation. McCarthy was a United States senator whose charges commanded attention and it was not considered the responsibility of the news media to employ objective reporting to determine whether innocent people and institutions were being maligned. That was the duty of the editorial page, it was believed, even though the editorials of many papers were not widely read. The result was that McCarthy was able to create widespread fears of subversion.

The chief device for correcting the omissions of straight news reports became the news analysis, which was pioneered by such respected journalists as James Reston in *The New York Times* and Robert Donovan in *The New York Herald Tribune* and later in *The Los Angeles Times* and which soon became standard fare in most papers. The news analysis attempts to put the event being reported in perspective, to explain what an event means in the larger context, to illuminate the background of how it evolved and explain what may be ahead. But never, never should it become personal or lapse into partisan opinion. The sharp differences between straight news, analysis and opinion were not always clearly understood, even by many editors and reporters, but by and large the discerning reader was able to sort out the events of the day with some clarity.

As television became increasingly dominant, newspapers found new ways to lighten their reports and be more

entertaining. One device was the style section, now a regular feature of most papers, which joined the sports section in allowing writers to go on at length about personalities and put in whatever they wished, short of libel, about their subject matter. And they became more and more dependent on the news analysis, allowing more analysis in the regular news columns if a separate analysis did not go with it.

More recently, newspapers turned to "judgmental journalism" in all types of general news—politics, government, the environment, business, racial and ethnic matters, the justice system and so on. Newspapers may now well be more interesting and compelling, even more enlightening and informative, in the view of some editors and publishers. But they, along with the runaway television news and tabloids, are drawing a barrage of criticism that the news analysis and the style section never did.

Typical was the comment by Jerry Lubenow in a column in the July edition of *Public Affairs Report* published by the Institute of Governmental Studies at the University of California in Berkeley. Singling out Maureen Dowd of *The New York Times*, Lubenow wrote:

"Disdaining the big picture, Dowd and her imitators search out the seemingly insignificant detail. They let the tic tell the story.... In Rome before the D-Day celebration, Dowd seized the opening ceremony to skewer Clinton as a draft dodger: 'The salute gave it away, of course. Where there should have been snap there was only chagrin.' In Oxford afterward, she lacerated Clinton with her lead: 'President Clinton returned today for a sentimental journey to the university where he didn't inhale, didn't get drafted and didn't get a degree.'... Everything she writes is hard-edged and opinionated. A gifted columnist, she belongs on the op-ed page, but her editors no longer recognize a difference between news and opinion."

In the same vein about another aspect of judgmental journalism Lubenow took on *The Washington Post* for allowing excerpts of Bob Woodward's new book, *"The Agenda,"* to appear in the news columns richly detailing important events in the White House without

naming his sources but warning that some of those involved might not remember saying what he said they said.

Harsh criticism has come from scholars and some journalists. A prominent opinion is that news writers and broadcasters turned loose to say what they please overly stress the negative aspects of their subject matter, some projecting their own neuroses onto public officials. Pack journalism, despite its well documented flaws, is still with us, particularly in Washington, and the negative approach spreads rapidly.

Along with this has come a marked change in the role the news media plays in shaping public opinion. For too long much of the press reported changing public attitudes and the causes of change without mentioning what influence journalists may have had in the process. Now that the press is being widely accused of helping create the current widespread public cynicism toward government and politics, newspapers, magazines and broadcasters are using news space and time to examine the charges.

*The Washington Post* recently carried a long article on how the highly paid "talking heads" on television, many of them print reporters, are being pressured to express strong opinions on issues and officials whether or not they hold such opinions. It is frequently those with the most outrageous opinions that are the most rewarded in both audience and money. The television talk shows have become so prominent in Washington that they exert a strong influence on what goes into the content of news reporting.

*The New York Times* prominently displayed an article saying there is "a new critique of journalism today that is being embraced by critics from the left and the right, from academia and from some in the working press itself." And it focused on what is worrying journalists the most, that negative journalism "may be undermining its own credibility." Kathleen Hall Jamieson, dean of the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, was quoted as follows:

"Journalists are now creating the coverage that is going to lead to their

# The New Journalism Of the 1960's

Tom Wolfe of The New York Herald Tribune decided in the mid-60's that traditional journalism had become "retrograde, lazy, slipshod, superficial, and, above all, incomplete—should I say blind? in its coverage of American life."

As described by Richard Kluger in his book on The New York Herald Tribune, "The Paper," Wolfe invented a prose style "of utter distinctiveness, shifting restlessly back and forth in time and place to gather dimension and perspective as he traveled, absorbing images in multicolored flashes, dialogue in all its often inarticulate inanity, and a surfeit of physical particulars that were both vivifying and inferentially judgmental. His writing indulged in every device the language offered—gratuitous punctuation, insistent italics, dashes and ellipses like traffic signals on the freeway of his thoughts, a picket fence of exclamation points, repetition for emphasis, sometimes appositives, mock-heroic invocations, arch interjections, rocketing hyperbole, antic onomatopoeia."

own destruction. If you cover the world cynically and assume that everybody is Machiavellian and motivated by their own self-interest, you invite your readers and viewers to reject journalism as a mode of communication because it must be cynical, too."

Public opinion polls show considerable distrust of the news media. In September the Times Mirror Center for the People and the Press released a survey that showed 71 percent of Americans believe the press "gets in the way of society solving its problems." Of course, the press has never won a popularity contest and probably should not if it is to do its duty to the public. But something new is involved today. In the past most condemnation of the press has been in relation to the content of

In describing this new form of writing, Wolfe said: "The idea was to give the full objective description, plus something that readers had always had to go to novels and short stories for: namely, the subjective or emotional life of the characters."

In his book "The New Journalism," Wolfe explained how he applied the fiction-writer's point of view to non-fiction, "entering directly into the mind of a character, experiencing the world through his central nervous system throughout a given scene." Thus, in the lead of his profile of "Baby Jane" Holzer, a model and actress married to a real estate mogul, Wolfe portrays the scene of a Rolling Stones concert from Baby Jane's eyes:

Bangs manes bouffants beehive  
Beattle caps butter faces brush-on  
lashes decal eyes puffy sweaters  
French thrust bras flailing leather  
blue jeans stretch pants stretch  
jeans honey dew bottoms eclair  
shanks elf boots ballerinas Knight

editorials, columns and what it chooses to cover. Now there is confusion and anger about how the news columns are written or the evening news presented.

Some journalists believe that judgmental journalism, if allowed to continue, will drastically change the relationship between editors and reporters. The reporter who writes judgmentally will make more decisions about what to cover and about what kind of sources to listen to. Editors will be left to make general assignments and decide how stories are to be played.

To use a dark metaphor, television in recent years has been in the minds of some critics a black hole pulling newspapers into its orbit and the papers seem powerless to resist. Tom Rosenstiel described one chapter of this process in

slippers, hundreds of them these flaming little buds, bobbing and screaming, rocketing around inside the Academy of Music Theater underneath that vast old moldering cherub dome up there—aren't they super-marvelous!

Traditional reporters and editors ridiculed Wolfe and other New Journalists, such as Hunter S. Thompson, Gay Talese and Truman Capote. How could a writer know what was inside the heart and head of a person? The reply was shockingly simple: ask that person. In other words, do more reporting. Record their gestures, mannerisms, gait, dress, habits—symbols of their relationships to people and to their possessions, anything that demonstrates how they view their status in the world.

Despite the criticism, the New Journalists had a tremendous effect in freeing newsrooms from the straight declarative style and inverted pyramid organization that made newspapers so dull. ■

the August 29 edition of The New Republic. He asserts that because of the round-the-clock broadcasts of hard news by CNN, editors felt that to survive they had to offer something different and moved toward interpretation and opinion, along with the evening news programs of the other three commercial networks. As with so many developments in journalism this soon became a trend that took off.

However one feels about judgmental journalism, there is one bright spot in all this. It is that so many journalists long indifferent to the criticisms heaped upon them are at long last doing some soul-searching and accepting some responsibility for the public cynicism that has increased in the nation. ■

# Expert Journalism

*Portland, Maine, Newspaper Reframes the Idea of Objectivity  
To Bring Readers More Forceful Interpretive Reporting*

BY LOU URENECK

What if the crisis of confidence in the media grows not out of a paranoia about whether the media leans left or right but rather out of a rejection by the public of the detachment with which the press regards the problems of society and the concerns of ordinary people?

As the discussion over the place of reporters' viewpoints in the coverage of news heats up again, it is worth considering that what the press needs today is more context and insight, not less, and that context and insight inevitably bring with them the exercise of subjectivity. Serious and successful attempts at finding the right way to bring the perspectives of reporters into the news columns are producing an exciting and useful journalism in newspapers around the country. It is taking many forms, from the expression of studied judgments by reporters about issues to franker, more pointed sketches of public figures. There have been problems, to be sure, and they need to be understood. The challenge to the public-minded press today is to find ways to accommodate the ever-present need for fair and dispassionate inquiry and the new and growing need to generate energy, meaning and solutions for the benefit of a society that has grown apathetic to civic participation.

The likelihood that the press more often fails readers through timidity than bias has led us at The Portland (Maine) Press Herald to experiment with another level of coverage in our news report, one that encourages reporters to explore wider latitudes of analysis, interpretation and judgment in the news columns. This new layer represents only a fraction of the stories we publish, and

we continue to build the news report from the fundamental day-to-day coverage of events with straightforward, hard news reporting. Yet, the response from our readers to the new work has been strong and positive. Often it is where they see the value of the newspaper. It has helped us develop a newfound sense of our ability to make a difference for the better in the life of our state.

Our most recent foray into this new style of reporting sought to understand the plight of Maine fishermen who have seen their catches decline dramatically in recent years. The project, in its methods and its results, offers a good illustration of the work we are trying to

achieve. The project began when a team of reporters and editors brought to the newspaper office about a dozen people who have a stake in Maine's fishing industry: fishermen, wholesalers, federal regulators, marine scientists and environmental activists. They were asked to talk among themselves about the state of the resource in the Gulf of Maine, once one of the richest fishing grounds in the world and now an exhausted corner of the North Atlantic. How bad was the fishery and what had caused the decline?

In minutes, the conference room where they were gathered burned with disagreement. Fishermen blamed sci-



*Lou Ureneck, on leave from his position as Editor and Vice President of The Portland (Maine) Newspapers, is the 1994-95 editor-in-residence at the Nieman Foundation. During his year at Harvard, he will seek to better understand what the practice of history can teach journalism about the role of point of view in chronicling and explaining events. Ureneck also is the incoming chair of New Media and Values Committee of the American Society of Newspaper Editors.*



entists for exaggerating the depletion of fish stocks and destroying their livelihoods and communities; environmentalists blamed fishermen for taking unsustainable amounts of fish from the ocean; scientists blamed regulators for making decisions without good data; regulators blamed the government for lack of support for fisheries management.

And so it went for six hours.

But for the journalists in the room the conflict they were witnessing was not the story. What use would it be to readers? The conflict was a stalemate and its only product was acrimony. For this project, conflict became a starting point, not a destination. It was the first step in an arduous process of research and understanding that culminated three months later in a five-part series that reported these conclusions:

•The Gulf of Maine is commercially depleted of its most valuable fish species, and the federal government is largely to blame. Through favorable tax changes and credit incentives, the government had encouraged investors out of the region (doctors, lawyers) to form companies that built big boats that took big profits from the sea.

•The depletion is so complete, and the regulatory system so stymied, that the offshore fishing industry is being wiped from the coast of Maine. To stem the disaster, the government is likely to get stuck buying back the boats it had enticed the wealthy investors to build.

Now what was remarkable about the newspaper series, beyond what it had to say about the fisheries and how the government operates, is that the reporters who were writing it refused to settle on a story about conflict and disagreement among opposition groups. They were not going to write a story that said scientists and regulators say this while fishermen and environmentalists say that. Instead, they were empowered by their editors to immerse themselves in the topic and draw their own conclusions about what had gone wrong and to share those conclusions with readers.

Like other newspapers around the country, some large and some small, The Portland Press Herald has been

To ascertain the bare facts or factors, sometimes a difficult job in all conscience, is only the first stage of [the historian's] work: If he is to give an intelligible account, if he will to his own satisfaction understand, he must use his material by choosing from it, ordering it, and interpreting it. In doing so he is bound to introduce an element of subjectivity; that is, he will tamper with or detract from the absolute, unchanging truth....The most that we can hope for is a partial rendering, an approximation, of the real truth about the past.

—Pieter Geyl

*"Use and Abuse of History."*

publishing stories in recent years that challenge traditional notions of objectivity in which fairness is achieved by quoting all parties that have standing within the circle of the issue and by keeping the text free of assessment or evaluation by the reporter. The new stories, generally in-depth pieces that go well beyond the basic enterprise story, call on reporters to submerge themselves for months in the topic and form judgments that can be expressed emphatically as conclusions about the performance of public figures, policies or institutions. These pieces state their conclusions up top without attribution from officials or authorities and rely on the body of the story to develop the evidence behind the conclusions. Often the evidence to support the conclusions comes from original research into database records and can not be attributed to an official because officials are not necessarily aware of the information.

In Portland, we usually reserve this technique for mature stories, issue-oriented stories that have had a long run in the paper, where the push-and-pull of debate in the daily coverage has not clarified matters for the public, and an independent and in-depth look at the topic is needed to help readers evaluate information and touch bottom on the validity of competing claims and charges. We have looked at the state's business climate and found it to be healthy, certainly much better than de-

scribed by the Maine Chamber of Commerce, which was mounting a heavy lobbying effort to rollback environmental laws. We examined a development moratorium approved by city residents to protect the Portland waterfront and found that it, instead, had hastened the disintegration of that part of the city by discouraging private investment. We looked at the decline of civic leadership in Portland and found that it was due in part to large corporations buying up local banks and businesses and replacing them with carpetbagger management.

Perhaps our greatest success came two years ago when we examined the state's workers' compensation system. Workers' compensation in Maine, as in other states, was conceived as progressive legislation to protect workers against serious injury or pay them if they were injured and to protect employers against lawsuits when injuries occurred. In Maine, the law had evolved to pad the pockets of lawyers and others who could exploit the system. The law failed to protect workers from injury and death and punished businesses with huge premium costs. Attempts to reform the system repeatedly bogged down in disagreements over the extent of fraud, generosity of benefits and statistics that described the danger of Maine's workplaces. In 1991, state government in Maine actually came to a halt as Republicans and Democrats, surrogates for business and labor, held up the state's budget over a workers comp reform effort.

In this climate of confusion and anger, a reporter for The Press Herald, Eric Blom, undertook an in-depth look at the system and wrote a powerful series of stories that contained his own conclusions, carefully reached and painstakingly tested by editors over four months. It was our first major project of this sort, and we called it expert reporting because we had asked our reporter to become an expert on the topic and draw independent conclusions based on his research. We asked him to report to readers in simple and direct language.

The series began this way:

"The Maine workers' compensation

system is a disaster. It wastes millions of dollars each year. It destroys employer-employee relationships. It distracts the state's attention from other vital issues."

The series went on to show Maine's shameful rate of workplace injuries and death, the practice of blackballing injured workers and the unreasonable costs that saddled businesses, even safe ones. It showed how expert witnesses and lawyers, some of whom were involved in writing the law, made millions of dollars from employer-employee legal battles.

The reaction from readers was quick and gratifying. They found the material understandable in its directness. The reporting created a picture of greed and confusion that rose above the contending he-said, she-said quotes of earlier stories. The series began a process that ultimately led to reform of the system, and today worker-injury rates are down in Maine and costs to business are declining.

We have also made mistakes as well. We learned early on that a project that dismisses the contentions of some sources because research has shown them to be weak or irrelevant needs to explain the reasoning process that led to that judgment in the published story. Otherwise, it appears as a hole in the work, or as arrogance. It also opens the possibility that the story, rather than the topic, will become the issue.

Without question, this technique of reporting raises difficult questions for newspapers. What qualifies a reporter to undertake a project of this sort? How much time and research is needed to develop the expertise that underpins the authority of the stories? What is the role of the editor who directs the project? And perhaps most important of all, what effect will this type of work have on the credibility of the newspaper among its readers? All of these questions need thoughtful consideration and discussion, and no newspaper that wants to do this kind of work should rush them.

In Portland, we have developed guidelines to help editors and reporters through the process of reporting, testing and writing the material. We see six prerequisites: (1) the impartiality of the reporter at the start of the project

(2) adequate time to master the story (3) thorough research (4) strong editing to test the fact selection and reasoning (5) continual evaluation for a sense of proportion and judgment (6) a note to readers explaining the nature of the project. We follow each project with extra space for letters and guest columns that are packaged as a response to the stories.

When we undertake a project, we are especially attentive to researching and reporting dimensions of the topic that often get short shrift in typical enterprise stories: the validity of assertions by various sources; the relevance or significance of what they are saying to the issue; the relationship of disparate events or pieces of information; what is not being said but is important; and the resonances of people and events that can not be reduced to empirical data. Clearly, all of this requires degrees of interpretation that are not found in most news features. However, it is the final dimension, the one I call "resonance," that is the most difficult for reporters to handle successfully and certainly the most difficult for editors to manage. Often it is the flash-point in discussion of the new reporting. It generally goes by the name of Maureen Dowd of The New York Times.

Dowd's ability to see personal idiosyncrasy and turn a phrase is a delight to those who follow her work from Washington. Dowd's skill derives from her sensibility, her knowledge of her beat and an acute sense of observation. Of course, the Maureen Dowds come along rarely. Only a few reporters can legitimately enter this territory. Dowd is not the only member of the staff who has more liberty to express her views and her style. The New York Times, with its depth of talent, regularly displays its willingness to give reporters room to connect and characterize events. Its readers get a rich and textured report as a result. Other newspapers show an openness to reporters' viewpoints as well. The Wall Street Journal encourages reporting that has a perspective on the news. This lead, for example, appeared on a Page One story in mid-September 1993 and previewed the content of the Clinton health-care pro-

gram: "President Clinton's ambitious health-care proposal promises to rely on the unseen hand of the marketplace, but its real power stems from the strong arm of the government." No shyness about interpretation in that news story. The Christian Science Monitor, long a proponent of solution journalism, trusts its reporters to suffuse its news columns with interpretive judgments, and The Miami Herald often ends its investigative series with prescriptions for solving public problems. Perhaps no newspaper is more closely associated with this technique than The Philadelphia Inquirer through the investigative team of Donald Barlett and James Steele. Their work in the series, "America: What Went Wrong," which strung together the economic events of the 1980's into a narrative that explained the loss of manufacturing jobs in the U.S. through mergers, acquisitions and plant closures, is a classic piece of point-of-view reporting supported by extensive research.

An informal survey among my Nieman colleagues also found a willingness among the news organizations represented at Lippmann House this year to draw the viewpoints and judgments of reporters into in-depth news articles. The response from Chris Bowman, a 1994-95 Nieman fellow who covers the environment for The Sacramento Bee, can stand for many of the thoughtful comments from the Nieman: "The rapidly escalating bombardment of information from television news and magazines shows, from cable, from radio, from the on-line personal computer services presents a growth opportunity for newspapers. It may not show up on the readership surveys but I believe the dizzying array of soundbites and megabytes has created a large, unsatisfied need for journalism that makes sense of it all. But it takes courage and an adjustment of newsroom values." Bowman, like other Nieman who responded to my survey, was cautious about the use of interpretive writing in daily hard news stories. "But there comes a time," Bowman added, "as with the owls vs. jobs story in the Pacific Northwest, when the story becomes a ping-pong match. Newspapers can actually perform a public

# Expert Reporting Coaching Sheet— A Guide to Press Herald Reporters

**E**xpert reporting is a technique for examining difficult issues involving public figures, public policies and institutions or private companies and associations in which the public has an interest. Expert reporting is a technique generally employed after a story has matured. It requires a reporter to master complex information, to evaluate that information for the purpose of reaching conclusions and to state those conclusions in clear and emphatic language. Expert reporting answers questions: Does this system work? Has this policy achieved its objectives? Is this organization being managed effectively, and in the public interest?

1. The effectiveness of expert reporting depends on thorough research and the reporter's ability to evaluate information. This means becoming familiar with important information and significant interpretations of this information before reaching conclusions.

2. The reporter should be prepared to draw conclusions based on an evaluation of information. They should be logical conclusions drawn from the information collected and analyzed. Discussions between reporters and editors are essential before conclusions are reached. Editors play an important role in asking questions and challenging conclusions.

disservice by limiting the reporting to opinions from opposing camps or offering the only-time-will-tell analyses. The reporter should stop and ask, what about this industry argument that protections for the spotted owl are leading to the demise of the sawmill workers?"

All of this interpretation has not gone unnoticed by press watchers, of course. Doubtful voices are being raised. This is healthy. A press that seeks to interpret needs scrutiny and benefits from it. "The shift to greater subjectivity on the news pages," the magazine, *Media Critic*, complained, "is one of the most significant developments in the news media.

3. Arriving at conclusions and stating them clearly and forcefully are vital. Conclusions must be expressed in clear and straightforward language. The evidence supporting these conclusions should be presented clearly and logically. The writer's goal should be to present a line of evidence that stands up to counterarguments.

4. The subjects examined by expert reporting will be controversial, and the conclusions of the reporter sometimes will be targets of criticism. It is important to anticipate such criticism. Significant arguments against the conclusions of the expert reporter should be summarized, and evidence refuting these arguments should be presented.

5. The reporter should be careful not to allow stories to bog down in exchanges of opinion. The goal of expert reporting is to cut through the rhetoric and show readers where the weight of the evidence lies.

6. Expert reporting must be careful to preserve the distinction between conclusions and opinions. Generally conclusions are drawn from factual evidence; opinions are a mix of facts and the predispositions and values of the writer. ■

It may help explain recent survey data indicating that more and more Americans think media organizations slant the news and cannot be relied upon to provide factual accounts." Not all reporters accept the new approach, either. In Portland, some reporters are uncomfortable with a forward role on an issue and others lack the confidence to assert judgments. They prefer letting "experts" on the outside draw the conclusions—and the fire.

Clearly, the new reporting touches a nerve of orthodoxy—objectivity. The debate over objectivity is an old one and stretches back, if not to the penny

press of the 19th Century, certainly to the philosophical father of the objective-scientific model, Walter Lippmann. But it is important to recall in this regard that Lippmann's view of the public was that it was incapable of governance, and that management of society belonged to an intelligent elite who would be kept in line through fear of the publicity spotlight of the press. "The purpose of news," Lippmann wrote, "is to signalize an event."

Dissatisfaction with Lippmann's vision in one form or another has been a recurrent theme since he articulated it. In an article in the *Kettering Review*, James Carey, dean of the College of Communications at the University of Illinois, put the matter succinctly:

"We have inherited and institutionalized Lippmann's conception of journalism, and the dilemmas of journalism flow, in part, from that conception. We have our new order of samurai but they turn out to be what David Halberstam acidly described as the best and the brightest. We have a scientific journalism devoted to the sanctity of the fact and objectivity but it is one in which the hot light of publicity invades every domain of privacy. We have a journalism that is an early-warning system but it is one that keeps the public in a constant state of agitation or boredom. We have a journalism that reports the continuing stream of expert opinion but because there is no agreement among experts, it is more like observing talk-show gossip and petty manipulation than bearing witness to the truth."

Perhaps the greatest reaction to the press as the signalizer of events came following the excesses of Joseph McCarthy, which were dutifully and uncritically recorded by the press.

It was after the exposure of McCarthy, writes J. Herbert Altschull, that a powerful demand arose for interpretive reporting. "The idea of social responsibility promoted by the Hutchins Commission joined forces with the idealism of the postwar generation of journalists and scholars, led by Curtis MacDougall of Northwestern University, in a campaign to end the practice of blind objectivity and turn instead to more explanatory writing."

In the aftermath of McCarthy, and into the 60's and 70's, several reactions to news coverage as a flat stenographic report emerged. Altschull has inventoried nine of them: enterprise journalism, interpretive journalism, new journalism, underground journalism, advocacy journalism, investigative journalism, adversary journalism, precision journalism and celebrity journalism.

The type of journalism that I have been describing represents an eclectic mix of existing forms with elements that are new. It often rings with the mission of investigative reporting and develops the depth and detail of enterprise reporting but it opens new ground by making judgments, as Don Barlett of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* puts it, based on the "weight of the evidence." It applies the search for answers, which in investigative reporting tends to focus tightly on law breaking or blatant malfeasance, to broad questions of the performance of public officials, policies and institutions. It also breaks the bonds of enterprise reporting by getting beyond the whipsaw of competing quotes that are so often put in stories to create the perception of balance. The new reporting, which actually counts the early muckrackers as its predecessors, works harder at making a point that the reader can grab than giving all parties to the dispute equal space in the story.

What to call it remains a problem. Our newsroom has not been entirely comfortable with the label "expert journalism" (perhaps for reasons that Professor Carey would have anticipated). One editor suggested we call it "immersion journalism." Some have included it under the tent of "public journalism." But whatever its name, it clearly fits with Altschull's description of the new forms as a reaction against the commonplace press standard of the journalist as mirror.

Behind this more subjective, or activist, approach is the power of information put into a framework of perspective and context. In a sense, it represents a strain of reasoned and informed argument and therein lies its appeal as a kind of provocation to act to solve, or at least debate, problems. Beyond informing readers it can serve a dialectical

purpose: it puts forward a set of conclusions that can spark alternatives. Christopher Lasch, the historian and social critic who died earlier this year, made the important point that the public needs argument to develop an appetite for information.

Information, Lasch said, is the byproduct rather than the precondition of debate. "If we insist on argument as the essence of education, we will defend democracy not as the most efficient but as the most educational form of government, one that extends the circle of debate as widely as possible and thus forces all citizens to articulate their views, to put their views at risk and to cultivate the virtues of eloquence, clarity of thought and expression and sound judgment. From this point of view, the press has the potential to serve as the equivalent of the town meeting."

Its shortcomings notwithstanding, the concept of objectivity keeps a powerful hold on the public imagination and the conventions of news writing. Any idea with as much staying power as objectivity deserves not to be understood too quickly—let alone disposed of. At a minimum, it is an important reminder that reporters should not begin stories with preconceived judgments about the material. Objectivity can be properly reframed as a call to rigor and integrity in the processes of reporting and reasoning. Clearly, in the public mind, factuality is an element of objectivity, and ultimately its judgment of the media. The first test of what is read or seen must be whether it is accurate and sound. But what is less clear, because the concept of journalistic objectivity is indistinct and undefined, is the degree to which Americans evaluate the performance of the media based on adherence to certain newsroom protocols of objectivity and the enforcement of emotional and intellectual distance from the subjects that they cover. So while it is no great risk to assert that Americans want newspapers that are fair and impartial in their coverage, the data on media perception may be telling us something other than what the critics of a new subjectivity have inferred.

Take the enigmatic results of the poll

by the Times Mirror Center for The People and The Press released in September 1994. It found that 71 percent of Americans felt the news media got in the way of solving society's problems. Yet a strong majority had a favorable view of daily newspapers (79 percent) and network TV news (68 percent). The poll respondents put daily newspapers third from the top of a long list of political figures, public institutions and social movements, behind only the military and the Supreme Court. To me, this suggests that the public maintains a reservoir of goodwill for the concept of a free press in the life of the nation but simultaneously harbors deep disappointment about the way the press applies itself and its influence to move the society forward to solve its problems.

This, to me, is the point that is missed so frequently by those who look to marketing solutions to revive newspaper readership. The marketing people intuitively, and correctly, sense some disconnection between readers and newspapers, some lack of synchronization on what readers want and what appears in the newspaper. So they design surveys that bring answers to their questions, not the questions of readers. The results are better television books, more color and zippier entertainment sections. These are all good things for newspapers, and they can be circulation builders, but lost in the process is the recognition of the power of lining up resources and energy behind what the public sees as the core and defining purpose of newspapers, which is to inform the public so that it can function in a democratic society. The best marketing plan is quality content in a newspaper that engages the mind and imagination of its community.

All of which is to suggest that flat or declining newspaper circulation around the nation may be a sign of the public's rejection of a press ethos that puts institutional caution or parsimony ahead of the courage and skill it takes to find new ways to bring clarity, force and reader appeal to the tough stories, the ones that need to get written.

If indeed readers would prefer a press that is more actively engaged in problem solving, or in explaining events and

issues in terms that allow readers as citizens to understand and solve problems, then newspapers need to craft news reports that convey meaning as well as fact, insight as well as events. And the one figure who is key to this kind of journalism is the well-informed reporter. A newspaper's decision to adopt a more interpretive approach to the news must be followed by a commitment to developing the research and analytical skills of reporters.

The debate needs to shift away from whether Americans need more or less objectivity in their newspapers to a better understanding of what it means to provide readers with accuracy, relevance and utility. Let's posit fairness and impartiality as the platform on which all parties to the debate can stand and

move ahead to figure out how the press can better create understanding about why many schools fail to educate children, what is wrong and what is right with the nation's health-care system and what that suggests about reform and how to account for the bulging population of our prisons.

As Seymour Topping, former director of editorial development for The New York Times Co. Regional Newspapers, wrote while he was president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, "There is agreement in our profession that the press has furnished enough facts. The question at issue is whether the press has provided the understanding of what those facts mean to enable the citizenry to cope with the problems confronting them." ■

## Kovach

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tyranny of narrative on a subject best told by simple description or accounting often entices us toward disinformation.

Consider a decade of reporting on the epidemic of drug use in the United States. I know of no editor in the United States who believes that the production of drugs in Latin America or Southeast Asia is the root of our drug problem. Yet virtually all of these editors have followed the politically inspired decision to make eradication of crops and destruction of drug cartels the story of drugs in America largely because it provided the kind of "story line" that produces Tom Clancy thrillers. The energy and resources devoted to this "more interesting" story were denied the more difficult flaws in our own society driving drug usage. Everyone knows of Pablo Escobar—do you know the drug lord in your city? And an ill-informed public accepts a politics of easy answers and flawed policy; public frustration and despair continue to grow.

Another example. How about the way the escalating costs of television advertising forces candidates for office to sell themselves to the special interests in order to raise enough money to run an effective campaign? An issue

leading to consideration of government allocation of TV time to candidates. All the elements to make a dull accounting story "sing." The story line is so potent it persists today even though an extraordinary analysis of the 1992 campaign by Dwight Morris, Investigative Research Editor of The Los Angeles Times Washington bureau, showed conclusively that advertising of all kinds represents only 25 percent of the average campaign budget. Raising money 365-days-a-year is the biggest cost of running for office.

The newsroom's surrender to the values of entertainment has another increasingly dangerous manifestation—the creation of newsroom celebrities. Supporters say it "gives reporters a personal voice;" others call it "reporting with an attitude." However it is defined it seems to confirm the German philosopher Hegel's conclusion that a driving force of human nature is the desire to be recognized.

As the "Funniest Home Videos" and the "Capital Gang Show" depressingly attest, people will do almost anything in order to call themselves to the attention of others—to be recognized.

In a candid admission to Howie Kurtz

of The Washington Post of her appearance on "Capital Gang," Margaret Carlson admits, "the less you know about something, the better off you are."

Journalists on television—as was once said of courtiers in old Vienna—have elevated the business of seeing and being seen to the purpose of their existence.

And, as these celebrity journalists aspire to be policymakers on television or in government, this tendency will grow and become more damaging to the usefulness and credibility of the press.

But the fundamental danger in the pressure this surrender to the values of entertainment create is that it threatens to eliminate objectivity from the lexicon of journalism. Objectivity, with its demand that the journalist not be influenced by prejudice or emotion or assumption, is often at odds with the demands for "a good story line" or the need to be recognized.

So the argument is abroad in newsrooms around the country now: objectivity is absurd. "We all know there is no such thing as objectivity. All of our decisions are subjective, so why try to fool the people. Let's just be honest."

Even scientists know absolute objectivity has yet to be attained; just so absolute truth. But objectivity as a discipline for their work, as the guiding principle of their procedures, is too valuable to be abandoned. Without it the pursuit of knowledge is hopelessly lost.

The same is true of journalism in the interest of a public which must decide its own collective fate. Do we give up the principle of free speech because we know some people censor themselves? Journalism in the interest of entertainment or market share surrenders objectivity—as a discipline for its work. It is a journalism with no contract of any value with its audience; nor of any use to a democratic system.

As the pressure grows to experiment with the values of entertainment a new compulsion enters the newsroom—to try just one more technique that might brighten the "product," attract a new category of reader—or, better yet, a

new category of consumer. A single example will stand as a metaphor for this trend: the appearance in the newsroom of what some call the "editor for new media," more commonly called the "t-shirt editor," whose job is, in part, to create a graphic page layout that will also be commercially successful as a t-shirt the day of publication.

Which brings me to the economic trend I believe needs urgent attention, discussion and debate. A trend set in motion by the revolution in communications technology that reduces all forms of communication—oral, written, pictorial—to a collection of 0's and 1's. The technological fact that all forms of communications are the same has had important economic consequences which should be of serious concern for journalism.

The economic organization of corporate journalism is now moving toward the vertical integration of communications in all its forms. Time-Warner is the model.

This reconfiguration of corporate structure of media corporations is bringing new strategic partners together by the day. Partnerships which take the corporation, once entirely journalistic, further and further away from the values of the newsroom—if for no other reason than that the newsroom is not a determining factor in the decisions of a company that sees an opportunity to fill the world with 500 paying channels of information.

How this affects the behavior of corporate journalism is becoming painfully clear—not just in terms of newsrooms as profit centers—but also in more pernicious terms of news blindness. A news blindness that an ever-skeptical—even cynical—public does not fail to see.

There is in Washington today a fierce struggle among communications corporations, including media-based corporations, over how the new world of computerized communications will be organized, regulated. These decisions will decide who will make money on the emerging systems, who will be served and how.

The last time such an event occurred was when radio came into public use

after World War I. When it was first being developed the universal expectation was that radio brought the world the perfect device for cultural and educational enlightenment of the people. Universities, schools, churches, civic organizations, labor unions, farm groups, all organized to use the radio for just those purposes. The first radio stations produced just such programming.

As political decisions began to be made organizing and regulating the radio spectrum—"the public's airwaves"—a consortium of economic interests moved in and shaped the system to favor an advertising-driven, entertainment medium at the expense of the original public affairs broadcasting. That pattern has only grown stronger with the years.

A similar process is underway in Washington today, following the same pattern but enormously more important both in its economic impact and its potential impact on public affairs journalism.

But where is the press in this story with such important social and economic implications for each American as a citizen, as a consumer? The press treats the story almost entirely as a business story handled by the business department where the social and political implications are secondary to economic considerations and seldom assessed, expressed or investigated.

Business editors know that where billions are at stake there is an enormous lobby at work. They also know, or should know, that media corporations—often including their own companies—are deeply involved in the lobbying. But where are the stories? Where are the journalists probing on behalf of the public interest and their citizen-consumers?

A couple of recent incidents should make clear the danger to journalists embedded in the system and why they should be concerned for the continued health of public affairs journalism.

There was the report of The Miami Herald's Washington bureau reporter who asked a member of Congress where he stood on a bill affecting regional Bell companies. The congressman responded: "are you asking as a reporter

or as a representative of a special interest?"

Then there is the incident earlier this month of lobbying by The Washington Post Corporation and Cox Communications for a special licensing designation from the FCC and a special provision in the GATT legislation to protect that designation. Editorial writers were vigorously pushing the legislation with no notice of their vested corporate interest.

There are rational explanations for the editorial department's ignorance of the parent corporation's behavior. And there are logical economic explanations for the parent corporation's behavior. But an already cynical public is not likely to buy those arguments. Covering any other industry, would a skeptical reporter?

There may be a fatal threat to public affairs journalism in the vertical integration of a media corporation. Journalism is different from media.

Just as digital technology mixes all forms of communications into the same form, media mixes all values. This ossifying effect makes it impossible to separate one value from another.

The pressing economic concern of the media turns the activity of the newsroom into a profit center; turns citizens into demographically attractive or undesirable consumers; turns a story into a vehicle for personal recognition. Self-reference journalism encourages self-service journalism.

Some of these tendencies were discernible to the Commission of Freedom of the Press in 1947. They warned that, as the importance of communication increased, its control was coming into fewer hands; and press practices were such that society might be justified one day in taking control from them "for its own protection."

They saw the emerging problem. They had studied it for years. But they had few suggested solutions—a point on which Louie Lyons commented in his analysis.

"The commission comes to a sticking point," he wrote, "how to protect the public right to access to truthful information is a complex question.... But the commission should not be judged by

failure to find the cure. Its value is in alerting the public...."

Needless to say, I'm no match for a \$200,000 commission and I don't have any solutions. But I would like to try to point to what might be a useful direction for serious and sustained discussion and debate and research for those fearful for the future of public affairs journalism. Let me address them in reverse order—economic first, journalistic second.

According to the recent national poll by The Times Mirror Center for the People and the Press, 70 percent of Americans believe the work of the press stands in the way of efforts to find solutions to society's problems.

Think of that. An institution so vital to a democratic society it is granted specific protection in the constitution in order to provide the information upon which those citizens can solve their problems is judged to be the problem itself. It's like an old joke come true. The one about the surgeon and engineer and journalist discussing which was the oldest profession:

The surgeon said: "Clearly I do. In genesis the Lord took Adam's rib and made Eve. That was the first surgical procedure."

"No, no," the engineer said, "the first line of Genesis is: 'God created heaven and earth making the world out of chaos—that was the work of an engineer.'"

The journalist smiled and asked: "who do you think created the chaos?"

Anyone who has been in a newsroom or spent any time with journalists knows that journalists at all levels share much of the public's frustration with their work.

I believe it has a lot to do with the world of uncertainty we are all trying to maneuver these days. The post cold war world in search of an organizing concept to make a lot of otherwise senseless things make sense. A revolution in international communications creating a disorienting babble of new voices.

And an internalization of economics which challenges political order to accept the rule of the free market.

A rule by which currency traders challenge national government's control of

their own economic policies.

It is the same rule of the free market which is dictating the economic decisions of the media corporations and creates the pressures I have outlined on the journalists embedded in those corporations. The overall ability of the free market to generate economic benefits and personal security are too well demonstrated to challenge.

But we decided long ago that some activities are too important to leave to the will of the free market. We will not, for example, let the free markets destroy our banking system. It is too important. There are many things we protect from the forces of a completely free market.

Octavio Paz, the 1990 Nobel Laureate in literature, spoke of how he trembled when he contemplated the threat posed by surrendering all values to that of what he called the "faceless, soulless and directionless economic process." "The market, blind and deaf," he continued, "...does not know how to choose. Its censorship is not ideological; it has no ideas. It knows all about prices but nothing about values."

I would argue that the system which provides a democracy the information by which it organizes its life and society is too important to be left to a value-blind marketplace.

I would argue that a strong, independent public affairs journalism in the interest of the citizen is too important to be shaped and guided by the free market.

What economic models exist that would circumvent the market I do not know. As a member of the board of directors constantly striving to keep National Public Radio on the air, I know that neither government subsidy nor public subscription is the full answer.

But I do know that the human mind is endlessly resourceful and that there have to be other ways to organize a public affairs press. I do not believe the problem lies in a dearth of possibilities. I believe the problem lies in the absence of a serious inquiry; a broad and active debate and discussion.

To stimulate such a debate and discussion is one of the paramount goals of our work at Nieman Reports.

And our journalistic values? I believe the journalistic value of distance—objectivity—is our only true protection from disappearing into a mindless world of entertainment and distraction.

The virtue of this principle was described long ago much better than I can ever state it. So let me just quote Thucydides commenting on writing "The Peloponnesian War" in the Fifth Century B.C.:

"With regard to my factual reporting of...events...I have made it a principle not to write down the first story that came my way, and not even to be guided by my own general impressions; either I was present myself at the events which I have described or else heard of them from eye-witnesses whose reports I have checked with as much thoroughness as possible. Not that even so the truth was easy to discover: different eye-witnesses gave different accounts of the same events, speaking out of partiality for one side or the other or else from imperfect memories....And if these words of mine are judged useful by those who want to understand clearly the events which happened...My work is not a piece of writing designed to meet the taste of an immediate public, but was done to last forever."

Maybe we journalists do, as Ben Bradlee has said, write only history's first draft. But our citizens act on that draft, however flawed and incomplete; the future is organized by that first draft; history itself is shaped by that first draft. Isn't its pursuit and preparation worthy of the principles of a Thucydides?

And I'll repeat the phrase I read or heard somewhere and adapted for the sub-title of this speech: values for journalists are like the stars to sailors—we may not be able to touch them but we are lost without them. ■

# Double Platooning Sports

*Beat Writers Can Continue to Comment Freely on Games;  
Straight News Reporters Deal With Issues*

BY DAVE SMITH

Each employee at The Dallas Morning News is evaluated on his or her anniversary. As part of that process sports staffers are asked to evaluate the sports section. This past year, there was a constant in discussing the sports section: "We need to make the section more fun."

And so it is with many sports sections today. Sports has become a serious business with a focus on money, scandals, labor problems, drugs and injuries. Because so many serious issues have become a routine part of sports coverage, many writers and editors treat the games with the same serious approach.

As one colleague told me the other day, "There is no lack of serious journalism on the sports page. The fall should be the happiest time of the year for a sports editor with football, World Series, basketball, hockey...you name it. Yet, the sports section is full of labor problems, strikes, lockouts, rape of the month, NCAA investigations. We do not lack serious topics."

How true this is.

And yet Bill Dwyre, the sports editor of The Los Angeles Times, reminds us, "We cannot get too serious. These are games...entertainment."

Once upon a time, sports was almost always fun. And it was fun covering sports. Unfortunately sports is now a serious part of a serious society. It has become part of our "life is earnest, life is real" attitude. It is definitely time to put the fun back in the sports section.

First we must separate the issue, such as labor relations, criminal trials and cheating, from the games we watch and play.

We need to remember when cover-

ing a game or a tournament that this is sports. And we need to make it entertaining. The writer should have freedom in his or her game story.

Why not poke fun at the way Andre Agassi dresses? Or describe how foolish a certain NBA player acts during the game? And why not zing the football coach who rants and raves on the sideline during the game?

The sports writer is a celebrity, and the fans develop a relationship with the writer. For example, the baseball writer who covers the local professional team is well known by the readership. And when the fan picks up the sports section he or she wants to read how the writer saw the game...what the writer thought of the outcome. Opinion? Perhaps. Commentary? Why not?

Listen to talk radio. People call in because they want that opinion. Who was the better golfer—Jack Nicklaus or

Arnold Palmer? Is Dean Palmer a lousy fielder, but a great hitter? Did the Cleveland Indians make the right trade? Should Jim Harbaugh start at quarterback? This discussion is what sports is all about. After all, Monday Morning Quarterbacking is what makes sports so much fun.

Of course sports talk is different from covering the NCAA investigation. Or writing about the labor negotiations in baseball.

And herein lies the problem.

Coverage of issues must be handled in the same manner that the Metro reporter covers a city council meeting. Straight. And if the baseball writer clearly favors the players union in the labor struggle, that writer should not cover the negotiations. This is the time to bring in another writer, perhaps from the business section.

*Continued on Page 15*



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# Lizzie Borden and O.J. Simpson

Reporters and editors seem to learn their lessons slowly, if at all. At the famous Lizzie Borden murder trial a century ago the press behaved much as it has today in the coverage of the O.J. Simpson case—sensational charges, overblown play, paying of sources.

*Smish continued from Page 14*

Will the reader feel that the beat writer, who covers Auburn on a daily basis and is given license to drop in commentary or opinion in a game story, is given the same freedom in handling the investigation story?

This is the dilemma.

Another example is the sports media critic. On many papers, this writer covers the industry news and at the same time writes a column.

Is this troublesome? Often it is.

In the good old days, many columnists would write both the lead and a column on the same event. But that was an event.

Today, many sports editors are struggling over the idea that beat writers also write columns on their specialty sport. Again the lines become blurred for the reader. Can a reporter report news and also express opinion? Yes. But should this exist? Probably not.

Baseball writers are covering the labor situation in baseball and at the same time writing baseball columns. And many of those columns are opinions about the labor problem.

Is this wrong?

As one Managing Editor told me, "This would never happen in the Metro department."

But should it happen in the sports department?

The easy and politically correct answer would be to eliminate all opinion from sports stories and limit opinion and commentary to columns. Columnists write columns. Reporters cover news. Feature writers write features.

But should sports editors take this stand?

The appeal to the public in both trials was based on the vicious killing of two people, elements of sex and jealousy and the absence of any witness to the crimes. While Simpson was a prominent national personality long before his arrest, Lizzie Borden, the daughter of a prominent banker in Fall River,

In my "opinion" the answer is a quick, firm and aggressive "no way!"

However, editors must draw the line. The specialty columnist, who also reports, should be restricted to columns that deal with on-the-field play, coaching strategy and the like. These columns should not include opinion of the serious issues that come up on the beat.

The objective force here is the editor sitting on the rim. This person can tell when a story goes a shade too far. And even the game stories must be controlled. While we are granted freedoms in sports game stories that are not granted in other news stories, we cannot be self indulgent.

When all is said and done, we must be cautious. We must play it straight with the reader. Label the things. If the story is an analysis, label it so. If it is commentary, say so.

Editors and publishers also must recognize that serious side of sports is exploding out there. This is the time we need the investigative reporters, business and labor writers and other specialists in sports departments. These people should be covering the issues. And leave the games to the sports writers.

NBA Commissioner David Stern constantly complains to sports editors that the basketball writers don't understand labor negotiations, labor laws and the like. He stresses that newspapers should have labor and legal specialists covering this side of sports. It is hard to argue with that.

And, yes, seriously, these are my opinions. Call it commentary if you must. ■

Mass., did not become a public figure until after the murder of her father and stepmother. Nevertheless, both crimes provided the curious public a look behind the facades at the troubles of the wealthy establishment.

So competitive were newspapers that after the inquest a Boston Globe reporter with the unbelievable name of Henry Trickey paid a private detective \$430 for copies of affidavits from 25 "new witnesses." The startling testimony, occupying the center of page one and an entire page inside on October 10, 1892, reported that "Lizzie had a secret." She was pregnant by her Uncle John. When her father discovered her secret, a quarrel followed and then the murders. In its rush to publish The Globe checked none of the names and addresses of the "witnesses." They were non-existent. The next day The Globe apologized on page one. A few days later Trickey died in a train accident in Canada.

The Borden attorneys never sued The Globe, a fact that Louis M. Lyons, former curator of the Nieman Foundation, attributed to the attorneys' preoccupation with their defense, noting:

"And the whole area was full of sensational stories—none such a whopper as The Globe's, but enough to keep defense counsel on edge."

While Lyons, in his history of The Globe, "Newspaper Story," says that The Globe was lucky to escape ruin, it suffered no setback. Within three weeks it published the largest edition ever put out until then by an American newspaper—627,270 copies the day after the November election.

The Globe's exclusive was one of the few newspaper stories that did not openly sympathize with Lizzie Borden. Throughout the trial she was treated tenderly, in contrast with the rhyme that is still recited 102 years later:

Lizzie Borden took an axe  
And gave her mother forty whacks.  
When she saw what she had done,  
She gave her father forty-one.

Perhaps that rhyme is the reason for the misapprehension today of the outcome of the trial. Lizzie Borden was found not guilty. ■—rhp

# A Voice for the Voiceless

## *The Case for a Television Program That Provides Only One Side of a Story*

BY ELLEN SCHNEIDER

Three Korean American women document the impact of the Los Angeles riots from the perspective of Korean shopkeepers, but no African Americans are interviewed. A community group in Chicago traces its efforts to expose police brutality, but no officials are asked for their side of the story. A previously institutionalized woman in San Francisco critically tackles the subject of women and madness, and seeks no rebuttal from mental health professionals.

In each of these television programs, articulate and frequently invisible Americans have been given an opportunity to tell their own stories in their own words. The perspective of these storytellers is not only clearly subjective, but also unique. Each program posed real dilemmas, added new layers of complexity to the sketchy characters we see on the evening news, and had the potential to humanize pressing issues around us.

The broadcast of programs like these also raises some tough questions for journalists.

Should television always attempt to be balanced? Are television viewers intelligent enough—and do they have enough time—to draw from a range of conventional sources and clearly identified points of view to draw their own conclusions? What benefits, responsibilities and risks are inherent in the broadcast of subjective public affairs television?

As co-executive producer of *P.O.V.*, the only national television series I know of where independent points of view are favored over objectivity, I look forward to a future when passionately argued, far-reaching, diverse perspectives

are widely available to television audiences.

Choosing, positioning and presenting these films is tricky. Every year my colleague Marc Weiss and I have the difficult task of selecting works from over 500 independent producers—some highly trained, others venturing into production to tell a specific story, many committing years of their lives to bring their ideas to the public arena. And our five-person staff works year-round to lay the groundwork for only 10 episodes. But as news becomes increasingly entertainment-oriented, as sound bites shrink to mere slogans, and as niche programming further isolates viewers, I'm convinced that these testimonials of our time can dramatically

enrich and enliven the public sphere.

I'm not talking about extending the 60-second "My Turn" editorials on the local news or the two-swivel-chairs-and-a-plant approach of public access channels. I'm advocating the expansion of in-depth, provocative public affairs programming, produced by individuals with deeply held convictions about, or a stake in, an issue. New broadcast venues and delivery systems give us an excellent opportunity to celebrate our First Amendment and to better inform the public. Why not support the natural storytellers and articulate stakeholders who are often superficially reported on, but rarely permitted to speak for themselves?



*After graduating from Antioch College in 1979, Ellen Schneider worked on independently produced documentaries for public television and educational distribution. A brief phase in development of reality-based movies-of-the-week for Hollywood sent her running back to non-commercial television. She was a member of the start-up team for the Congressionally mandated Independent Television Service, which funds innovative and diverse independent productions. In addition to co-producing P.O.V., she is Executive Producer of E.C.U.: Extreme Closeup, a highly subjective video diary series in final stages of development. She readily acknowledges that she has written a subjective article and hopes that readers will respond: povonlin@aol.com.*

## 'Chewing Your Tears:' Case Study

Little in the P.O.V. program *Sa-I-Gu* (presented on public television in September 1993) resembled the majority of television accounts of the 1992 L.A. riots. The opening tracking shot captures a familiar South Central boulevard, but the camcorder image shakes a bit. Rather than cutting to the ubiquitous footage of stores on fire (they'll show up later), we see a melancholy middle-aged Korean American woman sitting in an armchair in front of a formal portrait of a young man. The image cuts to the young man's funeral, as a heavily accented voice-over explains that 18-year old Edward Jae Song Lee was the only Korean to perish in the melee when he was mistaken for a looter. The camera moves in on the mourners, but then pulls back to reveal a crowd and a sign reading, "We grieve together as one family at the loss of our brave son."

The program made no attempt to present a "balanced" perspective on the human toll of racial conflict. Made by producers Christine Choy, Dai Sil Kim Gibson and scholar Elaine Kim, it invites viewers to listen in on candid, often bitter, discussions within a community. Every P.O.V. program opens with an interview with the filmmakers. In this case, professor/producer Kim explained their motivations for picking up a camera: "The three main media images of Koreans before, during and after the riots were: one, of a Korean shopkeeper shooting a black teenager in the back of the head from a store videotape...two, screaming, begging crying, yelling, inarticulate...mostly female shop owners who were begging people not to destroy their stores...and three, the footage shown over and over again of Korean, mostly male, merchants on the roof with guns, apparently ready to shoot anybody."

Speaking strictly for themselves, the women interviewed in *Sa-I-Gu* provide a context for understanding the lives of immigrant merchants in South Central Los Angeles. Some reflect on their now-dashed hopes for *Mi Gook* ("beautiful country," as the U.S. is known in Ko-

rean), some describe their struggles with language and business etiquette ("My children's father always told me to put the change in their hands. Even just one soda—put it in a brown bag"). Others reveal racist attitudes about their neighborhood ("It did not feel like America...I thought it was Mexico").

Their opinions are neither refuted nor put into context. No experts from minority groups are invited to offer their analysis of the situation, little historic information is provided. But perhaps for the first time, audiences heard the unfiltered testimony of a community so focused on pursuing the American Dream that the shock of watching it go up in smoke resulted in a collective rage and spiritual crisis. The program's moody tempo, Kim Gibson told me, was influenced by *han*, Korean for "a long sorrow turned inward...chewing your tears and your sighs inside, not ever letting it happen on your face, but never abandoning hope."

The critical press responded positively to the broadcast of *Sa-I-Gu*. From *The Washington Post*: "a passionate point of view piece." *The Los Angeles Times* declared it "a powerful new film." The National Asian American Telecommunications Association (NAATA) which "promotes better understanding of the Asian/Pacific American experience through film, video and radio" publicized the broadcast to its community and reported an enthusiastic response. As far as we know, the broadcast did not, as some predicted, inflame passions in communities experiencing African American/Korean American conflict (although we prepared a few major market stations for the possibility). I would be surprised if it triggered an avalanche of letters to Congress echoing one interviewee's demand for reparations. More likely, *Sa-I-Gu* achieved what the producers intended: to "add a missing voice to the dialogue," and offer a new layer of awareness of the complexity of contemporary race relations.

## No Pink Slip For Peter Arnett

I'm not suggesting that first-person or judgmental accounts replace conventional broadcast journalism. But when clearly labeled as espousing a point of view, when the perspectives of the producers are honestly defined, when the information is verifiable, subjective television provides the public with a level of passion and authenticity unavailable to "objective" newsgathering.

Sound familiar? Daniel Hallin, author of *We Keep America on Top of the World: Television Journalism and the Public Sphere*, reminded me that during the American Revolution, and continuing through the end of the 19th Century, journalists frequently crusaded for political causes, mobilized readers, popularized ideas and actively formed public opinion. Later, the quest for objectivity guided most modern reporters until "personal" or "advocacy" or "interpretive" journalism styles intervened in recent decades. Yet during his entire life span, broadcast journalism has bent over backwards to balance its approach to issues; as a result it has narrowed the range of voices heard and homogenized perspectives.

Although letters to the editor and magazine essays are commonly accepted as important elements of a responsible fourth estate and a democratic society, many find "ordinary" people editorializing on television considerably harder to swallow. I've heard the concerns of many of my colleagues: that television is more manipulative than print; that images are more powerful than the written word; that, unless viewers tune in from the very beginning, they might accidentally stumble across a subjective piece, take it out of context, and be misinformed or tricked.

But when we're honest with our viewers, openly subjective television sends an important, direct message: that the mere broadcast of video images and accompanying audio doesn't imply absolute authority, that every story is shaped by someone's perspective. Identifying a distinct point of view helps to demystify television, encouraging more

critical viewing and a healthy skepticism toward any claims of complete objectivity. It also forces us to remember that behind all "issues" are real human processes and consequences.

What are our responsibilities as programmers of subjective work? P.O.V.'s criteria are simple but familiar. An advisory group helps spot the exceptional work and weed out the unfairly manipulative. We insist that the producers have full editorial control of the program, and that the funding sources did not compromise or influence content. We fact-check when necessary, and provide all required documentation for our lawyers and insurers. We never make changes without the producer's permission. We look for a diverse range of opinion (not easy to find, given the anti-establishment motivations that fuel many independent producers, but we're looking). We tend to gravitate toward compelling, human stories that shed some light on the world around us and permit a deeper understanding of one way to look at a story. Not the only way, not necessarily the "correct" way, but from a sincere, well-argued position.

### Talking Back

Putting subjective stories on a medium with little history of letting non-professionals speak without interpreters can be provocative—in the best sense of the word. To maximize P.O.V.'s potential to stimulate a robust exchange and to underscore the grassroots nature of the work, we urge our viewers to challenge our programs and offer their own points of view.

We've created some modest but promising mechanisms to encourage this public conversation. We invite viewers to submit "video letters" to a feedback segment. Teenagers, Christian fundamentalists, disgruntled filmmakers and grateful supporters are among those who have turned their camcorders on themselves and spoken their minds, and many have wound up on national television. (One New Mexico resident who didn't own her own video camera went to Sears and taped her commen-

tary in their Small Appliance department.) We ask for letters and e-mail messages, and receive hundreds every season. This year we went on-line with 10 live post-broadcast interactive forums through America Online, and experimented with electronic conferences for viewer "discussions" that continued well after the broadcast.

For example, the program by the formerly institutionalized filmmaker generated a steady stream of e-mail, frequently from women who had had similar experiences. "I do need a sisterhood to give me hope to hang in there....works like [this film] give me hope—that I am not alone," commented one. Another wrote: "...most of the women [in the film] seemed to have experienced the mental health system in a very negative way. Not all of us have, and many of us have educated ourselves so we can have some control over how we are treated." Many addressed their comments directly to the filmmaker; some, on a special electronic bulletin board, to each other.

This public response has reinforced our conviction that most intelligent, discerning viewers can watch television in much the way that they use any media in a democratic society: to be consumed, absorbed, weighed, questioned, discussed, critiqued, applauded, shot down, disputed and contemplated. We, as public affairs programmers, have a unique opportunity to broaden the public's exposure to different opinions, voices and ways of seeing the world.

Just before Sa-I-Gu went on the air, I received a phone call from a young Korean American who had seen the film at a university screening. She was disturbed, she said, that viewers would think that all Korean Americans were like the women in the film. "Maybe some people in my parent's generation think like that, but a lot of us second generation Korean Americans see the problems as far more complex." I asked her if she was suggesting that the program not be aired. "Oh no," she asserted. "There's never been anything on television that comes from our community. You've got to start somewhere."

She's right. ■

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# 'Erase the Hate'

## *USA Network Gets Positive Response From Campaign Confronting Intolerance and Violence*

BY KAY KOPLOVITZ

Responsible media cannot ignore the increase in violence and intolerance in our society. As fragmentation along social, ethnic, and economic lines has fed fear and misunderstanding among people, cries have come from all sides for solutions, and calls have come for those in a position of possible influence to "do something" about these problems.

For myself and my staff at USA Network, a chance to use our influence in a positive way first came to us in the form of a wonderful script and movie for our continuing "USA World Premiere Movie" series. This movie ignited a strong desire to in some way be a part of the solution to America's current crisis of violence and hatred. As this feeling took hold, one of the first questions that occurred to me was: how will the news media, which have always been so quick to judge the entertainment industry for what they perceive as inattention to morality or too much violence, receive socially relevant programming? I believe that what I learned in seeking the answer to this question is instructive in our understanding of the media's role in attempting to deal with society's problems, and in what can be done by all of us who work in this incredibly diverse and far-reaching field.

"Silent Witness: What a Child Saw" was a movie produced for USA Network by Hearst Entertainment. This film dealt with the difficulties many young people currently encounter in a world filled with gangs and guns. Besides being entertaining, the movie resonated deeply within all those who saw it. It suddenly seemed obvious that we were in a position to say something positive about what many in this country see as

a decline in values and an increase in violence. Almost immediately, the "Erase the Hate" campaign was born.

"Erase the Hate" was conceived as an 18-month media campaign including public service announcements, anti-hate themed episodes of our original series, similarly themed network IDs, as well as an incorporation of the "Erase the Hate" message into marketing materials and the "Cable in the Classroom" program. The centerpiece of the campaign would be our first "Erase the Hate" special, a one-hour program written and produced by members of our programming staff.

"Erase the Hate" had its premiere telecast, in prime-time, on August 25 of this year to overwhelmingly favorable reviews. The program focused specifically on young people who have found positive ways to combat the bias, preju-

dice, and hate they face in their everyday lives. Topics included gang violence, anti-semitism, homophobia, and peer counseling as a method for reducing fear and intolerance. The quality of this program surpassed my highest expectations of what could be achieved in a one-hour television special.

Groups and individuals profiled in "Erase the Hate" included Gangs for Peace, a Los Angeles-based group comprised of many former members of L.A. Gangs; Camp Rising Sun, which recruits an ethnically and culturally diverse group of youngsters to learn realistic ways to work for peace and harmony; Project CURE and the Crown Heights Youth Commission, a program developed by an Hasidic educator and a Baptist Minister in the wake of the Crown Heights race riots; and, Facing History and Ourselves, a national orga-



*Kay Koplovitz founded USA Network in April 1980 and has served as its President and Chief Executive Officer since its inception. A cable pioneer, Koplovitz was the first to negotiate national cable rights for major league sports. Prior to her career at USA, Koplovitz was Vice President and Executive Director of UA-Columbia Satellite Services Inc. In 1993 she received the International Crystal Award from Women in Film for her achievements in film and television. A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of Wisconsin, she also holds a master's degree in communications from Michigan State University.*

nization that educates young people based on the premise that history's worst chapters can repeat themselves if hate is not understood and confronted. The work of organizations was described through telling the personal stories of various members. For instance, the opening segment on Project CURE told the story of Yudi and T.J., an Hasidic Jew and an African-American who were brought together by the community leaders who started the group. Both of these young men overcame considerable fear and prejudice to achieve a new understanding of human relations.

While the airing of "Erase the Hate" was a very significant moment in the more than decade-long history of USA Network, in many ways it was only the beginning. On a company-wide level, the "Erase the Hate" special kicked off our year-and-a-half long campaign. On a personal level, the special and the media reaction it garnered brought up many vexing and complicated questions. As the CEO of a major cable network which does not have a news department, I feel I have a unique "outsider's" view of what could be done by this country's journalists when addressing our deepest social problems. Also, as someone who has jumped into the fray with a documentary and campaign such as "Erase the Hate," I feel that I am now somewhat of an "insider" in this world as well.

What, indeed, should we be doing to confront the hatred, violence, and intolerance that are on the rise in our society? What sort of changes can we realistically expect our efforts to affect among the general population? According to Federal Bureau of Investigation statistics, an estimated 120 U.S. children under the age of 18 are slain every *month* as a result of gunfire. The numbers have risen dramatically over a very short period of time. In fact, the number of children killed by gunfire has doubled in only the last five years for which we have statistics, 1987-92.

In light of the alarming upswing we have seen in senseless and hate-related crime in this country, what should we expect from a television special, or an evening newscast, or from the editorial pages of our nation's newspapers? We

assume that simply by discussing the issues in public we are somehow contributing to the solution, but how can we be sure that we are inspiring anyone? Why do we assume that images on a screen or words in a newspaper can lift idle members of our audience (and ourselves) out of passivity? It is tempting at first to project a direct cause-and-effect relationship from the basis of a well-meaning program and campaign, but I soon found myself wondering whether I could back up with concrete facts my hopeful assumption that I am a contributor to the solution.

I recently found some answers through two different experiences. Initially, I was discouraged by the press reaction. Despite a special advance mailing of review cassettes and press releases, I was distressed to find that the New York media had completely ignored "Erase the Hate." I am still unsure as to why these outlets that are usually so eager to review our programming chose to pass on this special. I wondered: is commercial television built solely for entertainment, or can we educate? I soon became encouraged that the latter was possible. The rest of the national press had not ignored "Erase the Hate." The Chicago Sun-Times gave "Erase the Hate" four stars. The Hollywood Reporter could find no flaw with our program. Across the country, I could not find one review which was not overflowing with praise. More rewarding than this response, however, have been the letters and phone calls steadily streaming in from viewers across the country.

Letters from children enrolled in an alternative school in Tallahassee; from a Neighborhood Watch Block Captain in Eureka, Calif.; from the Department of Justice in Philadelphia; and, most of all, from teachers and counselors across the country. All of them expressed gratitude for our airing of this program and were eager to obtain copies of "Erase the Hate" for their classrooms. All of them asked for more information about and addresses of organizations profiled in our special. The feeling one gets from reading these letters is the heartfelt concern and hopefulness of so many of our educators in this country.

A teacher at Midland Freshman High School in Texas reported "more and more gang activity spills over from the community into our school" and felt that "Erase the Hate" could be instructive in her new conflict management class. An English teacher from Napa, California felt our program would be "perfect" as the centerpiece of her new class on racism, prejudice and hate. A St. Louis high school teacher said our "excellent" program would be "very helpful in teaching students to be more tolerant of each other." The hope expressed by these educators who have taken the time to create classes to teach young people tolerance is an inspiration to me. That USA Network has at least acted as a catalyst to inspire action from so many concerned citizens gives me hope as well.

As the letters and phone calls continue to come in and as we expand our plans for the next phase of the "Erase the Hate" campaign, I feel absolutely convinced that socially conscious journalism is effective, and more specifically, that we all have a responsibility toward the young people of this country to address this nation's largest problems. We must step back from the sensationalism that seems to be overtaking so much of the media's coverage of current events and begin to think about how we can all contribute to ensuring a safe and peaceful future for our children and grandchildren.

When television does step aside from commercial programming and takes a positive step toward focusing on a major societal problem, when it presents to viewers across the country how this malaise can and is being solved, it deserves your attention and support. We must understand the far-reaching influence we in the media possess, and we must report and program as if the future of this country depends upon it—because I have come to believe that in many ways, it does. ■

# People's Way With People

*This discussion of how People magazine handles articles and pictures on personalities was held at the Unity conference of minority journalists in Atlanta in July.*

## LONDON Y. JONES JR.

Managing Editor of People magazine

Personality journalism, to me, is the journalism of compelling human interest. It is often thought of as synonymous with celebrity journalism, but I see it slightly different because, at People, we don't simply cover celebrities, we cover people who are not famous. And we tend to cover them more or less the same way as we cover the celebrities.

But certainly it's true in 1994 that personality journalism and some aspects of personality journalism, tabloid journalism, have become the most dominant and most controversial aspect of journalism today.

We started People in 1974, and we like to think that we more or less invented or legitimized the notion that we could apply professional journalistic scrutiny to the personal, if not private, lives of well known people. Prior to that, the only well known people who were subjected to intense and professional journalistic scrutiny were movie stars. That was typically done in fan magazines.

At People we applied the human interest techniques in learning about where people lived and what they thought and about their families, their houses, their backgrounds and parents. All of which now seems ordinary feature journalism was new and we expanded it beyond movie stars into poli-

tics, into sports and then — certainly as we've all seen very lately — it's expanded into crime.

Two things have happened since 1974 and largely because of People's success. People, today, has a circulation of 3.15 million. We have about 33 million readers. And our success has made us the most profitable magazine in the world. It has not gone unnoticed by other journalists.

Now almost every magazine you can think of practices some form of personality journalism. Movie stars sell. Magazines I never thought I would ever see put a star on the cover—all of them do it now.

And the other thing that has happened is that the definition of celebrityhood has broadened further. No longer do we think that only movie stars are celebrities. All forms of journalism are covering it and expressing an intense interest in the private lives of well known people.

The most recent trend has been the truly amazing entry of television into this field. Not too long ago, the only TV shows that were practicing anything close to the form of personality journalism that People practices were shows like Good Morning America or The Today Show. You heard variations of it in the afternoon talk shows. In the last five years — beginning prior to that with shows like Entertainment Tonight — all of these news magazines and prime time reality programming have essentially made that a dominant form of television entertainment. It's one that's very cheap to produce.

The unfortunate result has been sort of a decline of standards. My main concern is that journalists are finding it increasingly difficult to define our stan-

dards of acceptable behavior: What is right to cover? What is wrong to cover? And how do we make that distinction? Who is talking about how we make that distinction? You don't hear too many people talking about it and that's a great concern to me.

Because of all the outlets, because of all the television shows chasing celebrities, because of all the magazines chasing celebrities, essentially it's a supply and demand situation. There are more and more people chasing fewer and fewer stories. When that happens the price of the story goes up. When the price goes up, the dollar value goes up and so has checkbook journalism. You pay for access to a star or you pay for access to photos. That also drives down standards. If you compromise on standards, you have a better chance of getting the story.

The internal debate about People is how to find and practice high quality journalism. Our goal is always to be completely accurate, to be completely fair, to communicate broadly across all the areas of our readership about all stories that we cover. We do not pay for any stories. We will pay for photographs, because we have to pay photographers.

We do not allow any anonymous pejorative attacks on people within the pages of our magazine. I wouldn't say we don't use paparazzi, but we're really careful about how we use photographs that are given to us by paparazzi, and particularly those that may be invasive of a truly private situation, say involving children, or where someone's home is or when someone is engaged in a really private activity. We're very careful about how we treat children in the pages of the magazine.

We have a responsibility in our role as something like a market leader. If we don't establish standards, it's not clear to me who will.

### **TERRI WILLIAMS**

Terri Williams Agency

I started my company about seven years ago and primarily focused on entertainers. Eddie Murphy was my first client. I've represented Miles Davis, Anita Baker, Martin Lawrence, Wesley Snipes—we recently signed Sally Jesse Raphael. In the business arena, we represent Russell Simmons, the 35-year-old chairman of Rush Communications who has been responsible for the commercial success of rap music. In sports, we represented Jackie Joyner, Dave Winfield, Willie Stargell and we do a lot of work for the NBA. In politics, [we were] an advisor to Mayor Sharon Pratt Kelly [of Washington] for about a year.

Primarily, I see my job as being a bridge between the entertainer, the personality, and the public and the media. I see my job as helping to bring some understanding to the person. I always try to get a handle on just how much of a person's life they are willing to share with the public and work from there.

At all times, I want to protect the image of my client and how that person is perceived and bring some balance to the picture. Because the public may see the person one way and because I have the opportunity to interact with them, I know other things about them.

### **MARY CARROLL MARDEN**

Picture Editor, *People* magazine

I often say, and truly believe, that I probably have the best job at the magazine. There's a staff of 14 people in New York. We have a picture person in our London Bureau and in our L.A. Bureau and we've got a growing staff of editors working on special issues.

Basically, the reason that I think I have such a great job, is that what we do is we're the people who get those pictures that, I always think, draw the reader

into the story. And getting the picture becomes more and more of a challenge. But we still try to get the thing that sets us apart from everybody else, which is a true representation of the person that we're talking about.

When we do a story, one of the prerequisites is to try to get that person at home, because getting them at home shows them the way they really are. Does a celebrity read? Are there bookcases in the living room? What are their hobbies? What do they do? Do they raise horses, dogs? What do their children like?

This is what we do. We try to match

**With more and more people wanting these stories, oftentimes the celebrities will make demands upon us in terms of trying to name a photographer [and] trying to help us choose the pictures. Neither of these things do we do, because as soon as we do that, we're giving up our journalistic responsibility.**

a photographer who you think is going to get along very well with an Eddie Murphy. How do you do that? Not only so that the two of them get along well, but that the needs of the magazine are met.

So you're going to get a picture of Eddie Murphy that the reader is going to look at and get something from—something more than a picture shot in the studio, sort of a captured intimate moment.

With more and more people wanting these stories, oftentimes the celebrities will make demands upon us in terms of trying to name a photographer [and]

trying to help us choose the pictures. Neither of these things do we do, because as soon as we do that, we're giving up our journalistic responsibility. But it's a harder and harder thing. Oftentimes, if those demands are made, we will walk away. Sometimes you don't want to do it. You might have a big, big celebrity. But rather than give up these things that really set people apart, we'll walk away.

An awful lot of the exciting part and a changing part of being a picture editor is that more and more we're negotiators. The picture editor will deal with a Terry Williams. And it takes a long time to set straight what we need and what the boundaries are.

Sometimes it works. With Eddie Murphy, it was fine. We went home with Eddie, we had the wife and kids—it was a wonderful story. Sometimes it doesn't work. I'll spend three or four days negotiating with the publicist who, in the end, will say: we will supply you with a set of pictures. We'll hire a photographer, we'll edit the film for you and we'll give it to you. So that person you don't do.

After all the negotiating is done I will talk to the photographer. What do we want? How do we do it? What is the little thing that's going to be that intimate moment that's going to make this different from everybody else's view of that person?

I remember a wonderful picture of [Eddie Murphy] outside his house in New Jersey, sitting with his little nephew on the steps with their knees up to their chins. That wasn't a tough comedian. It was just a very nice uncle. Which is what I always like to see in *People*.

A lot of celebrities are more and more difficult to get to. It oftentimes drives the paparazzi to try to get people that nobody can get. Unfortunately, I think it opens up an area where photographers are hiding in bushes and are capturing really private moments that are not meant for anybody else.

I remember a celebrity couple who were in Central Park, with their child—and this was a couple who was divorced. It was just a nice private time for them. There was a photographer in the bushes and they took pictures without



the three people knowing. It was a real invasion of those people's privacy. I don't care if they were public figures. This was a private moment. The pictures were brought to People and we turned them down flat just because it's not fair journalism. It was a real intrusion. But I do think that that, unfortunately, is more and more what does cross our desks. We've got to, again, keep our standards up. Hopefully, the celebrities will be a little bit more cooperative so that they don't have to put up with and we don't have to put up with that kind of intrusion. While we won't publish those pictures, unfortunately others do.

#### JEANNIE PARK

Senior Editor, Entertainment Weekly

I was a writer at People Magazine for three years, in the show business sections. Writing celebrity profiles.

The way People works is that, for most of the stories, there are writers in New York, and reporters — in my case, mostly in Los Angeles — who do the interviews and do the research, talking to the people, the people around them, and they send in their files. It all comes together in New York and a writer puts the story together there.

For the past two years, I've been the television editor at Entertainment Weekly Magazine. In this job, Entertainment Weekly is not as focused on personality journalism. I'd say maybe only a third of the stories I work on are profiles. But I'd say probably, at least more than half of my daily frustration is dealing with publicists to get stories—even when the stories aren't specifically about that person, but are about projects or television shows that these people are involved in.

I think today control by publicists and by celebrities is an issue that all journalists have to deal with. I think it's interesting that Terry describes herself as a bridge, because most publicists that I deal with anyway would describe themselves as fences. I would describe them as barbed wire fences or brick walls, who basically see their job is to

keep journalists out. Anyway, which is sort of a double-edged sword, I think, that maybe we can talk about more later. But that's where I'm from.

#### LYNDA WRIGHT

Los Angeles Correspondent, People Magazine

It's my job to get around the increasingly prevalent brick walls and barbed wire fences, and that's not the easiest thing to do. As a correspondent, I am the person who does the reporting; who goes out, who interviews the person, the people around the person. It's my job to get into the personality; it's my job to bring out the personality; it's my job to get beyond the public image. Increasingly, it's my job to get beyond the self-image. Because people begin to get an idea of who and what they are that may have absolutely nothing to do with who and what they really are.

What I find, more often than not, is if somehow or other you're lucky enough and you find that thing— you know, sometimes it's as simple as wiping your feet before you come into their home—that connects with them, they are very surprised that you are interested in who and what they really are. Very often, people want to tell you a lot more than you think they do, even when they are celebrities. But you just have to sort of look for the key that unlocks that.

I don't want the writer and editor in New York to get my file and say: And I read this there, I read this here, I read this there — oftentimes they have and there's nothing I can really do about that. But I can try and increase the number of times that they said: Oh, I didn't know that. That's what I'm looking for.

But I don't personally want to do it at the expense of a person's dignity, a person's humanity, a person's privacy even. Though my editors probably don't want to hear this, I strike deals. I'm not going to ask a certain question. A lot of times I'm going to use my not asking that question in order to get something else that they don't want to tell me.

I'm up front about it. I'm honest. This is why I have to ask you this question. They answer, they don't answer.

And then sometimes when they do answer, and they say: I hate it when they ask that question. I go: Why don't you ever say "I'm not answering it? You have that right, and you certainly have that right in this interview." And then they always tell me whatever I want to know.

So like Terri, I think that part of my job is getting that balance out there. Sometimes I think of it as helping Terry to achieve her goals. I mean you deal with the system that you have. I don't like the fact that there's this intermediary. I don't like the fact that I have to deal with this publicist. But that's the

**What I find, more often than not, is if somehow or other you're lucky enough and you find that thing— you know, sometimes it's as simple as wiping your feet before you come into their home—that connects with them, they are very surprised that you are interested in who and what they really are. Very often, people want to tell you a lot more than you think they do, even when they are celebrities. But you just have to sort of look for the key that unlocks that.**

system. And she's got a job. She's got to justify that job. She's got to justify that salary. So why not work with her, help her achieve her goals? At the same time, I'm trying to delicately, and very lady-like, get around those goals and still get what I want. It's all style.

So basically, what my job technically

is gossiping with people who you want to make like you. Ultimately, my job is to serve the readers. And to get a story that's worth them paying, you know, for \$2.95 or whatever.

#### NANCY PIERCE WILLIAMSON

Chief of Reporters, People Magazine

I have a staff of 25 reporters and writer/reporters working with me. Our number one job is assuring the accuracy of the magazine. We go to great lengths to get the facts right. And also to be fair.

In checking, we do not rely on just one source. We usually use at least three sources to verify a fact. These can be various sources, such as reference books; we could be using *The Atlanta Constitution*, our own magazine. But we do go and look for at least three sources. One-source journalism is a very dangerous area, especially in dealing with celebrities.

We also go to great lengths to be fair. If a star says her ex-husband was a drunk and abusive, we need to hear the other side. If there are court papers or documents, this is a safer feel for us. But we still want to talk to the ex-husband, or his lawyer or his agent. They might give us a no comment, but at least we've tried.

Do we make mistakes? Yes, we do. Not many. We have misspelled names, [which] is really rare because we do go to such lengths to try to get it right. Often, we're checking material at 4 and 5 in the morning and that's when reporters get tired. And we sometimes don't transfer things on to the computer. With pictures, we have more than once mixed up a golden retriever with a golden lab. Our biggest problem is ages. When the magazine started, we gave the age for everything. We gave ages of dogs; we gave ages to cats; we once even gave the age of a goldfish.

But it's humans we have the problem with. Some of the rock stars are so stoned out, they don't know how old they are. (laughter) Others, celebs and stars, just out and out lie to us. We have one star that's been 25 for 10 years now. We usually can get ages, but sometimes we can't. And then we'll hear back from

a high school classmate that will say: I sat with her in English class. I'm 35, what is she doing at 25? It is an on-going problem.

My favorite is Zsa Zsa Gabor. We are having a personal correspondence. A year ago she wrote and said: It's really time to stop calling me in my 70's, I have included my passport and birth certificate. Well, if we went by Zsa Zsa's birth certificate, she would have been married at age four. So, for the record, she is 76, and we will continue aging her each year.

While accuracy is indeed our main objective, we also — our reporters also go out in the field in New Jersey and Connecticut and New York area — we've had a very big year on Long Island, as you all can suspect with Joey Buttafuoco, many celebrities circulating out in the Hamptons. So it's been a busy time for us.

#### Q. & A.

Q.—Does the freelance writer ever have the opportunity to read [an article before it is printed]?

Williamson—Yes. We send that story back out to you, at the writer's version, at the editor's version and at the re-type for checking version. The reporter is then in contact with you, to be sure that you've gotten these versions and [whether] you have any problems with what we are printing.

JONES—A background comment here. People covers its beat through the use of full-time correspondents who are on our staff. There's 25 or 30 of those, and then we have maybe 80 stringers and free-lancers. We do use a lot of stories reported by free-lancers. As Nancy said, if your name is on the story, you are assuming responsibility for the story. We want to be sure you are comfortable with the result. Yes, sir.

Q.—As far as personality journalism, I think the same thing is happening with newspapers that's happening with magazines. Because we're focusing on how people are affected by the news. I was wondering if you could possibly tell me how to make someone who is not necessarily a celebrity into a human

interest story?

WRIGHT—Recently, in Los Angeles there was a homeless family that found a wallet in a shopping mall. A boy and his two parents. And they were — the wallet had \$4,000 in it, and a plane ticket to Australia. They took it to the police station. The tourist [who lost the wallet] took it, counted the money and left. Didn't even give them a reward or anything. There just happened to be a TV camera there and they became world renowned. Hundreds of thousands of dollars started flowing in.

I go in about four or five days later and they're very naive. Maybe the father has a learning disability. Talking to them on the phone was just very difficult. By now, they've just been battered. They're staying with her mother in a two-bedroom house, four adults, one kid.

Something just told me to help them think that the mother, who was fed up after years and years of trying to help them get on their feet, felt good about this. I hate coming in after TV crews. They're brutal, they're mean. They just want it and then they get out and they leave tracks, you know?

So I just took a bunch of flowers and gave them to the mother. I don't know what made me think to do that. Not expensive. Just a bunch of flowers. She starts crying. Well, then I don't know what to do. I just said, "You know, I just want to thank you for being so nice and for giving them my messages." And she goes, "Nobody said that."

Well, when the daughter and her husband came home, they were so happy that she was so happy and somebody had paid attention to her, that they then went on—and it was a breeze. It was wonderful. It was a really nice interview.

You know, non-celebrities are the easiest people to do because they are so interested that someone's so interested in them. And they did what they thought was right. They were very surprised to have all of this attention.

And when — you know, it's amazing what non-celebrities will tell you. I mean they'll tell you stuff — I have to remember: oh, I can ask that question now, you know? I'm not going to be,

you know, shunted off the door. I can really ask that question, ask any question the right way. It just works.

JONES—I was just going to add that you were making a distinction between reporting a news event like someone being rescued in a fire and its impact on people as sort of a follow-up. But, boy, I mean you should tell your editors. That's a story that moves a newspaper—the second day story about the amazing person who performed a rescue. And then when you interview, interview, interview, interview and you find out stuff about that person's background, that maybe they had been in a previous fire earlier in their life. That's it. That's why *People* succeeds. Everyone thinks that *People* succeeds because we're a celebrity magazine. Not at all. The celebrities are put on the cover just to get ourselves into people's homes. But the magazine succeeds because exactly that kind of story—heroic tales and ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances. If you ever see ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances, that's the best. The best. Yes?

Q.—Do you ever think that you can give too much credit or too much personality to an individual, such as a star maybe?

PARK—There are times where you go to an interview and it just bombs. Sometimes it might be because the person truly is just incredibly boring, sometimes it's because you can't develop an interviewing chemistry with that person. Or a lot of times it's because the publicists have introduced so many restrictions or else have warned this person so much to not talk. In some cases, you kill the story. We don't want to obviously ever embellish a person's personality. All of us have had to pull the trigger occasionally, which then gives you grief for weeks and months because the publicist is furious at you and the celebrity is furious at you and all the celebrity's friends and all the publicist's other clients.

WILLIAMS—The publicist really, really has to walk a very, very fine line. I oftentimes say that I get paid to be Ms. Bitch. Because the fact of the matter is my client may say X to me and may be

one way with the press and with the public, but if I don't do my job — if I don't do what I've been instructed to do, what I'm paid to do, then I'll catch hell afterwards.

I think that [something] often gets overlooked in this business. [It] is just the importance of the human quality about what we do. There were some photographs that ran of Jackie Onassis when she was in [Central] Park. And I thought there is no amount of money that I would have taken to have sold that photograph to anyone, simply because she loved the park. She was on her way out. And that was like just the ultimate, I thought, invasion of privacy. And you think about Arthur Ashe and how he had to reveal himself—that was something that was very personal. I also think that because of the kind of person that Arthur was—how he moved through life, how he treated people—he was able to hold on to that for a far greater time than I think a lot of people do.

And I think it's a base that I operate from. I think that everything that goes around, comes around. And that when you treat people the right way, you know, good things come to you in return. And if you screw people, it comes back to you. It's the law of nature, that everything that goes around comes around. So I think it's important how one operates in business.

Q.—How do you choose pictures for the cover of *People*?

JONES—The cover decision at *People* is a packaging decision. It is so because half of our circulation is that newsstand. We sell anywhere from a million to two million a week. Therefore, it depends on a couple of things. One, people have to know who is on the cover. I mean I cannot put an unknown person on the cover or even kind of a little known person on the cover and get away with it. Because simply not enough people will know about the story. So we assume a pre-existing interest in the story.

Then I assume a lot of curiosity. It's the stuff that people don't know about the person. I like to say that the cover is where reality hits curiosity. If something has happened, and the people are

curious about it, we want to deliver on that.

If a story is overexposed and people have heard it all ad nauseam, that's a problem too. There's sort of a balancing act. The story like O.J.—the curiosity and interest was so intense, that I think it was the first time we ever did two back-to-back covers on the same subject based on a news event. We've done one subsequent cover. So it is three. But that is highly unusual for us. And I have not felt that we had overexposed [in that case] because the public interest was so dramatic and high. Where we have been criticized is on the sort of endless coverage of Princess Diana. In one year we did at least 12 or 15 covers, it seems. I know that 20 percent of our unit sales had Diana on the cover. A lot of readers were saying, enough is enough.

Q.—(inaudible comment)

JONES—Yeah. Well, but basically it was working. So partly we did it because it worked. And I was looking twice at where I was going to sell half as many covers and I was going to have a lot of people voting with their feet, not to buy the issue at all. And so I'd rather have people buy the issue and get all the stories out. I mean we put out twenty to twenty-something stories in every issue. And so I'm willing to go pretty far to kind of sell that cover to get the rest of the magazine in people's hands and their homes.

Q.—Are you merely reporting what others have already printed or broadcast?

JONES—Oh, I don't think we're regurgitating a sort of previously known or sort of recycling old stuff. That would be truly cynical. We ask ourselves on this story on O.J. every week: Do we have something new here? Or are we just going to be repeating the same old stuff? And I think we've not done that. We've put so many people on the story, inevitably we're going to find out some interesting new facts or insight into the story. ■

## Family Sensitive TV News

*Here are excerpts from a discussion of a Twin Cities television station's experiment in eliminating pictures of violence from its 5 p.m. news show. The discussion took place June 12 on Alex Jones's program "On the Media" on Radio station WNYC in New York. Jones's guests were Don Shelby, an anchor at WCCO in Minneapolis; Ed Bewley, Chairman of Audience Research and Development in Dallas, and William Babcock, Associate Director of the Silha Center for the Study of Media Ethics and Law at the University of Minnesota School of Journalism and Mass Communication.*

JONES—It seems there's always something to complain about when the subject is local television news. There's too much violence, there's too much happy talk, there's too much violence, there's not enough coverage of issues that really matter, there's too much violence.

When the folks at WCCO-TV in Minneapolis reached out to their viewers to find out what they liked and disliked about the news the top-rated stations

provided, the big complaint was this: families couldn't watch the news with their young children around. The news, they said, is too gory. So the folks at WCCO decided to do something about it. They came up with the concept of family sensitive news. What they mean by family sensitive, I think, is that the news editors and producers would take into consideration that adults with young children watch the news. So they'd be sensitive to the viewers' concerns and cut the gore.

But now some people are complaining that family sensitive news is a distortion of reality, that it's censorship. And it's just plain consultant-oriented gimmicky, as one news director whose news is not family sensitive, put it.

Don Shelby, WCCO invented family sensitive news. Could you give us your definition of what it is?

SHELBY—I think family sensitive news is just an experiment. An effort to find out whether television journalism at the local level can break out of the trap that it's found itself in. And that is resorting to and often relying on the most horrific, violent, gory crime-oriented news topics to fill our newscasts. We've fooled ourselves it seems for almost a generation now.

Our viewers, in these feedback sessions, have helped us understand that that isn't really what the news ought to be about. And although crime is an important element, and violence in society is an important element, what they've asked us to do is to not participate in the violence, to report crime that has occurred, but not do it in such a violent way. To not appear—as one of our viewers said—to seem so damn happy about telling us all the bad news.

Now, to the degree that we've been criticized for somehow keeping bad news off the air, those critics are wrong.

We have not tampered with, in any way, to any degree, the amount of bad news which appears on our 5 o'clock news. There has been a penchant in the past on the part of television journalism to go to a crime scene. And if there is brain matter on the sidewalk, to take a picture and show you that brain matter as an intelligible part of the story.

Perhaps the viewers are right. Maybe the sight of brain matter does not necessarily have to communicate what the story is all about. And perhaps we've relied on it too much, to the degree that we don't really report the story very thoroughly at all because we have this formula. So that's what we're doing. We can try to remove the gore, not the bad news.

JONES—Well, if you had that same story and you were reporting at 5 P.M. and [10], compare the way [it] would be treated at the one versus the other.

SHELBY—At 5, we would tell you exactly what happened. But if there was a mangled body, if there was a video tape surveillance shot of the individual being shot down, at 5 o'clock you wouldn't see that surveillance video tape from the convenience store, for instance, and you would not see the body and you would not see the brain matter. Six o'clock and 10 o'clock you probably would. That shows you the experimental nature. We've been criticized. They're saying: this is such a good idea, and if you're really committed to family sensitive, why don't you do it at 6 and 10? And the answer is because we said we were going to offer an alternative for families to choose. We didn't say we were going to reinvent the wheel completely.

If it becomes terribly successful and, in the corporate world of television, if it is a rating success, then you might find it creeping into these others. But so far,

the ratings have not been spectacular for our effort. But we're going to continue with it anyway, just as a moral thing.

JONES—And what has been the impact on your 5 o'clock rating show?

SHELBY—A year to date it has gone down a little bit. And I don't know if that has to do with family sensitivity, or what it does. But it doesn't surprise me, not one wit, because it seems to me that there's a duplicitousness in the society about what it wants in television. It will say no more violence, but then it will make the most violent shows on television the highest rated. And I'm not the person who understands that very well.

JONES—Well, Ed Bewley, you go around counseling local news stations on how to improve their ratings, how many stations now do it?

BEWLEY—At last count, there were fifteen that I'm aware of.

JONES—And how successful has it been?

BEWLEY—Well, I think it's too early to tell. WCCO was the first station to launch family sensitive. Our company—since we do work with WCCO—saw this as a wonderful idea in terms of dealing with criticism that we receive from a pretty large chunk of viewers around the country, regarding the way crime is covered. We saw it as a great opening solution and recommended it to all of our TV clients. About 10 of the 15 that are doing it now are ones that we've specifically worked with. I think it's a little early yet to determine how this is doing. At one market recently we did a study and we [asked a typical] question: is one station getting better? Or is the station getting worse in the market? To try to get a sense of momentum.

One station was seen as improving much more than the others in the market. And we asked, why is that? They had just launched family sensitive at their early newscast as well. And some 30 percent of the people that were listing this station as improving listed family sensitive as the reason for that.

JONES—Did they follow their opinion and watch it, or did they not? That's the question.

BEWLEY—Well, I think people are

genuinely honest when they tell you what they like and what they don't like.

JONES—You do?

BEWLEY—Yes.

JONES—I don't.

BEWLEY—I think they're pretty clear. I think there are a number of factors that come into play in terms of whether you watch what you say you like. Things like the programs that precede a program. Things like other people in the house.

JONES—But isn't this an example of just exactly the opposite? Because people complain like mad about violence on television and then violence on television garners huge ratings.

BEWLEY—Well, I disagree with you on that. If you look at the 10 top-rated television shows during the May rating period, I don't think there's a violent show listed there. Unless you label comedy sitcoms as violence.

JONES—Nu, I would say more like the sweeps period efforts usually to [do] something sensational or violent to attract the viewership. It's pretty much a standard operating procedure for most local television stations, isn't it?

BEWLEY—Well, it may be a standard operating procedure, but I think as Don Shelby would attest, his report on polar bears garnered one of the highest ratings ever during the 10 o'clock news in Minneapolis.

JONES—Well, I mean you see these things on an industry-wide trend basis. Are you saying that violence doesn't attract ratings?

BEWLEY—I don't see the evidence. I know it is a common tenet in the business that certain people in our business believe that violence and crime does in fact attract audiences.

SHELBY—If there were three competing television stations and they each ran their early promos for what is coming up on the news, and they were by some circumstance seen by all viewers so that they could make a choice about which station to watch, and one reported coming up tonight, "the facts behind Dan Rostenkowski's indictment." The second station said, "a new sewer tax increase expected for the entire city of a hundred dollars." And another one said, "a body found in the

local dump, cut in twenty-two pieces." Which station would get the most switch-over viewership?

BEWLEY—Well, let me go another way. As you well know, we have done content testing where we actually present the viewers a wide range of story possibilities that can be done for these sweeps reports. And I think if you go through that list, something like your piece on polar bears ended up getting as much interest as some of the things that were more crime oriented and more sensational.

JONES—Well, is that our choice, polar bears or murder and mayhem? I mean that seems—

BABCOCK—Don, didn't your polar bear story win over [the story of a hunt for the] killer of a police officer? I mean you had the most violent story, a police killer who was on the loose, 10 most wanted list—FBI—he was brought back to justice, quote/unquote, and your story on polar bears won. Doesn't that say something about the public's appetite for violence? Maybe it just isn't as great as we think it is.

JONES—Let me ask you, Bill Babcock, what is your fundamental complaint about this idea of family sensitive news? What's wrong? I mean isn't it innocuous at best?

BABCOCK—I don't think it's innocuous. I think we've got a public relations gimmick here to boost the ratings by saying: Hey, we're going to cover violence, but we're not going to give you the blood and gore. In other words, we're going to avoid the blood, the body bags, the brain matter.

JONES—The brain matter, I think, is the key word.

BABCOCK—The most recent statistics have indicated that CCO is the leader as far as proportion of its news, in the Twin Cities, in stories about crime and violence and accidents. So essentially, you've got a station which is overreporting reality of these areas more so than any of the other stations, from a proportional standpoint. What they're now doing is saying: well, we'll continue to overreport on these areas and say that this is our news agenda. Essentially, set us up as a tabloid broadcasting station—which is so out of keeping

with the tradition, the rich tradition of CCO—but now we're going to sanitize one of the broadcasts. You know, I think that's really playing free and loose with the facts, not giving much credibility to the listener. I'd just love to see them put violence in perspective and cover it with sensitivity, which means less violence and with sensitivity. I think that would be the key I'd love to see CCO work on.

SHELBY—I would have a tendency to agree that there's been some changes going on in WCCO's personality. But I think this most recent coming together of the minds of the people who make decisions there is essentially a way of saying: maybe we got off base. Or maybe we did fall into the trap of becoming like a tabloid on newscasts and maybe we did find it awfully easy for a period of time there to report scary stories and shocking stories. That is not a phenomenon that's been around at CCO for very long. And I hope it doesn't last very much longer.

BABCOCK—Doo has clearly the reputation of being the most respected and ethical of all the anchor people in the Twin Cities. And I just think he's being put in an untenable position by the network, or has been in the last few years, by having essentially gratuitous violence on the screen. And I'm glad to hear him speak out on this. I think there's no question he is the moral, ethical voice in journalism, broadcast journalism, in the Twin Cities.

JONES—Well, what do you do about something like Somalia? You know, and those terrible pictures from Rwanda?

SHELBY—At 5 o'clock, we don't show the most hideous pictures of Rwanda. We report it at five o'clock much the way a radio broadcast would report a Rwanda story. Without the availability of pictures to radio, they must tell the story in context with descriptive language. But not horrifying language.

BABCOCK—Isn't Rwanda/Somalia really a different kettle of fish, let's say, with the brain matter on the pavement after a bicycle accident? I mean aren't we really talking about something which is major, international news where you have tens of thousands of people being killed as opposed to one perhaps iso-

lated incident?

SHELBY—Yes, but remember what the idea was at the beginning. And that was a show that families could watch together and help explain the world in a more balanced way, within some context of understanding.

BABCOCK—But if you have a whole country going up in violence in Somalia and Rwanda, isn't that—shouldn't you provide the footage which will actually show that in context?

SHELBY—And then accurately.

BABCOCK—But can you say that [the only way to show] violence in the community is with the brain matter on the street?

SHELBY—No. I'm saying at 6 and 10, of course, you will see that. And, of course, in the national news (which we carry) you will see all of that video that will motivate, that will shock, that will drive legislators to act, that will force people to call for action from the U.N. and so forth.

But when I say at 5, I don't know that we're asking children to make that decision. And I'm not sure that children are capable of making that decision. Mom and dad can then watch 6 and 10, can make those further decisions based on that video.

But sitting down with the kids and saying: now, here is a country that is in desperate trouble. And we can explain—take that time and explain some things about the country. It may actually be more beneficial than just running the horrifying video later on. It may actually do more in terms of explaining things.

## Q. & A.

JOAN (from Brooklyn)—Early this year I drafted a letter to a woman anchor on Channel 4. I listened to it especially because of her. And I was suggesting that she suggest to the producer, that maybe that they start putting in maybe five to fifteen minutes of helpful, positive news each evening. And if they can't find it in the city—which I really think they could—go out of the city. I wasn't really speaking about the violence. It's just an absence of some hope or positive news.

BEWLEY—Well, there has always been a cry from a segment of the population that TV should balance the negative with hope or positive news. I think it grows or diminishes based upon what kind of world we're living in. Certainly the negative criticism relative to graphic coverage of crime is tied to that same core feeling on the part of a lot of people. And I think television news has a bigger responsibility to the viewers than simply putting data out, putting facts out. It has a responsibility to help change things for the better.

JONES—Don't you already though have a positive element in what you recommend to stations? I'm hard pressed to think of any station that ends the day's news, local news, without a warm, fuzzy type of a story. Isn't that something which is built into the equation?

BEWLEY—Well, I think that's always been part of the tradition. But I think for many television stations that is about the only moment in which someone consciously thinks: did something else happen today that was hopeful, inspiring or something to cause people to get up for the next day?

JOAN—In New York, Channel-31, WNYC, they had a program that ended last month about community activism, people doing hopeful, positive things. Now, it would be nice if something like that was interspersed with the regular news. You know, just one little thing each night. They don't have to do away with the crime report or whatever. But just put something like that in. I mean it's really going on.

SHELBY—Yes, it is. And it is news. And it also may be the future of television. If it becomes absolutely clear to us that people are going to use television newscasts as a mirror reflection of their lives, as opposed to using it as an information source for things that have happened.

JOAN—Yes.

SHELBY—People watch these newscasts—and Joan, I think you may be one of them—and walk away from a newscast that is full of violence—and even though the violence has not personally touched you—you walk away feeling that the quality of your own life has

gone down.

JOAN—Absolutely. And the reverse is true if something hopeful and positive is going on. If somebody is really doing something to change, you may even want to get involved. And it does give you hope and it changes everything.

JONES—But is that really what the news is for?

SHELBY—That's the point, Alex. It is a misuse. And Joan, you're one of a hundred million people who do this, who watch and feel bad for their own personal lives. We may now be on the brink of doing what I swore I would never do. And that is going out and finding positive things to say, to put on our newscast, in place of important bad things that need to be said. Because we only have that half hour.

BABCOCK—But Don, isn't this overreliance on violence in your news agenda, just as abortive of what the real reality is as overreliance on the happy stories? I think you've gone to the other extent, let's say, with CCO, in saying: this is our agenda. So rather than trying to give news which will make you feel good—which is unrealistic—we're going to give you news which will really make you feel bad—which is unrealistic—because of the sweeps.

JONES—Ed Bewley, local television news has long been a major profit center for most local TV stations. That's where they get a lot of their local advertising. How inclined are local TV station operations going to be, realistically, to do things that are not going to bolster their position in the ratings, even if they think that it's something that is responsible socially, like family sensitive news or something similar?

BEWLEY—Well, I think if you look at the ratings of television news, as we do—we're looking at some 80 different television markets that we work in—you start to learn several things. One is that they don't change rapidly. So this idea that you can somehow pull a gimmick—which this has been labelled as—you can somehow come up with something that instantly will change the way people watch television news, just isn't borne out. Television news ratings change incrementally over time. And if

anything our research tells us, it happens based upon two or three principles. One is that the people who present television news are people the audience respects [more] than the other people who present the news in that particular town. And that respect comes from several things. One is being in the town for a long time. Therefore the viewer feel[s] that the anchor [is] one of them and speak[s] with the same voice they would. The other is that they just see a particular television station as doing a better job of covering the news. Television news becomes a very habitual thing for most people.

NAOMI (in Manhattan)—I was going to say that I would support bringing something along the lines of family sensitive news to New York. But I think that it's a misnomer to call it family sensitive news. It's simply a return to real journalism. Television has, for a long time, overrelied on pictures as a way of telling stories and using that as a way of avoiding having to develop context. And I've given up watching television news for that reason. I get more news from radio, or from publications, than I do from television. Because I find that I don't get news from television. I get the same pictures over and over again. And once you've seen someone shot or a body carried out of a building from a fire you probably don't need to see it again.

JONES—Family sensitive news as far as WCCO is concerned is that they have the same central news broadcast. They just take some of the nasty pictures away. But the real change they could make would be to switch to a format that addressed more substantive questions. How does television address people like Naomi? Is there anybody who really is doing this kind of format someplace between violence and something that's boring.

BABCOCK—I share the frustration when I'm monitoring a few different broadcasts of CCO or KARE or KSTP, the three major news affiliates in the Twin Cities. I'm amazed at how much I see the same news. But, on the other hand, if I listen to public radio on three consecutive broadcasts, I'm going to get the same. So I think there's going to be repetition. I'm not so much con-

cerned with the repetition as I am with the fact that I think a better job needs to be done with the choosing of what the news is. Again, I went back to some of the major topics in the Twin Cities. You've got a huge medical complex, the Mayo Clinic; you've the world's, the country's, largest university; you have issues of diversity; you have public transportation. All of these, I think, could be—

JONES—But that may not necessarily be what the news is really about. If the news is about creating or reflecting a reality, maybe the idea of reporting news is something that local news is not going to be able to do and get an audience.

SHELBY—I think television news can make any topic interesting. Whether it be health or whether it be environment or whether it be crime. So I think it's about what local television decides it's going to go out and cover. I just think this whole issue has to do with editing, in my judgment. Television news has limited resources, far few[er] people to go out and look at the world than does the newspaper in that particular town. They have a narrow window of time. Most people are going to watch thirty minutes of local news a day, some an hour. But most only find time for a half hour of news. When you take the commercials out, and you take out a look at sports and weather, you basically have fifteen minutes in that half hour to deal with the issues that are important to people. So a television news program is as much about what doesn't get into it as what does get into it. And those are decisions that are made by the editors and the people inside TV stations, about a whole range of things. You know, what is interesting? What is essential? And I guess, lastly is what is going to draw our particular kind of audience?

JONES—Do you really think that's the last priority? I mean are you telling me—

SHELBY—No, no—

JONES—that you really believe that?

SHELBY—No, I don't. I honestly think that's the first priority. But I don't think that's a bad priority.

JONES—Hm-mm. ■

# Too Many Crime Stories? No, Just the Wrong Emphasis

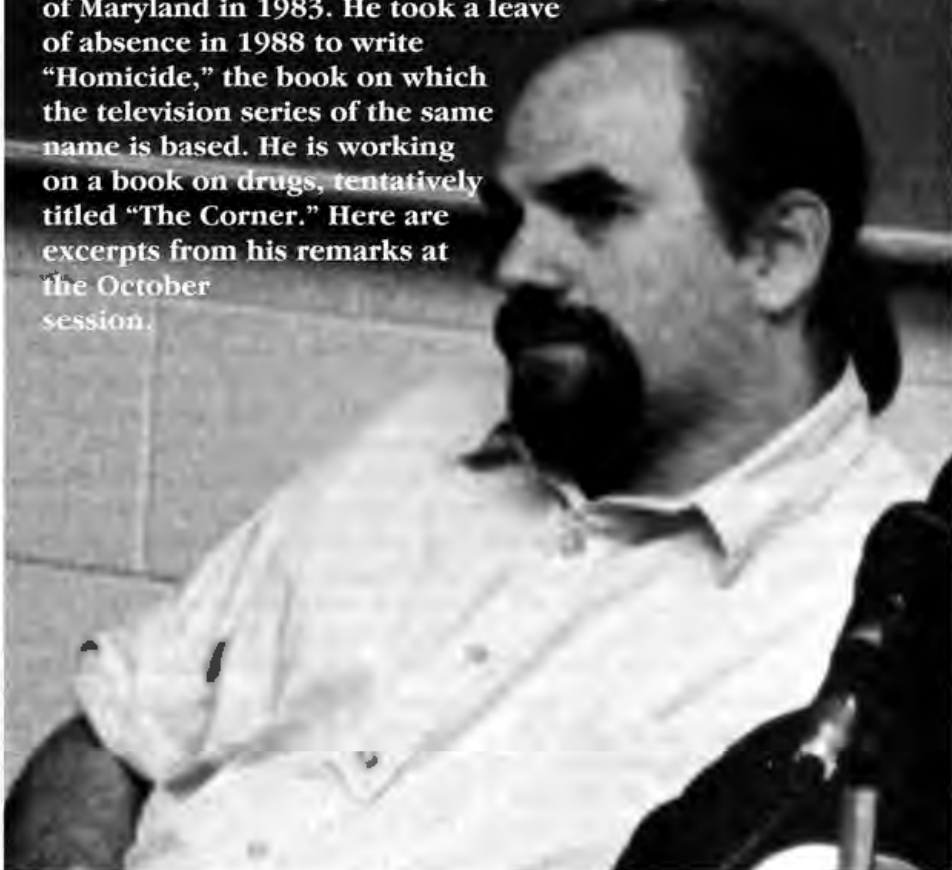
**C**rime in this country [has been] for the last 100 years one of the great evocative dramas in society. For better or worse, some of the best American journalism of this century has been the crime coverage of people like Herbert Bayard Swope and Damon Runyon and Meyer Berger. America has always been a violent place; the reporting reflects that. But there's a difference between the visual aspect of violence and the substance of it. The substance of it is the real issue—that's the real drama, that's the stuff that absolutely has to be covered, covered to a greater and better degree than we're covering it now, because I think it is the elemental issue of our times.

I disagree with the notion that we are covering crime more even as the national crime rate is static or declining. Total crime has remained constant in the statistics only if you include the majority of property crimes—burglary, theft, larceny. Larceny accounts for more of the crime statistics than any other category. But the bottom line is that nobody in the modern world bothers to report larceny anymore.

You can't skew the number of shootings or murders because people have to go to the hospital. Look at the murder rate or the aggravated assault rate. That's the true perception of crime and what's going on, and those stats are going up.

Total reported crime has remained constant over the past decade but violent crimes have gone up in most cities. In Baltimore, the rates for murder and aggravated assault are now far beyond anything in modern history. There is more violence in Baltimore than there has ever been. I don't have any sense of shame about bringing violence to

**David Simon, a crime reporter for The Baltimore Sun, not only defended the quantity of crime reporting in the media but suggested there should be more of the right kind of stories at an October session on media and public opinion at The Johns Hopkins School of Continuing Studies. The series was produced and moderated by Ghita Levine, Director of Communications for The Johns Hopkins University. Simon went to work at the Sunpapers as a night police reporter right after graduating from the University of Maryland in 1983. He took a leave of absence in 1988 to write "Homicide," the book on which the television series of the same name is based. He is working on a book on drugs, tentatively titled "The Corner." Here are excerpts from his remarks at the October session.**



© JOSEPH ARABTIGNI, THE JOHNS HOPKINS NEWS LETTER

everyone's breakfast table.

But if you're honest with yourself collectively, I think the raw, visual aspect of the crime story—rather than its substance—is what readers and viewers want, particularly with electronic

media. TV news editors know what you want; they see it in the Nielsens, in the Arbitron ratings. The imagery of violence sells very well. I think that's the problem. For some people who've seen enough violence on TV, they tend to



turn away from the issue. But I think that's a mistake. I think that violence—violent crime, drugs, the war on drugs, the notion of a violent America—is the issue for the next decade and the issue for the next century.

I would also say because the imagery of violence—a body on the ground, body in a body bag, a cop charging through the door and jacking somebody around—because that's so evocative, because it excites us, what's lost are some really serious issues that nobody is dealing with—nobody in the newspapers, certainly nobody on TV, nobody in government and nobody even in Washington.

For example, there's an issue out there of where the drug war is taking us and how far we're going with this and whether we can claim any particular victories over anything. The Federal crime bill that passed may seem surreal in comparison with the actual problems; it doesn't seem remotely related to the forces that are causing the problems. The only thing in that crime bill that I thought may bring some changes are the midnight basketball games, and everybody laughed at me when I suggested as much.

By concentrating on the visual, rather than the substantive, what we end up with are these very strange images of what crime's about—the good guy and bad guy, very simplistic, very much the three-minute story, the soundbite. And where it gets down to issues and choices for society, nobody is paying attention. This is why I cover crime and I think actually we need to get more of it into the paper, but at the same time make it relevant.

Another issue that has not been dealt with accurately or intelligently is that of race. How many people in this audience know the name Dontay Carter? That's because the Carter case is one in which a black youth kidnapped and killed a middle-class white victim. For that story my editors couldn't give me too much space. I got a page and a half, a whole page and a half. They were willing to put as much as we could find on Dontay Carter because the victim was white. In two comparable cases that we reported about the same time

you wouldn't remember the names of the people involved a minute after you read them because the victims—though they were genuinely innocent, and by that I mean not drug involved, not in any way culpable in their own deaths—happened to be black. In those cases, my paper was willing to provide considerably less space, and what they provided was only because I insisted on going out and interviewing families. Neither one had a criminal record, none of them were involved in drugs, but they were black, they were working class.

But here's the lie in our coverage: The Dontay Carter cases are the rare occurrences. In Baltimore, if you [are] white your chance of being a victim of murder are the same as if you were a resident of Omaha, Nebraska. Yet we have the fourth highest crime rate in the country. Obviously, blacks are by and large the victims of violence and by and large, that fact is ignored.

The bottom line is that we come from two separate societies and the reality is that crime is affecting the black community more and more to a profound degree and that is important and that's what we should be writing about. It's what should be getting attention. So I would make the argument that there's not too much crime coverage, it's just that it's misplaced.

Our imaginary readers are the guys who show up in newspaper demographic services—the guys have 2.3 cars and 2.3 kids. I'm very cynical about this because I think that the way we structure the media, we're not writing with an egalitarian viewpoint. We're putting stuff on the air for a non-egalitarian group that is seeing it, for the people who are going to read the ads and go out and buy. That's how newspapers are run now. Everybody wants the best demographics, so nobody's writing for black working class people, and certainly not for the black underclass.

We're not telling the truth about where violence really is; we're writing about white fears of violence, which is how ultimately we get co-opted into things like the drug war. As much as it is a war on drugs, it's also a war on America's underclass. But by and large,

**We're not telling the truth about where violence really is; we're writing about white fears of violence, which is how ultimately we get co-opted into things like the drug war. As much as it is a war on drugs, it's also a war on America's underclass.**

the media isn't much concerned with the substance, only with the raw emotion of the thing. We're not concerned with what the real reasons for crime are. We don't care why crime has taken over our cities. We don't want to go beyond the emotion of the thing, beyond the immediate provocation to fear or anger. We're not being decisive or intelligent about how we present the facts; we just run on in a rage that things are not really being solved, or worse, we get excited over solutions that are not really solutions and for that reason, readers and viewers never learn anything particularly useful.

I think one of the problems is that crime reporting is regarded as an entry-level beat. Once you get good at it you're promoted to something more dignified. There's nothing so difficult about going to Washington and pontificating, or going overseas to see the world, and that's what people aspire to, and for that reason you never learn anything particularly useful about crime because by the time anybody's mastered the beat, they're gone. ■

# As Ombudsmen See It

*In response to a request from Nieman Reports for flagrant judgment calls by editors and reporters, ombudsmen sent the accompanying reports.*

## Readers' Caution Exceeds Editors'

BY HENRY McNULTY

The Harford Courant

The reading public, so we are told, increasingly distrusts and dislikes the press; when it comes to credibility, journalists are right up there (or down there) with used-car salesmen, politicians and televangelists.

Much of this antipathy, I am convinced, comes about because journalists and readers inhabit two different worlds governed by different value systems. If common ground is to be found between news producers and news consumers, I'm convinced it must begin with a discussion of the values we share and don't share.

The newspaper is the perfect place for such a dialogue, but unfortunately it's hardly ever used for that purpose. Twice a year, however, I devote my ombudsman's column to an examination of the values gap; I give readers a kind of "You-Be-the-Editor" quiz, almost always focusing on ethics.

Most of the cases I use spring from actual news events. I describe a scenario, then give a choice of editorial actions, usually boiling down to "print it" or "don't print it." Typically, hundreds of readers respond.

For each quiz, I also poll my newspaper's top editors, to find out how they would handle the same situations. In a follow-up column, I report the percentages of readers and of editors voting each way on each question.

The examples involve the everyday choices faced by those of us in the news business: Which facts should be in-

cluded? Should we show someone innocently committing an unsafe or illegal act? Do we report a rumor? What about offensive language or actions? When are the media invading someone's privacy? What happens when timely reporting interferes with thorough fact-checking? Which news should be withheld from the public?

In making such choices, there are no "right" or "wrong" answers; there are only judgments based on personal or professional senses of right and wrong.

Readers disagree and editors will, too. But what interests me most are the ways in which news producers (journalists) as a group and news consumers (readers) as a group fail to agree on the ethical choices. In several years of doing these quizzes, I've discovered that:

- **Readers are more cautious than editors.** They will often say they don't want journalists to be censors or to limit the public's access to the news. But in answering these quizzes, readers consistently and predictably are much more willing than editors to withhold facts and be circumspect in reporting.

- **Readers' responses are more varied than editors'.** Often, their votes will split 50-50 or 60-40 on an issue. The editors, on the other hand, frequently split 80-20 or 90-10. A few times, 100 percent of the editors have chosen the same solution to an ethical problem.

- **Readers place a high value on personal privacy.** When an issue boils down to the people's right to know versus an individual's right to be let alone, most readers usually side with the individual, even at the expense of their own knowledge. Editors almost always favor the right to be informed.

- **Readers are more concerned about issues of "taste" than are editors.** If gory pictures and graphic de-

scriptions report the news effectively, editors tend to say: use them. Readers, by and large, disagree. Also, readers are more cautious about using profanity and vulgarity in quotes, or in reporting sexual matters, than editors are.

- **Readers aren't convinced that relatives of famous people are newsworthy just because of the relationship.** If the brother of the mayor is arrested for drunken driving, editors usually decide that the kinship should be reported in the police item. Readers generally vote the other way, saying the man is responsible for his own actions and it's unfair to mention his more famous sibling.

The responses to my quizzes reveal other differences between how readers view the world and how journalists see it. But simply to acknowledge different points of view, though a necessary starting place, won't do much to narrow the gap between newspapers and their readers. If each side remains convinced that the other is a bunch of valueless dolts, not much has been accomplished. A dialogue is needed.

Publishing the responses to the quiz lets each side see where readers and journalists agree and where they differ. Equally important is the reinforcement of the truth that there often are splits on most issues among the members of each group—readers and editors. That's a revelation for some people, who believe "everyone" shares their point of view.

In the newsroom, it's also important for the news producers to be made aware of the ways in which they and their readers disagree on ethical issues. Such awareness will inevitably bring responsible journalists closer to readers. ■

# Out, Out Damned Statistic

BY JOHN SWEENEY

The News Journal  
Wilmington, Delaware

A statistic is like a magic wand. Or so we Americans think. It can prove a point, silence doubts and end all arguments.

To journalists, an "authoritative source" holds even more magical power. Journalists believe all they have to do is accurately quote the source, thereby making it a fact and capable of withstanding any veracity test.

Marry the statistic to the authoritative source and you may approach media immortality.

Once a figure pops up on the screen, it tends to be repeated over and over. Variations may occur, but few journalists challenge the truth of the claim.

The Newhouse News Service recently did all of us a favor by collecting the following comments, all of them made on one day in Washington:

- "Every nine seconds an American woman is battered—and somebody looks the other way." Esta Soler, Executive Director, Family Violence Prevention Fund, during a press conference. June 30.

- "Every 13 seconds a woman is battered in America." Vicki Coffey, Executive Director, Chicago Abused Women, testifying before the House subcommittee on crime and criminal justice. June 30.

- "Every 15 seconds a woman is battered in a domestic dispute." U.S. Rep. Thomas J. Manton, Democrat, New York, in a press release. June 30.

- "In the United States today, a woman is battered every 18 seconds." U.S. Sen. Joseph Biden of Delaware, in a statement to the House subcommittee on crime and criminal justice. June 30.

Domestic abuse is a horrifying problem and journalists should publicize it mightily. But common sense tells us all of these statements cannot be true.

Which one is? Are any?

And why haven't journalists nailed it down?

We're supposed to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable, but aren't we also supposed to check the numbers?

Numbers magic works across the political spectrum. From the right we learn everyone everywhere is in imminent danger from violent criminals. From the left we hear that one in 10 teenagers fired a gun at someone. And on milk cartons we read that one in 50 kids has mysteriously disappeared.

Do any of these claims make sense? Are any of them true?

We're suckers for statistical studies.

Advice for opinion manipulators: if you want your message to get big play in the press, say it in numbers.

Especially, alarming numbers.

Whether it's the numbers of domestic abuse, homeless people, missing children, drug dealers or welfare queens, we journalists tend to pass along the statistics, satisfied that the authoritative source is correct.

But that's not the way it's supposed to be.

We're supposed to be skeptics. Remember "If your mother says she loves you, check it out?"

Of course, if mom said a study showed she loved us, we wouldn't bother. ■

## Non-P.C. Photos And 2d-Day Headlines

LARRY FIQUETTE

St. Louis Post-Dispatch

In newspapering, "close call" is the name of the game. Because almost every decision is a judgment call, "lapses" (second-guesses) show up in a lot of different stripes.

Photos are among the most troubling: should the paper print photos showing non-P.C. behavior—bikers wearing no helmets, drivers not buckled up, celebrities smoking, etc.?

How about printing a photo of a black child decorating a Halloween window by drawing a witch surrounded by Stars of David? Does that constitute insensitivity to Jewish readers—or is it just the messenger bringing a controversial message?

How about dirty language or graphic descriptions of murders, abortion and sex practices? The list goes on.

But "lapses" can be much subtler, too. Let's look at headlines.

Because of today's round-the-clock radio and TV newscasts, Americans are more up-to-the-minute than ever. If we've heard all the day's big stories by bedtime, they seem old hat at the breakfast table.

So, in the search for newness and freshness, newspapers sometimes play up the latest twist—often someone's reaction to the day's news—which then becomes tomorrow morning's headlines.

Let's say someone lodges an accusation early in the day against a public figure—President Clinton, for example. That allegation is likely to dominate the day's radio and TV airwaves.

But if the president decides to counter the allegation before the end of the day (the spins come quickly these days), his response can make the next morning's headlines, not the allegation.

That "second-day lead" gives the denial more importance than the allegation. Post-Dispatch readers have complained often about this "editorial slanting"—the cart out in front of the horse.

I've fielded just such reader objections over Whitewater allegations, Israeli-Palestinian violence, and political campaigns.

Example: the headline read, "White House Denies Report of IRS Threat," concerning Clinton's 1993 problems with his travel office staff.

That was Saturday's headline, based on a Friday story in The Washington Post, which reported that a White House lawyer had raised the possibility of using the IRS to investigate possible wrongdoing in the travel office if the FBI would not.

The White House denial followed

even Sen. Robert Dole's call for an investigation. Did the headline favor the president?

Example: "Wheat Defends Record on Crime and Drug Bills." That appeared over a story about a political opponent's same-day accusation that Alan Wheat, Missouri candidate for the U.S. Senate, was soft on crime.

Example: "Egypt Deplores Attack That Killed 4 Israelis," on a first-day story about the attack.

In bygone days, morning papers routinely headlined the most important events of the preceding day, even if they were almost 24 hours old by the time readers got their paper. The historical record was important. News was chronicled...well, chronologically. The event, then the reactions.

The impression coming in from readers now is that many would have newspapers resume their old role, giving the historic value of the news as much weight as the other factors that usually determine the play and the headlines—surprise, conflict, the unexpected and, yes, entertainment.

That's a view from a contrarian's desk. But it could help avert some reader complaints that editors' bias shows up in the headlines. ■

## Abortion And AIDS In California

BY LYNNE ENDERS GLASER

The Fresno Bee

Lately, it seems, that about once a month I've encountered a "flagrant judgmental lapse" that gives me reason to beat my breast and howl in righteous indignation on the part of readers.

In July, for instance, it was the deletion of a significant paragraph from a wire account and the alteration of a formal name in the same story that caused abortion opponents to charge, once again, that The Fresno Bee had reflected its editorial position on a news

page.

The article reported that the nation's Roman Catholic bishops would fight against any health-care reform that included abortions in a standard benefits package.

Deleted, at The Bee, was a paragraph saying that on the same day the bishops made their stand, a Times Mirror Center poll had concluded "the public opposes abortion coverage in a federally guaranteed benefits package by a margin of 68 percent to 26 percent."

A copyeditor also changed the name of the Pro-Life Committee of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops to "an abortion opposition committee."

Explained an assistant managing editor, the paper intended to run a separate story on the poll, but ran out of space, and somebody forgot to reinstate the removed information. About the name change, she said, it should not have happened. She referred to the deletion and the name change as "bad calls."

I added, "...you'll get no argument from me about that."

And, I concluded my column for July 31:

"To me, the most serious thing about these two calls is that they contribute—unnecessarily—to the belief of readers...who feel strongly that the media are against their cause and will do whatever they can to advocate abortion rights."

In August, I was equally dismayed about a headline on a local dispute over funding for the AIDS quilt. Fresno Mayor Jim Patterson objected to spending city dollars to pay for its display. Bee headline: "Patterson throws wet blanket on AIDS quilt."

Readers—straight and gay—were quick to condemn The Bee for insensitivity, lack of taste and, once again, for inappropriate use of humor.

"If the story had been a feature examining some aspect of the life of a person with AIDS, a 'clever' headline would probably not be appropriate," said the same assistant managing editor. "But, given the [political] context, I really don't think the headline was inappropriate."

She added, "Nevertheless, we regret

if we did offend some readers."

I wrote for Aug. 28 that I, like the readers who called, was "offended and surprised by the application of word play to this subject."

Even more, I said, I am "...distressed by a trend throughout the news industry to rely so heavily on being clever.

"I recognize the power and value of snap, punch, alliteration, puns. But, I think these techniques often are applied when there's no need, and then they detract, put off, even offend.

"AIDS' is such a powerful word that it doesn't need help to get your attention. Not only does it come with an emotional snap, it also carries the visual punch of capital letters."

I feel the same way today—about both subjects—as I did when I first addressed them. ■

### When The Times Took a Chance

On Tuesday, April 14, 1912, The New York Times carried banner headlines proclaiming the sinking of the new British ocean liner Titanic. The decision by Carr Van Anda, the Managing Editor, for The Times to state, at first that the liner was sinking, and before the night was over that the "unsinkable" ship had sunk, has often been cited as one of the shrewdest judgment calls in American journalism.

There had been no official announcement of the sinking. Basically all that was known came from a wireless transmission from the Titanic that the ship had hit an iceberg, that its bow was going down and that immediate assistance was required. New York executives of White Star, owner of the ship, were not able to say what had happened.

Nevertheless, The Times tore out its lead and headlined the new story: "Titanic Sinking in Mid-Ocean; Hit Great Iceberg."

Would Times editors do that today? ■

# The Lace Curtain

## *Gender Bias in the Media: The Other Side of the Story*

BY ARMIN BROTT

“One of the central accomplishments of the women’s movement over the last two decades has been to draw media attention to the physical suffering and institutional victimization of women in North American society,” writes gender bias researcher Adam Jones. But does this imply that men’s suffering and victimization have been given their share of concern and coverage by the media? “Absolutely not,” say Jones and a large number of others who have chronicled what they claim is a pervasive strain of anti-male bias in the media.

Not surprisingly, many women’s advocates take strong exception to this claim, asserting instead that the true gender bias in the media is an overwhelmingly anti-female one. And as proof, they offer counts of the gender of people pictured and quoted in the media, and of the by-lines of journalists. For example, the 1994 survey of 20 newspapers in 10 major markets and 10 smaller markets conducted by Columbia University’s Women, Men, and Media (WMM), found that women wrote only 33 percent of the front-page newspaper stories and appeared in the same percentage of front page pictures (53 percent in *The New York Times*, though). Just 21 percent of network news was reported by women, and only 24 percent of those interviewed for nightly news shows were female.

But does this prove that there is anti-female bias in the media? That depends on your definition. While it might be proof of anti-female bias in hiring by the media, and it may chronicle the continuing effects of discrimination in various other fields (politics, for example), it may say nothing about

whether there is a fair mix of coverage of women’s and men’s suffering in the news.

And for Adam Jones, coverage is the real issue. “The other side of human suffering and victimization...has, unfortunately, passed almost unnoticed by mainstream media,” he writes in his extensive analysis of gender bias in Canada’s “National Newspaper,” *The (Toronto) Globe and Mail*. “Aspects of suffering which could be considered largely or specifically ‘male’ have tended to be ignored, dismissed, or distorted.”

Because Jones’s 1992 conclusions fly so completely in the face of conventional wisdom, one might be tempted to dismiss them. But that would be premature. First, his is essentially the only scientific research to do an in-

depth analysis of each and every article concerning violence over a certain time period, and to evaluate whether it contained bias against either portraying the man as a victim, or the woman as the victimizer. Other research on media gender bias has consisted simply of the type of number counts described above. Second, his findings are confirmed by anecdotal accounts by dozens of men and women who work in the media.

So does the media have a tendency to give more coverage to, and be more critical of, men who are guilty of wrongdoing than women who are guilty of the same wrongdoing? And does the media have a tendency to give a story more play when the woman is the “victim” than when the male is? Clearly, there’s a lot of disagreement on this issue. After



*Armin Brott is a freelance writer whose articles and essays have appeared in *The New York Times Magazine*, *Newsweek*, *The Washington Post*, *Men's Health*, and many other publications. Based in Berkeley, California, he is also co-author of "The Expectant Father," to be published by Abbeville in Spring, 1995.*

all, deciding whether coverage is negative or positive can be a rather subjective task. Nevertheless, further exploration of the widespread claims of anti-male/pro-female bias (which, for the rest of this article I'll refer to as the "Lace Curtain"), seems warranted—if for no other reason than out of a commitment to intellectual curiosity and journalistic integrity.

But before going any further, let's get one piece of business out of the way. Nothing in this article is meant to suggest that women have not suffered or to deny that, in many areas, they have been discriminated against as a class. What is being discussed is how issues that affect men and women are *covered* by the media—not past (or even present) discrimination.

Nevertheless, the question of past discrimination often makes it hard to recognize the effects of the Lace Curtain. Until quite recently, women were generally excluded from testing and research in non-gender specific health areas. But now there's an Office of Women's Health at the National Institutes of Health which deals exclusively with women's health concerns. And each of the various national health plans includes special provisions for women's health—regular mammograms, Pap smears, etc. According to Laura Flanders, Coordinator of the Women's Desk at F.A.I.R. (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting), the very use of the term "women's health" indicates "that the default has always been men's health." While it's hard to argue with that point, it's also important to note that such critical *men's* health issues as regular prostate exams, or screenings for testicular cancer, are not even mentioned in any of the proposed national plans. Nor are they highlighted in coverage of the health-care debate.

In a recent phone interview, I asked Flanders whether she thought women's gender-specific health concerns get more media attention than men's gender specific concerns—especially given that prostate cancer kills almost as many men as breast cancer does women. While denying absolutely that there is any anti-male bias in the media ("to talk about sexism against men is ridiculous"),

Flanders said that any disparity in coverage is a result of what she called "surplus visibility." "When people who have been silenced speak out, the sound of their voices is shattering."

There's a good case to be made for giving a bit more than their proportionate share of media coverage to women who are emerging in areas that once excluded them. In some ways, this may be the media equivalent of affirmative action. But if this approach is justified when it comes to remedying past discrimination against women, why not apply that rule to areas in which *men* have been excluded? Female soldiers who participated in Desert Storm (who were only about 10 percent of all the soldiers who fought) received a lot of coverage. But where is the male perspective on such important social issues as family leave and abortion, or on fathers' efforts to juggle their desire to be with their families with the demands of their jobs? Flanders feels that it's sexist and demeaning for the media to focus exclusively on women when it comes to parenting issues. But it doesn't occur to her that men might find it sexist and demeaning to be *excluded* from these discussions.

According to a journalist with a major news organization, the Lace Curtain manages to exclude the male perspective on other "gender issues" as well (things like sex, relationships, and children). For example, one of this country's largest news-gathering agencies distributes to its reporters a valuable guide containing over 6,000 names, phone numbers, and addresses for sources on a variety of subjects. Under Women's Groups, the guide lists 18 separate topic headings, including battered women, magazines, and political organizations (which itself contains 23 sources.) But the reporter looking for a quote from a man on a "men's issue" (divorce and custody, for example) is out of luck. No fathers' rights organizations, male health advocates, or men's groups are listed. In fact, the alphabetical index of categories skips directly from Mellon Bank to Mental Health without so much as a single entry for Men. (This is not because men's groups don't exist: Rod Van Mechelen, publisher of The Egali-

tarian, has compiled a directory listing over 100.)

As evidenced by the WMM surveys, women have been—and, unfortunately, continue to be—underrepresented as interview sources. This has to change. But on issues that affect men in ways that tend to have been neglected in the past (male victims of domestic violence, men's health, and, again, divorce and custody, etc.), including the man's perspective is necessary to ensure balanced and thorough coverage.

Even if we assume that leaving sources on men's issues out of the book was simply an oversight, people listed in the source book will be the first ones called. Reporters who might otherwise be interested in including a male perspective will have to spend a lot of time and effort tracking one down—something they often won't be able to do on a tight deadline. The result? The male perspective gets left out. Perhaps not deliberately, but left out nonetheless.

Among those who argue that the Lace Curtain exists, no issue is cited more frequently than the media's coverage of domestic violence. While this is not the appropriate forum in which to debate the true extent of the problem of battered men, suffice it to say that even advocates for battered women admit that some men are beaten by their female partners, and that not *all* female-on-male assaults are in self-defense. It is, of course, impossible to agree on the exact percentage of victims of unprovoked domestic assaults who are men, but for the sake of discussion, let's use 10 percent—a number admitted to by even the most skeptical women's advocacy groups. The question, then, is whether battered men and violent women are getting their "fair share" of media coverage.

According to Laura Flanders, "they're getting too much. There have been op-ed articles on the subject in The Los Angeles Times and USA Today." Besides op-ed articles, however, there has been virtually no coverage of male victims of domestic violence. A computer search of over two million articles appearing in the nation's largest newspapers revealed 112 that focused on battered women. Only one focused on

battered men. A similar search of over 1,500,000 magazine and journal articles located 203 on battered women and, again, only one on battered men.

When Kim Gandy, Executive Vice-President of NOW, was asked to comment on this seeming disparity in coverage, she replied that perhaps "there should be proportional coverage of domestic violence issues." (She wasn't, however, able to say who would establish the correct proportions.) But Gandy's views are hardly universally shared. "Talking about battered men simply detracts from the real problem," says Laura Flanders. She and other women's advocates fear that giving battered men even proportional coverage would jeopardize the already pathetic amount of money available for women's shelters.

In some ways, it's almost possible to justify the media's reluctance to cover violent women adequately. After all, it's only relatively recently that the women's movement succeeded in getting the issue of domestic violence against women out of the closet. (Advocates for battered men, however, maintain that the issue of violence against men is still in the closet.) The media, then, may be ignoring or minimizing men's victimization in order to protect feminism's hard-fought gains.

This raises an interesting contradiction. On one hand, the media is quick to condemn paternalism when it seeks to "protect" women from the pressures of work outside the home, the public life of politics, or the dangers of combat. But when paternalism operates to judge women less harshly (or to absolve them of responsibility for their behavior) in the name of "protecting" past gains, the media sometimes seems to be far slower out of the box. "If a politician made an outrageous statement, or if the concrete lobby or the tobacco lobby said something that common sense told you was crazy, we'd be all over them," says Bernard Goldberg, a correspondent with CBS News. "But when it comes to people in groups that have an agenda to 'do good,' it's considered bad form to challenge them."

An article on domestic violence in a recent issue of a national parenting

magazine illustrates this point perfectly. The author of the article made reference to a 1992 letter by Surgeon General Antonia Novello, and quoted her as having said that "one study found that domestic violence is the leading cause of injury of women 15-44." In an attempt to maintain the highest factual standards, most national magazines require writers to submit backup for every statistic or quote used in an article—especially one on a controversial topic. In this case, the magazine's fact-checkers routinely should have asked to see Novello's letter. Had they done so, they would have found that what Novello actually said was that "One study found violence to be...the leading cause of injury to women ages 15 through 44 years." Nowhere did she say "domestic violence," just violence. The study Novello referred to was a study of extremely poor, crime-ridden, inner-city African-American women in Philadelphia—a population not even vaguely representative of the rest of the country. In a recent phone interview, Dr. Jeane Ann Grisso, the study's lead researcher, cautioned that even if her study had concluded that domestic violence was the leading cause of injury, she would "never apply that conclusion to the total population of American women."

Unfortunately, when inaccurate statements—such as those mentioned above—are left unchallenged, they soon take on the status of "fact." In one part of a recent "Eye-to-Eye With Connie

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**But paternalism is not the only explanation for why coverage of female violence and male victims of that violence is suppressed. Some writers who might otherwise be interested in seriously investigating the issue are simply afraid to do so.**

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Chung" segment, Bernard Goldberg wanted to debunk an assertion by NOW President Patricia Ireland that domestic violence was the number one cause of birth defects. (If you think about it, does it really make sense that domestic violence could cause more birth defects than crack? than alcohol abuse?, than car accidents?) But rather than raise their eyebrows and check out Ireland's (non-existent) sources, CBS's army of attorneys made *Goldberg* prove that *Ireland* was wrong.

This brings up the dueling paternalism contradiction raised above, but with a dangerous twist. By allowing what are perceived to be "pro-women" stories to use lower standards for truth and accuracy, the stage is set for a backlash against all "pro-women" data, which may be treated as suspect out of fear that the research methods that produced it were motivated more by politics than by science.

But paternalism is not the only explanation for why coverage of female violence and male victims of that violence is suppressed. Some writers who might otherwise be interested in seriously investigating the issue are simply afraid to do so.

Take, for example, the experiences of Erin Pizzey, a lifelong advocate for battered women who opened England's first shelter over twenty years ago. Pizzey's involvement with battered women apparently gave her a rare insight into women's capacity for violence, a topic she discussed in her book, "Prone to Violence." In an interview with British journalist David Thomas, Pizzey describes the threats on her life and bomb scares at her house that began to happen after the book was published. "I finally decided that I couldn't take any more of that intimidation, not for my sake, because I'm used to it, but for my children's sake," she said. "So we went abroad."

Suzanne Steinmetz, one of the first American researchers to document female-on-male domestic violence, had similar experiences. Dr. Steinmetz told me that after she published an article called "The Battered Husband Syndrome," she received verbal threats and anonymous phone calls from radical

women's groups threatening to harm her children. In addition, all of her female colleagues were contacted and told to "do everything possible to deny" Steinmetz tenure. She received tenure and now holds a prestigious post at the University of Indiana, Purdue. And when the ACLU invited her to speak on domestic violence, it received a bomb threat. Both Steinmetz and Pizzey found it ironic that the same people who claim that women-initiated violence is purely self-defense are so quick to threaten violence against people who disagree.

Fortunately, as David Thomas notes, few researchers have "stirred up the kind of hostility" that Pizzey and Steinmetz have provoked. Nevertheless,

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**Television and films are two other areas in which media coverage of women's minimal victimization far overshadows that of men's. According to Warren Farrell, the average American child will watch more than 40,000 people get killed on TV—97 percent of whom will be men.**

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he writes, "anyone arguing against the view that women can only be seen as innocent victims can expect, at the very least, trenchant criticism."

Some argue that, besides protecting women by punishing their critics, the Lace Curtain attempts to protect women by silencing their critics before they even have a chance to criticize. In an extensive analysis of bias at *The New York Times Book Review*, John Ellis, Literary Editor of *Heterodoxy*, claims that pro-feminist books are "protected by assigning them to ideological clones of their author," thus protecting them from negative attack. "How do you en-

sure a respectful review of feminist eminence Gloria Steinem's 'Revolution From Within?' Since Steinem is the former editor of *Ms.*, the book goes to Dierdre English, former editor of *Mother Jones*: a close match. Susan Faludi's 'Backlash' is the work of a journalist with a sour view of any criticism of feminism, so let's find another like her: the equally sour Ellen Goodman." Others within the media have also noted a corollary trend: books by those who criticize feminism or who write favorably about men seem to be given either highly negative reviews (Christina Hoff Sommers's "Who Stole Feminism") or not reviewed at all (Jack Kammer's "Good Will Toward Men," and Warren Farrell's "The Myth of Male Power," for example.)

"It is not always wrong for a review editor to be guided by a viewpoint," writes Ellis. "But *The New York Times* is, or should be, a very different case—its readership has no ideological restriction. It is a national, not a sectarian resource, and it ought not to behave like *The Nation*."

Again, one could use Flanders's "surplus visibility" argument—that because of past discrimination, the paternalism inherent in giving women's views prominence may be necessary. However, the big question is whether this kind of paternalism helps or hurts women. "Because of Faludi's book and the climate of antagonism against men, anything critical of women—legitimate or otherwise—is called backlash and therefore dismissed," says Christina Hoff Sommers. Criticism is a good thing; it acts as a kind of quality control for the media and for academics; it leads to a healthy debate and to sharing of information. But shielding a particular point of view from scrutiny, criticism, or debate (or threatening to kill those who question it) ultimately results in shoddy, unreliable scholarship.

As discussed above, reasonable minds will probably always differ as to the percentage breakdown of the victims of domestic violence. However, there are other areas where it's impossible to deny that the men are the majority of victims. "In cases where the victims of violence cited in statistical data are over-

whelmingly male—where, therefore, a gender component is both obvious and relevant—the victims are likely to be categorized not by gender, but by some other gender-neutral classification variable (e.g., age, occupation)," writes Adam Jones.

A variety of recent articles have, for example, noted that convenience store workers and taxi drivers die on the job at nearly the same rate as police officers. And the current reexamination of the military's early atomic weapons testing has highlighted the powerlessness, suffering, and death of those soldiers who—frequently without their consent—became human guinea pigs. The fact that nearly all these deaths are male is rarely, if ever, mentioned.

Using the standard that it's OK to ignore battered men because there are fewer of them than battered women, it might seem reasonable to ignore the even smaller number of female workplace deaths. But instead, women's suffering is given top billing over men's.

Take, for example, an October, 1993 *New York Times* headline declaring "High Murder Rate for Women on Job—40 percent of Women Killed at Work are Murdered, but Figure for Men is Only 15 percent." At first glance, this sounds as if women are being butchered in the workplace. But a careful reading of the article reveals that "women account for only 7 percent of on-the-job deaths" and that "although men are 55 percent of the work force, they comprise 93 percent of all job-related deaths."

Television and films are two other areas in which media coverage of women's minimal victimization far overshadows that of men's. According to Warren Farrell, the average American child will watch more than 40,000 people get killed on TV—97 percent of whom will be men.

Critics (and women's activists) regularly—and rightfully—complain about the sexist and demeaning nature of the "woman-in-jeopardy" theme so popular in Hollywood. But as Farrell points out, "In woman-in-jeopardy films, the woman is typically saved while many men die saving her." In fact, contrary to the assertions that violence against women is rampant in films, over 90



percent of those killed in movies are male.

According to Frederic Hayward, the director of Men's Rights Inc., in Sacramento, California, men also get a pretty raw deal when it comes to the way they're portrayed on television. Hayward, who conducted a survey of 1,000 random advertisements, wryly summarized his findings by commenting: "100 percent of the jerks singled out in male-female relationships were male. There were no exceptions...100 percent of the ignorant ones were male. 100 percent of the incompetent ones were male."

When Marlene Sanders, director of WMM, was asked to comment on this rather startling example of anti-male bias, she was dismissive. "Sit-coms are ridiculous. I don't watch them and we don't keep track of them," she said. "And anyway, they're all written by men." Sanders may not watch sit-coms, but millions of other Americans do—many times more than the number who watch the nightly news or read the newspaper. For that reason, television's portrayals of men and women are particularly powerful. And given the results of Hayward's study, the gender of the writer obviously has nothing to do with his or her bias.

Although legitimate examples of the way the *Lace Curtain* seems to operate are plentiful, some media critics feel compelled to overreach. In "The Myth of Male Power," for example, Warren Farrell compares the media coverage of Joseph Hazelwood, who, as skipper of the Exxon Valdez, caused one of the world's costliest natural disasters, and Robin Lee Wascher, a female air traffic controller, whose negligence resulted in a plane collision in which over 30 people were killed.

Farrell correctly notes that after the Valdez oil spill in Alaska, Hazelwood received massive amounts of well-deserved, negative attacks in every media outlet, while coverage of Wascher was minimal and focused not on the reasons for her negligent performance, but on the grief she felt after the incident. Farrell writes that the difference in coverage is an example of how women who fail at their jobs are treated more

gently than men who do. In reality, however, this difference in coverage is probably unrelated to the gender of the negligent person, but directly related to the difference in the nature of the wrongdoing. People—women or men—whose negligence leads to *accidental* deaths are almost always treated gently by the media. (Coverage of a male police officer who shot an undercover detective on the New York subway focused extensively on the shooting officer's emotional devastation.) But when the negligence is aggravated (or caused) by alcohol or drug impairment, all bets are off—the media has no sympathy.

Despite Farrell's overzealousness on this point, others, such as syndicated humor columnist D.L. Stewart, have made the charge that women are generally shielded from criticism—even the most mundane kind. By his own description, Stewart's column is "the flip side of Erma Bombeck's." But while Bombeck can joke that her husband goes into a coma during football season, Stewart has to "bend over backwards" to make sure he's the butt of every joke and that his wife gets the last word in any argument. "If I joke that my wife doesn't know the difference between baseball and football, I'll be bombarded with negative mail." Stewart, who is clearly not a misogynist, feels that "there's a double standard and it's not getting any better."

"The results of this double standard—whether it shields women from criticism, overplays women's suffering, or underplays men's—are bad for women and men alike," says Cathy Young, Vice President of the Women's Freedom Network. "For men, because their suffering is not taken as seriously as it needs to be; for women, because they are getting an exaggerated picture of the dangers they face—something that can have a very restrictive effect on their lives." Young feels that media coverage must reflect the fact that just as there are some problems that are more specifically female, there are others that are more specifically male.

So what can we do to eliminate double standards in reporting and insure more balanced coverage on gen-

**What this means is that all of us in the media need to recognize the inconsistency and bias inherent in giving women "surplus visibility" in areas where they have been victims or historically silenced, but limiting men to "proportional coverage" in areas where they are victims or where they have historically been silenced.**

der-specific social issues? According to Jack Kammer, "journalism's professional conventions should include workshops and presentations that recognize gender bias against men. Journalism schools and associations should educate their students and members to be as aware of anti-male bias as they are of any other kind."

What this means is that all of us in the media need to recognize the inconsistency and bias inherent in giving women "surplus visibility" in areas where they have been victims or historically silenced, but limiting men to "proportional coverage" in areas where they are victims or where they have historically been silenced.

Finally—and most important—writers and their editors need to remember the incredible power of their pens. "Every society, I now realize, has its taboos—even those that seem as permissive as America's," writes *The New Republic* Editor Andrew Sullivan. "Journalists actually are the guardians of many taboos. They determine what is said and how; they frame the parameters of public debate. They help sustain the fact that debate in a democracy tends to be less about truth than about the appearance of truth; not about arguing, but about posturing." ■

# Berlusconi and the Battle for the Italian Media

*Prime Minister, Who Controls Much of Country's Television,  
Is Waging War Against Newspapers*

BY PIERO BENETAZZO

**A**ugust 15, a major Italian holiday: Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi unexpectedly appears on TV. Seated behind his desk, a large pack of newspapers in front of him, he touches them, then pushes them aside with disdain. He tells the interviewer, "don't waste your time reading those headlines and articles, they're all lies." Then, he repeats exactly what is reported in those newspapers—he warns that if his government were to fall, there will be riots in the streets.

The long interview was broadcast in the early afternoon on all three state-run Radio Televisione Italiana (RAI) networks and on the three Fininvest private networks owned by Berlusconi. And it was re-broadcast on all six evening news programs.

The interview was one of the tensest moments of the media battle that characterized the first six months of the government headed by the TV tycoon-turned politician. The all-out and relentless battle has involved Italian journalists and foreign correspondents. It has been waged with harsh and often disconcerting slogans and accusations and it has raised the specter of mass firings

and "purges" of journalists at the RAI networks. This summer, Berlusconi's Forza Italia (Go Italy) party and its coalition partners, the neofascist National Alliance and the market-oriented Northern League, accused the media of "conspiring" against the March 27 election results and of "undermining" the government. In trying to explain the continuing flight of foreign investors, Berlusconi accused newspapers of providing "constant disinformation." He also said foreign correspondents "breathe this air of preconceived hostility and reproduce it in their articles, giving a false and distorted image of Italy and its economy."

"Whoever speaks against our government, is going against the interests of the country at a time when we need to work serenely for the future," Berlusconi asserted.

Berlusconi, who calls himself a conservative, directed his accusations against newspapers that are anything but leftist, such as *The Financial Times*, *The Economist* and *The Wall Street Journal*. He accused them of harping on the conflict of interests of the magnate cum government leader, on the judicial problems of Fininvest managers (Berlusconi's own brother Paolo and

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*in Beirut and in Angola, the anti-Pinochet movement in Chile in the mid-80's, the rise of the Solidarity trade union in Poland, and the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe. He began reporting on Yugoslavia in 1985 and covered its disintegration from Belgrade to Ljubljana, from Zagreb to Sarajevo. He has also contributed articles from numerous countries to The Christian Science Monitor.*



three other executives are under investigation for bribery and falsified accounts) and on the government's inaction in tackling the largest public deficit in the industrialized world. For weeks this summer, the lira's value declined and the stock market continued to fall but the government didn't move. Its major concern appeared to be to seize total control of the media.

The pretorian guards of the constant onslaught against the media were members of the neofascist National Alliance. Their aggressive slogans reminded many Italian commentators of the Twenties and of Mussolini's polemic against the State. Deputy Prime Minister and National Alliance member Giuseppe Trattarella—a veteran of the infamous Saio' Republic of the final and most repressive stage of the Mussolini regime—lashed out against a "shadow government" formed by what he called "strong and obscure powers." By this he meant independent institutions such as the Bank of Italy and the Constitutional Court, but also large private industries and the newspapers they own. He accused the big newspapers of conspiring to bring down the government "in order to take over the State" and he charged that the foreign press "wants to destabilize Italy" so that, through privatization, foreign investors can "take possession of the jewels of the national economy."

The "post-fascist" (as the National Alliance characterizes itself) weekly *Italia Settimanale* published a list of "enemy" journalists who, it said, should be purged. Alessandra Mussolini, a National Alliance MP and granddaughter of Il Duce, said that the managing editors of all the big newspapers should step down because they belong to the past regime. Francesco Storace—also a National Alliance MP and Deputy Chairman of the parliamentary RAI watchdog commission—kept the tension high by regularly compiling a list of "good and bad" journalists. Storace—who is proud of his nickname, the Purger—threatened the big industrialist groups that own the major dailies by saying that if they want to keep their newspapers they must "put an end to their punitive campaign against Berlusconi." Other-

wise, he warned, they will have to accept the creation of a media authority which would select their papers' managing editors.

Italian journalists reacted to the government's attacks by showing up en masse at a "Convention for the Defense of Freedom of the Press" organized in July by the dean of Italian journalism, 85-year-old Indro Montanelli. A fervent conservative, Montanelli last winter quit in protest as managing editor of the Berlusconi-owned *Il Giornale* and quickly founded a new paper, *La Voce*. The Convention concluded with an appeal to Italian journalists to defend press freedom and "citizens' right to correct information." At the time, Montanelli was asked whether he thought the Italian situation was the same as in 1922, when Fascism came to power. He replied, "the danger is of a different nature, it is subtly insidious. There is a power which tends to become an excess of power and there are men who have no sense of the State, but they are very good in the art of conquering the audience."

To understand the terms of the battle over the Italian media and its possible outcomes it is necessary to review briefly the recent history of a media situation which Marvin Kalb, in an interview with *La Voce*, has described with a gentle euphemism as "a little backward."

The original sin of the print press is that it was born not as a public service nor as a profit-making enterprise but to uphold a political and economic interest. When a law was passed in the mid-Seventies that required newspapers to make public disclosure of their financial condition, only two out of 74 newspapers were found to be in the black, with the immense losses covered by the papers' political and economic patrons. The situation changed radically after the founding of the independent daily *La Repubblica* in 1976. In the first issue, founder-publisher-editor Eugenio Scalfari set as his paper's goal absolute financial independence as a condition to maintain political independence. For the first time, an Italian newspaper was an enterprise heeding the interests of readers and not those of politicians. The other newspapers soon followed

the new trend and became more competitive. Circulation—which had been stagnant for decades—doubled in a few years, the local press began to blossom and in a short time a politically subsidized press was transformed into a profit-making business. But it also became a business that attracted the big industrial groups. Today, the major newspapers—representing nearly half of all circulation—are in the hands of the major industrial and financial groups whose major interests are not those of publishing: the Fiat auto giant controls *La Stampa* and *Il Corriere della Sera*; Olivetti now controls *La Repubblica* and the weekly *L'Espresso*; the Montedison petrochemical giant owns *Il Messaggero*.

And in the Eighties, the state monopoly on TV was broken with the sudden emergence of private TV stations. Silvio Berlusconi—whose Fininvest conglomerate's interests range from real estate to supermarket chains, from insurance companies to movie theaters, from advertising to publishing—virtually invented commercial television in Italy by taking advantage of legislative vacuums in both the TV sector and in antitrust legislation. But he was able to build his media empire thanks to the political patronage of the Socialist and Christian Democrat parties which governed Italy for decades. In 1990, the parliament passed what it called anti-trust legislation in the broadcast media sector—a law which more or less sanctioned the existing division of Italian TV between Berlusconi and the three RAI networks.

The political negotiations which led to this two-way division of the TV spoils also bolstered another Italian anomaly. Political "allotment" is the system by which at the RAI networks executives, journalists, technical staff and even receptionists were hired according to political quotas. The then-Communist Party agreed to "legalize" Berlusconi's commercial TV monopoly in exchange for its entrance into the allotment system and journalists "close" to the Communists were given editorial sway on one of the RAI network's news programs.

RAI and Berlusconi's Fininvest not only divided between themselves the

TV audience (each have about 47 percent of the total), they have also effectively divided between themselves the advertising pie. Fininvest today controls 60 percent of all TV advertising, RAI—which has an ad ceiling—controls 30 percent. Berlusconi's three networks and the three RAI networks combined broadcast what is probably a world record in TV advertising—19 hours every day, about one million ads a year. Moreover, Berlusconi's Publitalia advertising company provides more than

30 percent of all advertising in the broadcast and print media combined. The spiraling growth of TV ads has penalized the print press which has continued to lose ad revenues, which now represent only 45 percent of newspapers' revenues. At the same time, the Italian TV audience—and the credibility of TV—continues to rise. Polls show that the majority of Italians form their opinions watching television and 46 percent consider TV "totally trustworthy," compared with 15 percent who

believe the same of newspapers.

The unregulated growth of commercial television in Italy has weakened newspapers. Despite a rise in circulation, Italy still has one of the lowest readerships in Europe—and the print press has often reacted irrationally to the sudden surge of TV power, sometimes imitating television and its presentation of the news. Today's newspapers rarely carry carefully researched articles or news analyses. They are now filled with interviews, and headlines are hyped up and sensational. The new TV-like style has radically altered even the traditional tone of Turin's *La Stampa* and Milan's *Il Corriere della Sera*—which prided themselves on providing Anglo-Saxon-style "coolness." Today, these two papers are in the forefront in sensationalizing headlines and news content. A study by the Rome-based Eurispes Research Institute reveals that during a 26-day period in January of this year the six major Italian newspapers carried 1662 hyped-up and alarmist headlines (700 in *La Stampa* and *Il Corriere* alone) on every imaginable subject—spiraling taxation, natural catastrophes, racism, murders, the tentacles of the Mafia, etc. The Eurispes report said the result is an "information of brevity and simplification, news that is shouted and inflated and thereby artificially transformed into an event."

Journalism historian Valerio Castronovo says that newspapers are losing their identity and are beginning to be out of step with their readership. In fact, after nearly 20 years of steady growth, circulation has stagnated and for many papers it has started to decline. This has happened not only in the poor south, but also in the wealthy north.

The culture of television is sweeping over Italy and if the standards and regulations of other European countries are not adopted the newspaper publishing business could be irreparably affected.

Publitalia, the heart of Fininvest, and its army of advertising managers (who stage-managed Berlusconi's three-month sweep to power) wield what *La Voce* has described as "the atomic weapon, the weapon of mass destruction, which could annihilate in an in-



L'ESPRESSO

stant the Fourth Estate"—the reins of advertising revenues.

The most important question today is, now that he is Prime Minister, how is Berlusconi using his immense media power? What style of government has he adopted? So far, it is a pure television style. Rather than holding regular press conferences and taking questions, Berlusconi prefers to give long statements to "his" anchormen on the Fininvest network whose respectful attitude borders on adulation and the promotion of a personality cult. (When early returns in the March elections indicated a Berlusconi victory, anchorman Emilio Fede broke into tears of joy.) Veteran journalist Enzo Biagi has written that no Italian Prime Minister has ever appeared so often on television and has likened this to the "syndrome of the balcony" from which Mussolini addressed the crowds—an obsessive need to "communicate directly with the people."

Another Berlusconi obsession is polls. There is nothing new in a politician closely following opinion polls. What is new is how the Berlusconi government uses them: government spokesmen have said it is "anti-democratic" to challenge the opinion of the majority of Italians as it emerges from polls. The (neo- or post-fascist) Deputy Prime Minister Giuseppe Tatarella has described the use of polls as "direct democracy against strong and occult powers." This attitude prompted Adrian Lytleton, professor of European History at the University of Pisa, to write in *The New York Review of Books* "it is remarkable to find the 'liberal' right adopting Rousseau's version of the unmediated obligation imposed by the General Will." But so many questions have been raised about the credibility of polls carried out by Fininvest-trained marketing managers that Berlusconi's most trusted pollster, Gianni Pilo, was expelled in early October from ESOMAR, the international association of pollsters, for having violated its ethical standards.

The only time Berlusconi ignored the polls occurred on the eve of his brother Paolo's arrest on charges of bribery and corruption. It occurred

while millions of Italians were glued to their TV sets for the Soccer World Cup Championship. The government adopted a decree curtailing the powers of arrest of white collar crime suspects by the Clean Hands anti-corruption magistrates in Milan (who are considered national heroes) and imposing tight press controls on media reports of graft probes. If the government believed the Italian people would be too distracted to notice, it was a major political miscalculation. A surge of popular indignation (street demonstrations and a flood of protest faxes to newspapers) forced the government to quickly withdraw what came to be known as the "save the thieves" decree. It was the government's first humiliating defeat. But Berlusconi once again blamed the media and tried to revive his image through a series of public service promos of government policies which even the three RAI networks were obliged to broadcast. Berlusconi's Chief of Staff Gianni Letta announced that this was part of the government's new communication strategy, prompting humorists Fruttero and Lucentini to nickname the Prime Minister Pol Spot. But the public service spots had to be quickly scrapped when critics pointed out that Italian law prohibits government propaganda.

It was after this debacle that Berlusconi intensified his drive to seize full control of the state-run RAI networks. It was not a difficult conquest. RAI's 13,000 employees and 20,000 salaried freelancers had by then lost their political patrons (some of the political parties that had acted as their sponsors had virtually disappeared); the TV journalists' union was politically divided; and the long-entrenched Italian vice of quickly bending with the new political winds was already evident in the RAI news programs—to the point that it was only through the print media that one could get a clear idea of what was actually happening on the Italian political front.

Openly declaring that a public service should be in line with government policies, Berlusconi fired the Chairman and entire Board of Directors of RAI. It was later learned that the top management had first been given a chance to

save their jobs: two of the fired executives revealed that as soon as Berlusconi had become Prime Minister, he had proposed a cartel agreement to RAI under which the state-run networks would give up part of their advertising quota to the advantage of Fininvest and would artificially diminish their audience share, providing Berlusconi's three networks with a least one extra ratings point (each point is equal to about \$20 million in ad revenues). Under this arrangement, in order to lose viewers, RAI would have had to re-schedule or even cancel its most popular programs. The former RAI Chairman of the Board, Claudio Dematte' told *Il Corriere della Sera*, "we refused because this would have meant a radical restructuring of RAI." The RAI management thus was replaced by Berlusconi loyalists and a few weeks later, without even consulting the Parliamentary RAI watchdog commission, the new Board of Directors dismissed the news management staff of all RAI TV and radio programs. Two of the replacements are journalists who came directly from Fininvest. Berlusconi thus now has under his control all six national TV networks.

In his battle to conquer the state-run media, Berlusconi completely ignored what has become the crucial issue of Italian democracy—the conflict of interest between his roles as Prime Minister and owner of the second largest media conglomerate in Europe. For years, the European Union has been urging Italy to apply European media standards which include advertising ceilings. After his election victory, Berlusconi gave assurances that he would do something, but he also publicly declared that "the principal guarantor is my clear conscience as an honest man...my conscience is worth more than any mechanism of control." And Berlusconi's aides took comfort in pointing to their opinion polls showing that Berlusconi was the most popular man in Italy and only 15 percent of Italians cared about antitrust legislation.

There was a lot of talk of American-style blind trusts, but Berlusconi's number two at Fininvest, Fedele Confalonieri, rejected the suggestion saying it would "castrate Italy." He said

the company could not accept such a proposal which is aimed at "blacking out TV networks which have become tools to understand politics and truth. We are prepared to resist."

Berlusconi's only formal concessions were to step down as chairman of the Board of Fininvest and to appoint a committee of three jurists—choosing men directly or indirectly linked with Fininvest—and gave them the task of drawing up an antitrust plan that would satisfy his critics. Two months later, the three "experts" presented to parliament a proposal that Berlusconi himself select a trustee who would manage his business interests while he remains in office. The proposal was dismissed by the opposition and even Umberto Bossi, leader of the Northern League, called it "as flaky as pastry."

Despite seizing control of the national broadcast media, Berlusconi still felt under attack, not only by the independent print press but also by the Clean Hands pool of investigating magistrates in Milan. One of the most popular Fininvest programs for teenagers, "Non e' la RAI" (This Is Not RAI) opened its fall season with a new theme song in which its star, sixteen-year-old Ambra, paraphrasing an aria from *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, lashes out against journalists and magistrates. She sings, "slander is a light breeze, the press makes squawking noise, it builds in a crescendo and stuns people's brains...and the one who has been slandered is trampled by the mass and slowly slowly he will die..." Ambra—an idol of Italian teens—already made her "political" debut during the election campaign in March when she proclaimed, "God is on Berlusconi's side."

As summer turned to fall, Berlusconi became more and more obsessed with the Milan magistrates. He accused them of conspiring against his government and his financial empire. His staff and followers began to circle the wagons, charging that the magistrates had overstepped their roles and were pursuing a witch-hunt. Vittorio Sgarbi—Chairman of the Lower House Culture Commission—went so far as to accuse the magistrates of being "assassins." Sgarbi made the charge on his daily program

on a Fininvest network during which he regularly hurls invectives against members of the opposition and anyone who dares criticize the government. The anti-magistrates campaign reached its peak in the first week of October as press leaks appeared that the investigators were closing in on Fininvest. Berlusconi himself called the inquiry a "use of justice for distorted ends." Justice Minister Alfredo Biondi accused the magistrates of "judicial fraud." Fininvest anchorman Emilio Fede charged that the magistrates and the print press were plotting to destroy the conglomerate. The strident tone of the campaign was widely interpreted as an effort by the government to tie the magistrates' hands.

The head of the Clean Hands pool, Francesco Saverio Borelli, then made an unprecedented counter-attack. In an interview with *Il Corriere della Sera* on October 5, he said an investigation into a pay-television channel partly owned by Berlusconi could embroil "very high levels" of the country's political and financial elite. The probe concerns ownership of Telepiu', of which Fininvest says it has a ten percent stake. Investigators are trying to determine whether Berlusconi's conglomerate owns much more of Telepiu' through nominee companies. If this were the case, Berlusconi could be charged with violation of existing antitrust legislation and could risk losing the licenses of his three flagship networks. The stakes are very high. Not only could Fininvest's vast media holdings be in jeopardy, Berlusconi himself could come directly under investigation.

The institutional confrontation between the government and the Milan magistrates was accompanied by a wave of invectives by Cabinet Ministers who accused Borelli of using Mafia-style tactics and of violating the Constitution. Fininvest anchormen joined the fray. Paolo Liguori on his *Studio Aperto* evening news program complained that Fininvest employees were being politically persecuted and urged viewers to sue Borelli for damages following the sudden plunge of the stock market.

While the confrontation raged on the front pages of newspapers and on

the nightly news, some print journalists discovered that a few weeks earlier the Berlusconi government had quietly issued a decree that decriminalized violations of the fragile existing antitrust law. The weekly *L'Espresso* wrote, "Berlusconi the Prime Minister effectively granted Berlusconi the owner of Fininvest an amnesty for any antitrust violations he may have committed."

Whatever the outcome of the Telepiu' investigation, Berlusconi's conflicts of interest have never been so apparent. For the first time in a democracy, a financial and media empire has come directly to power. Berlusconi used American-style tactics—personalizing politics and using modern TV techniques. The difference with the U.S., however, is the total absence of checks and balances—a vital condition which Berlusconi seems to ignore.

The aggressive tones of the Berlusconi government have raised concerns in Europe as well as in Italy. His Forza Italia party did not succeed in joining the caucus of Christian Democrat parties in the European Parliament. The greatest alarm has been expressed in Germany—where there is still a strong memory of the Fascist "wind from the south" that helped inspire Hitler. The German daily *Suddeutsche Zeitung* has disdainfully described Italy as a country on its way to becoming "a banana republic." Adrian Lyttleton has written that it is not democracy that is in danger in Italy, "it is the quality of democracy rather than its existence which is at stake....Berlusconi's government endangers the distinction between the public and the private spheres that is the foundation of a free society." Lyttleton says this is "a new design of government that could be contagious."

Within Italy, the events of the first six months of the Berlusconi government have dampened the euphoria that accompanied the tycoon's election victory and popular criticism and opposition is increasing. But journalism historian Paolo Murialdi is pessimistic about the future of the media in Italy. He fears that the industrial oligarchies that dominate the print press have only their business interests at heart and could be willing to make compromises

# Welfare Reform In the World Economy

BY MARTIN GEHLEN

in order not to antagonize the government. Murialdi, moreover, is also concerned about the traditional politicization of Italian journalism, still uncertain about its role and independence. It should be noted, however, that in recent years Italian journalists have begun to be less dependent on political and economic sponsors. They have been stimulated by competition and are now much more attentive to what readers want. This is particularly true of the local press which was nearly non-existent 25 years ago and which a 1990 Parliamentary report on the press described as "more pluralist, less conformist and less infiltrated by the political parties than the national press" and could therefore be considered "a factor in democratic growth."

But Italian journalists' search for greater autonomy is hampered by another Italian anomaly—a weak collective understanding of the role of political and civil rights which have always been overshadowed by the preponderance of ideology in politics. When the last government—which included several esteemed experts and university professors—was called on to set ethical guidelines for television coverage of the election campaign, it dismissed the proposal as superfluous.

Nevertheless, the rise of Berlusconi the politician and his aggressive use of media power have finally put the spotlight on the long-ignored problem of Italians' political and civil rights—not least the right to fair information. And, perceiving that those rights are endangered, many Italians are beginning to mobilize. Opposition politicians and journalists have founded a national information monitoring committee. And a group of MP's—from both government and opposition parties—have collected sufficient signatures to convene a special parliamentary session dedicated exclusively to debate what centrist opposition leader Mario Segni has called the Berlusconi government's "military occupation" of the state-run RAI networks. ■

**F**or non-American ears Bill Clinton's message sounds like the onset of a revolution: "To end welfare as we know it."

The Democratic President has called for a "dramatic breakthrough" in changing public assistance through the complete overhaul of the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program installed during the Great Depression. More specifically, as the first Western industrial nation to do this, the United States would impose a general time limit on public support for the poor and the needy in order, according to Clinton, to "break the cycle of welfare dependency."

Would such changes pull, as promised, hundreds of thousands of people back "from welfare to work?" Or is it more of a recipe for social disaster, a high-risk human experiment on the backs of the weakest, likely to put even more people in unbearable situations and cause new harm and sufferings?

Although the precise details of his reform have not been formed, his new approach is undoubtedly tough. People who don't comply with work requirements would, after two years on wel-

fare, face financial penalties. If adopted, American society would abandon its duty to provide, if necessary, long-term support for millions of poor citizens who cannot find work or who for various reasons are unable to participate even in the low-paid labor market. Thus, Clinton's initiative would likely perforate and tear down the bottom layer of the social safety net and implicitly redefine the traditional commitments and responsibilities of the modern welfare state.

Given this situation, journalists and political observers abroad might think that this large-scale social surgery would be restricted to the United States—a nation that usually treats its needy citizens more harshly than, for example, the majority of European states.

However, there is growing evidence that the Clinton administration is not simply acting as an international outsider; it could assume the role of a Western trendsetter that could influence the social guidelines of other nations for the next decade. Tony Blair, for example, the new British Labor leader, has already taken up the issue



FOTOGRAFIE, KATHARINA EGLAU, BERLIN

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and responded positively to Clinton's reform principles. In Germany, Helmut Kohl's recently re-elected Christian Democratic Party announced welfare cuts for people unwilling to work. In France, the government tried to implement a special low-wages labor market for young jobless professionals as a way to get them from welfare to work. Only countrywide demonstrations and severe riots stopped this legislation. And in Italy, plans to cut back social security ignited a nation-wide strike.

These incidents prove that the internationalization of markets, companies and businesses is likely to be followed by an internationalization of social cut-backs and growing domestic tensions. But, while the international economy and finance is a common topic in journalistic coverage, the focus on the negative social side-effects tends to be restricted to the boundaries of each country. Social policy is still viewed as a problem of predominately domestic concern, covered by domestic political writers most of the time without outlining links and parallels to other countries and their experiences.

Certainly, there are reasons for this nationalistic view. In many cases, specific social legislation is hard to compare. Often social security systems differ in their goals, their method of financing, the number and the category of persons included, the level of support and the organizational structures. In addition, traditions of social thinking and social consciousness vary as well as the general understanding of the distribution of responsibilities between the individual and the society. For example, in the United States, public worry for the poor was never one of the strongholds in American self-understanding whereas in Scandinavian states it is traditionally on top of the public and political agenda.

But this difference is only part of the picture. Remarkable international shifts, affecting almost all industrial nations, are emerging in the social sector. The whole Western world faces increasingly tense competition from low-wage countries in Asia, Latin America and the former Communist bloc. Massive long-term unemployment, as well as record

**... it is necessary to develop a much more alert sense for long-term developments like the creeping determination to scale down the responsibility of society for its weakest members. An important indicator, for example, is a growing public tendency to see the lack of success in life primarily as an individual character problem or a moral failure. Other hints of the same kind are the increasing number of political initiatives to instrumentalize social support payments for the direction or punishment of dependent people's behavior.**

numbers of welfare-recipients and homeless, are the troublesome result. Especially, lower-skilled workers, who have difficulty in competing with new international demands, form an increasing burden on the national jobless insurance and welfare budgets. In comparable need are the victims of ongoing family erosion, which puts millions of single parents and their children on the edge of poverty.

As a result, inside all wealthy industrial nations a growing rift between rich and poor, winners and losers, lucky and unlucky, is developing, accompanied by an erosion of societal solidarity. The successful majority enjoys access to the high-paid job market, strong lobbies and representatives in the political class, while the marginalized minority of working poor or welfare recipients is more and more abandoned, has no

access to influential lobbies and is neglected by politics.

For journalists, this situation presents a twofold challenge. First, to capture the situation, it is necessary to develop a much more alert sense for long-term developments like the creeping determination to scale down the responsibility of society for its weakest members. An important indicator, for example, is a growing public tendency to see the lack of success in life primarily as an individual character problem or a moral failure. Other hints of the same kind are the increasing number of political initiatives to instrumentalize social support payments for the direction or punishment of dependent people's behavior.

Second, domestic social coverage must seek access to new resources and look out for different angles and perspectives. International experiences, for example, can offer fruitful additional information for the national audience and allow them a more qualified evaluation of new social proposals and their likely consequences at home. Therefore, journalists who write on such topics need to build new international information networks similar to those that scientific or business writers already have in place, with the help of Internet. In addition, international organizations should bring together journalists, politicians and experts of different countries not only to discuss matters of science, economy or foreign affairs, but also to deal with general trends in social policy.

Last, but not least, newspapers or magazines could set up multinational exchange-programs for their domestic writers so that they, for a few weeks, could work together with local social reporters or domestic editorial writers in a host country. This would not only stimulate the exchange of ideas, but also open up new valuable information sources and contacts. With such firsthand insights into other nations' situations, the coverage at home could provide additional enlightenment to the domestic readership, but also present alternatives, expose superficial political rhetoric and correct unrealistic expectations. ■



# Haiti: Reporters Look Good, Not So the Pundits

BY HENRY RAYMONT

Perhaps more than anything, the coverage of the Haiti intervention by U.S. troops can be considered a triumph of unbiased, competent reporting from the scene over the thumb-sucking of "worst case scenarios" constructed by some less-than-nonpartisan think tanks and, unfortunately, an abundant number of editorial writers.

In broader terms, it put into sharp focus outstanding professional journalism as the discipline of informed observation as distinct from the abstract formulations so favored by Washington's policy elite. It also brought out differences between the field reports of the news departments and editorial writers. The latter tended to express, Cassandra-like, fears of uncertainty, inevitable political chaos, revanchist killings and untold U.S. casualties in the event of a U.S. intervention, the version favored by the think tanks.

The major news organizations deserve much credit for having sent some of their finest reporters to Haiti even before the U.S. troops began to land—television being only slightly behind the leading metropolitan dailies. By September, The New York Times had a team of five on the ground, taking the place of the veteran Howard W. French who had just been reassigned to South Africa.

The Times Foreign Desk deployed this team while its editorial page expressed strong disapproval of military intervention. On July 25, in its lead editorial, titled "Don't invade Haiti," the newspaper said: "To invade would be an irresponsible use of the world's most formidable military force. Horrible things are going on in Haiti. These are good reasons to put the strongest

diplomatic and economic pressures on the junta and to provide sanctuary to fleeing refugees. They are not good reasons to send in the marines."

Horrible things were indeed going on in Haiti. They were being graphically chronicled by The Times team and by Douglas Farah, Tod Robberson and William Booth of The Washington Post, among others. All conveyed a chilling account of brutality and corruption, a reality that tends to elude many of the strategic thinkers who are fortunate never to have experienced it first-hand.

I was in Haiti in 1963 when President Kennedy sent an aircraft carrier into the Port-au-Prince bay to deter the massacres unleashed by "Papa Doc" Duvalier's Tontons Macoutes. Though I consider myself an unreconstructed anti-interventionist of the Franklin D. Roosevelt

school, I remember how keenly I wished the Marines would land; they did not.

But I had seen the hacked bodies of Haitian army officers suspected of disloyalty, as well as those of their families and domestic staffs. I had also experienced the terror of the gentle and artistic people of the Haitian capital. It was one of those times when both the lessons of history and abstract legal principles clash with a concrete situation demanding perhaps more the exercise of moral responsibility than the observance of legal principles. I must hasten to add that this article is based on an impressionistic spot check of the Haiti coverage, not a scientific sampling.

Many U.S. correspondents covering the current Haiti crisis seemed as repelled by the bloody Haiti dictatorship as I was 30 years ago—and elated by the



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subsequent public explosion of freedom. Though there were many excellent reports, I find it worth quoting from John Kifner of *The New York Times* to appreciate the political context and his ability to spot the correct mood and cultural setting even though he had never before set foot in Haiti. For example, on Oct. 15, 1994, the day of Aristide's return, Kifner wrote:

The squalid shantytowns were festive today, with crowds dancing and chanting under victory arches of palm leaves and branches. The rutted streets were swept clean, lined with freshly painted murals depicting American soldiers, their tanks and helicopters and a smiling Aristide descending on a cloud.

Very quickly the reporting from the field suggested that not only the correspondents, but also the U.S. commander, Lt. General Henry H. Shelton, and his troops were more in control of the Haitian reality than most of the strategic thinkers and pundits in Washington.

"We call them thugs," Shelton was quoted telling a group of Haitians as U.S. soldiers arrested some Haitian officers the Pentagon in Washington had previously characterized in more diplomatic language. A *Washington Post* story portrayed Marine Col. Tom Jones, commander of U.S. troops in northern Haiti, as "overwhelmed" by the celebrations sparked by the announcement of Aristide's return:

"It was like a scene from the movie 'Gandhi.' It was like the yoke of oppression was lifted from the people. It was just awesome. I've never seen anything like it."

But while the Haitian people cheered the arrival of U.S. troops, the Clinton administration had to ward off a barrage of editorial flak: Why hadn't Clinton consulted Congress? Why is he sending troops to Haiti when polls say that the move has overwhelming popular opposition?

Ridiculing what he called "Clinton's little war," columnist Charles Krauthammer in *The Washington Post* implied that the invasion was ordered for domestic motives, because "now, Haiti is a threat to Clinton's chances of carrying refugee-weary Florida in 1996."

Indeed, there were stories aplenty about opinion polls suggesting the public's disenchantment.

Ironically, much of the Washington policy-making establishment still seemed imbued with one of the less edifying legacies of the Cold War—the belief that certain societies require authoritarian rule to impose "law and order." Henry Clay once called that kind of thinking "Old World" and the "argument of monarchies" that had no place in the Americas.

Since the mid-80's when Latin American dictators were swept out of office

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one after another, including the corrupt regime of "Baby Doc" Duvalier in Haiti, the U.S. media began to focus on the surge of democratic sentiment in the region, an indigenous development for which various U.S. administrations liked to take credit.

Not surprisingly then, the landslide victory of Aristide as Haiti's first democratically elected leader in March, 1991, was greeted with wide enthusiasm in the United States. Accordingly, when a military coup ousted the president seven months after he took office, the United States and Latin America instantly and vigorously demanded his reinstatement without conditions.

The Organization of American States, acting with unusual dispatch, sent a

delegation of foreign ministers to Port-au-Prince to request that the military junta step aside, a demand Argentine Foreign Minister, Guido di Tella, called "a test of the new international order."

The O.A.S. had a compelling interest in the success of the mission. Barely four months before the coup, the O.A.S. General Assembly meeting at Santiago, Chile, had adopted a ground-breaking resolution pledging to protect democracies from military takeovers, by authorizing member governments to adopt "any measures" deemed appropriate to reconstitute constitutional rule. One commentator called it a testimony to "a newly democratic O.A.S."

However, the reporting of the Haitian crisis out of Washington paid scant attention to this new landmark in international law. Predictably, the focus was on the White House, the State Department, the Pentagon, Congress and scattered U.S. "experts," rather than on what tools the inter-American system could bring to bear against the military usurpers.

The reporting from Haiti itself, on the other hand, gave a far less equivocal picture, although assessments emanating from "diplomats" and "business circles," not to mention the Haitian military and other Aristide opponents, would darkly repeat Washington's misgivings about Aristide. At first, *French of The Times* tended to stress class hatred, over and above what was clearly emerging as an organized effort to undermine Aristide, most likely aided and abetted by the C.I.A. and some Pentagon officials, as a powerful contributing factor to the proverbial cause of Haiti's endemic political instability. In his first-day story of the coup, datelined Miami, French wrote:

President Aristide, though still wildly popular among the desperately poor masses of this country who elected him in the expectation that he would improve their lot, has generated almost equally passionate fears and suspicion among many in the tiny and prosperous educated elite; these people say that after his election to the presidency last December, Father Aristide showed scant regard for the country's newborn

democratic institutions and on several occasions openly legitimized the use of violence to settle scores.

To be sure, almost nobody in Haiti is showing any sympathy for the armed undisciplined thugs who now roam the streets shooting randomly at pedestrians and virtually everyone is crying out for a return to constitutional rule.

Though the day of the coup the Bush administration practically led the hemisphere in demanding Aristide's unconditional reinstatement, it took less than a week for Washington to betray its lack of trust in the reformist "priest-turned-politician." In fact, the very day that Aristide met with the O.A.S. Council in Washington and called for all sides to renounce violence in Haiti, anonymous "administration officials" began to hint that "Aristide is at least in part to blame for his fall from office."

The report led *The Times* on Monday, October 7, 1992, one week after the government's fall. The headline read: "In Policy Shift, U.S. Criticizes Haitian on Rights Abuses; Deposed Leader Faulted."

The manifest ambivalence within the administration, and the unconcealed animosity that existed toward Aristide in the Bush administration, continued during a considerable period after President Clinton came into office, aided and abetted by the C.I.A., the Pentagon and some State Department officials. However, to their credit, Warren Christopher, Strobe Talbott and Anthony Lake seemed totally committed to Aristide's restoration.

The source of U.S. ambivalence, and of the virulent hostility shown to Aristide by conservative Senators and Congressmen, turned out to be a classified C.I.A. "psychological profile" of Aristide, branding the Haitian leader as "mentally unbalanced" and a radical follower of liberation theology. The classified document was assiduously leaked by a series of Republican Senators, led by Sen. Jesse Helms, to discredit the Clinton administration's policy of attempting to restore Aristide to power.

Adding insult to injury, Helms accused Christopher at a Senate hearing on Nov. 4, 1993, of seeking to gloss over unflattering revelations in the report.

**Whatever one's persuasion, it is a matter of fact that most of the speculation and fear mongering that preceded the use of U.S. forces in Haiti did not deal realistically with the concrete situation prevailing in that terrorized Caribbean island.**

"It was well known that Mister Aristide was a murderer," Helms, who is in line to be the new Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said. "Yet somebody decided to return him to power at the risk, if necessary, of American lives."

It is not too far-fetched to suggest that Aristide and Haiti were the victims of the relics of a classic cold war McCarthyism that had perverted U.S. policy in the Caribbean and Latin America since the overthrow of Arbenz in Guatemala in 1954: the systematic defamation and destabilization of leftist reformers and the concomitant propping up of rightist dictatorships in the name of containing a "Sino-Soviet imperialism" in the New World, a policy that almost invariably kindled deep nationalist antipathies toward Washington's policies.

Comparisons are proverbially odious, but it is hard not to detect similarities between the methods copyrighted by Senator Joseph R. McCarthy and those often used by the C.I.A. to defame its enemies. What is strikingly reminiscent of the McCarthy tactics is the flood of distortions, exaggerations and plain unvarnished lies about Aristide that issued forth almost daily from the C.I.A. fiction writers.

In retrospect, top O.A.S. officials are saying publicly what everybody knew privately at the time, that Washington's ambivalence was held responsible for thwarting the regional organization's efforts to reverse the Haitian coup. The

former O.A.S. Secretary General, Joao Clemente Baena Soares of Brazil, in an interview for this article, recalled that shortly after the coup he wanted a senior U.S. military officer to accompany him to Port-au-Prince as a show of force in his negotiations with the Haitian military. Bernard Aronson, the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, endorsed the idea.

"But it was subsequently vetoed by the Pentagon," Baena said. "And there was no way that Cedras and his people would enter into meaningful negotiations without the visible backing of the U.S. military. After the O.A.S. talks collapsed it was only a matter of time before the same fate befell the mediation sponsored by the United Nations."

Whatever one's persuasion, it is a matter of fact that most of the speculation and fear mongering that preceded the use of U.S. forces in Haiti did not deal realistically with the concrete situation prevailing in that terrorized Caribbean island.

Perhaps one of the most dramatic stories of the Haitian crisis that is still unwritten is the story of how Aristide resisted the humiliating pressures brought by both the United States and other foreign governments to force him to compromise, initially with the opposition politicians he had roundly defeated in the election and then with a brutal military leadership that held his country hostage. Nor is it quite clear how Clinton himself evolved from emulating the Bush administration's policy of reluctant support to the warm embrace for Aristide backed by military intervention. ■

# Haiti—Broader Picture Needed

BY DOUG WALKER

**I**t was nearly nine years ago when I stood on the corner of Delmas 29 in Port-au-Prince and watched scores of exultant Haitians waving tree branches, while others ransacked two Duvalier-related businesses—all to celebrate dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier's departure.

Two radio stations came back on the air that morning playing Handel's triumphant Hallelujah Chorus. Little did any of us know, however, how hellish much of the next nine years would be for many Haitians, as their hopes for something better seemed to be repeatedly raised and then crushed.

I watched triumphant Haitians again this fall, as their president, Jean Bertrand Aristide, returned. However, this time I watched on television. My "view" of Haiti's struggle was dependent on someone else's observations. I now depended on what I saw and read in the media. It has given me a new appreciation and

concern for the images and words we use to develop our view of the world.

There were many positive elements to what I heard, saw and read in the media as Haiti grabbed the headlines for several weeks this fall. First, to one starved for news about Haiti, it was refreshing to get a variety of perspectives on what was happening in Haiti. Suddenly, I could read five reporters' accounts of the events in Haiti, just in *The New York Times* alone. One of the drawbacks to most routine international coverage is that we get only one reporter's view of a situation. With several viewpoints, we get a richer perspective on not just the events, but many people's reactions to those events.

When Tod Robberson of *The Washington Post* went outside Port-au-Prince to the village of Brash, he saw people carefully cleaning the streets and erecting small shrines in anticipation of President Aristide's October return. Eighty-

four-year-old Carmen Jean Gilles told him the celebrating was "in honor of the justice and democracy that we hope for. We have so little and we believe in so much."

It was encouraging to read those words because too often people I talk to have a view of Haitians as only violent attachés or looting vagrants. One friend told me recently, "I'm tired of turning on the morning news and seeing live shots of Haitians looting stores."

A student wrote of his reaction to coverage of the Haiti crisis: "The images of violence are burned into my head...I have learned how much hostility there really is." Another said, "Often television news puts on pictures with Haitians covered with blood, riots everywhere....It gives me the feeling that Haitians are a group of people who are uneducated, angry, violent, helpless and waiting for rescue."

There have been more reports than that on television, but those students' overgeneralizations show how much weight pictures can carry. People remember the pictures more than the words, so television needs to show a greater variety of Haitian pictures—not always the most dramatic or bloodiest shots.

Certainly there is violence in Haiti,



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*Doug Walker was program director for Radio Lumiere in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, from 1984 to 1987. The station reported extensively on the anti-Duvalier uprisings that led to the dictator's exile in 1986. Doug returned to the states, where he completed his doctoral dissertation on the role of the media in the adaptation of Haitian immigrants in Miami. He now teaches broadcast communication courses at Asbury College in Wilmore, Kentucky, but follows Haiti closely and still craves Haitian diri kolé (rice and beans).*

but there are also many who most desire to have a country at peace. We need to hear from more of the Carmen Jean Gilles to be reminded of that.

A second element I have appreciated in coverage of the Haiti crisis is the opportunity to feel the frustrations and agonies of the Haitian people. There were some specific attempts, by writers like The New York Times's Catherine Manegold, to show the American audience the struggles Haitians faced in a land nearly strangled by a U.S.-sponsored embargo.

NBC's Mike Boettcher had a moving piece on the plight of Our House Orphanage where supplies to the orphanage had been held at a dock for weeks because different officials wanted their shares of the cut. One cannot understand Haiti (or the obstacles facing President Aristide) until one has stood in line all day waiting for a government document, only to be told to come back the next day (because, you later find out, you didn't give a bribe to the right person).

There were other reports that also helped to give a broader picture. ABC gave its person of the week award one Friday to a Haitian doctor trained in the United States, who had returned to his homeland to run a rural hospital. The special segment on this doctor was a hopeful reminder of the Haitians working for the betterment of the country, not their own pocketbook. And there are many like him who have not been seen on television.

Americans need to hear more Haitian voices like the woman who told The Washington Post's Douglas Farah that the children in her neighborhood had finally played soccer in the streets the previous night: "They have not been able to stay out for three years. If the police saw them, they would be arrested and beaten. For three years we were in hell. Now we are not afraid because my Titid [Aristide] is coming back."

Credit also goes to CBS's Dan Rather for his interviews with Lt. General Cédras both before and after the occupation. The longer versions of those interviews provided insight into his fear of chaos and of his nationalistic pride.

There are some areas where I would have liked to have seen additional coverage from the media in order to help me and others better understand Haiti and its present problems. First, it would have been helpful to use this opportunity to show us more about the history and culture of Haiti. Some did this well. ABC's special, "House on Fire," gave a fascinating summary of Haiti's recent political history. It also let us meet fleeing boat people and members of the Haitian elite, each with very real fears.

Too little of the media coverage, however, told us more about the Haitian people and their beliefs. It's easy to say that Haiti is 90 percent Catholic and 100 percent voodoo, but that masks a much more complex reality and ignores the striking growth of Protestant churches in recent years. Some stories told of Father Aristide's rise to power, but only a couple that I saw truly captured (or mentioned) the power of his Haitian Creole proverbs. Other stories mentioned the mulatto/black divisions in Haiti, but few dealt in depth with the implications of this in politics and business.

Strangely, I also feel that few pieces helped us to know Aristide better. One that did was Peter Jennings's interview with Aristide in which the Haitian president said that the United States should intervene "because we are men; it's a question of human values."

Second, we need to hear more about what Haitians (both rich and poor) are thinking (not just Americans or foreign diplomats). It's too easy to use the same dozen (or fewer) sources for our stories, rather than striking out for new viewpoints. I speak of my own failure (while reporting in Haiti) when I say this, as well.

CBS's 48 Hours included a segment with Don Weaver, an American missionary in Haiti, that mentioned Weaver's support for Lt. General Cédras but never let him explain why he supported Cédras. On the other hand, Peter Slevin and Yves Colon wrote an excellent article in The Miami Herald that used interviews with at least a dozen members of the Haitian elite to better show some of their frustrations and fears of change.

Talking to the poor can also be a challenge in Haiti. You need to go beyond the people who want to talk to you to find those that live in places where the raw sewage turns your stomach. You need to go beyond Port-au-Prince to the rest of Haiti, where most Haitians live. My thanks to reporters like Gary Pierre-Pierre of The New York Times and Laurent Belsie of The Christian Science Monitor who looked at towns off the beaten path and discussed issues like how to replace rural Haiti's notorious section chiefs.

We also need to know what the poor and rich, those in and out of power, are thinking about political compromise. Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter have written that without compromise between the elite and a new democratic government there can be no development of strong political institutions nor a transition from authoritarian to democratic rule.

Third, one of the critical problems facing Haiti is the total collapse of the law as a respected and functioning institution. I would like to learn more about how that issue is being handled in Haiti today.

I did an interview in 1987 with former Haitian Minister of Justice Francois Latortue who said he visited a rural Justice of the Peace who "had no legal books, no Civil Code, no Penal Code, nothing." When asked how he decided his cases, the justice said, "my memory."

Latortue said that Haiti since the Duvaliers has had no organized system of law. And he warned that "without respect for the law, eventually the social system will degenerate." That will be a critical issue under Aristide's new government as well, and I hope that it is covered by the American media.

Taken as a whole, I was pleased with the coverage of the Haitian situation, especially in the period immediately before and after the invasion (when the number of reporting viewpoints was at its maximum). But there are different challenges now.

Thomas Friedman, in his book, "From Beirut to Jerusalem," writes that one of the lessons he learned as a correspondent in the Middle East was "that the real story is often found not in the noise

but in the silence and that is why it is so often missed....It's the people who won't talk to me whom I really want to meet."

Friedman's comments were directed toward the secretive kidnapers who took men like ABC newsman Charles Glass, but his comments are strikingly relevant in Haiti also. There are many in Haiti who remain silent because no reporter has sought them out. They remain silent because of barriers of location, language or lifestyle. Some live outside Port-au-Prince or behind iron gates in hillside mansions or in the corner of a Cité Soleil slum dwelling. Others speak in a thick Creole accent that takes time to learn and to appreciate. Still others—both shopkeepers and students—maintain a self-imposed silence.

As Haiti fades from the daily headlines, I would echo the dreams of a Haitian reporter who told me earlier this year, "We need to have international journalists cover this country who live here all the time, who see the daily issues and can faithfully report these issues."

There is a proverb in Haiti that says, "A friend may give you his teeth, but never his heart." Even a friend is wary of revealing his innermost secrets because of a lack of trust. But only reporters who are able to stay in Haiti can begin to build the trust needed to learn and to share Haiti's deeper secrets (and that would happen best if it included more Haitians reporting for the international news media as well).

My thanks to those reporters in Haiti who went beyond the friendly circles of the Holiday Inn, where many reporters stay, to show us what else was happening in Haiti. To do so took time and some risks. Some bridged the barriers to tell us the continually changing story.

All that was easier to do when organizations had three, four or more reporters on the scene. Now that that is no longer true, I still hope there will be a greater commitment by organizations and reporters in Haiti to finding the stories in the silence. Such stories will become even more important as the inevitable frustrations with the American presence in Haiti grow in the coming months. ■

## How Poland Rejected Press Curbs

[ - - - -Cens. Law number- - - - ]

BY ANDRZEJ WROBLEWSKI

**A** Polish superspy, sentenced by an American court to years in jail and later exchanged for some American spies, may have done something much more important for his country than stealing the designs of the Patriot missile and Stealth bomber. He put the proposal for a state secrets law in motion and contributed to the dramatic triumph of journalists over bureaucrats.

Poland never had someone like James Madison and had never seen a close relationship between a free press and a prosperous society. Therefore, senators from the ruling coalition, who discussed the state secrets bill in a television studio on the eve of the Senate debate, seemed to be gaining the upper hand over "hysterical journalists," as one of them put it. "We must shield our country from excessive penetration of foreign intelligence," said another one, "especially as we are in the process of privatization of our economy. That openness costs us millions of dollars."

The next day, October 7, the overwhelming majority of 74 senators (with only 5 opposing) rejected the proposed law, which threatened up to 10 years of contemplation in jail to those who revealed state secrets, no matter whether they possessed it on purpose or by accident.

What happened during the night?

Let me run back to our superspy, Major Marion Zacharski.

Zacharski came back to Poland in the mid-Eighties and was hidden somewhere. In mid-1994 he was appointed by a new, neo-communist government as the head of Polish intelligence. "He is

second to nobody and was spying not for Communists, but for Poland," the government said in recommending him. That appointment helped the opposition launch a political campaign against the government. The names of former, current and future spies were flying in the air, to the joy of reporters and foreign counter-espionage services. The need for a law on state secrets seemed to be increasingly clear.

Actually the draft of such a law was prepared, but was always pushed to the side by more urgent measures. Each succeeding government edited the proposed law the way it liked. Hanna Suchocka, prime minister in 1993, wanted to narrow the access of journalists to secrets, but did not want to put us in jail. Waldemar Pawlak, who took the premiership over a year ago, was more hospitable and invited us behind bars. The proposal his government prepared and submitted to the Parliament stipulates state secrets to be protected (the list consists of 71 points, which the minister of justice says is an enormous progress from the previous 400), how long they should be kept secret and what awaits those who reveal a secret. Here is the most crucial point, at least for journalists: not those who should guard secrets, but those who distribute them, are to be punished.

### Chernobyl? Never Heard of It

The scheme not only would shrink the amount of information that we can publish, but also would give bureaucrats power to exempt from our penetration the areas they do not like. When the draft of the law appeared in the

media, some reporters composed a list of what a Polish reader would not have read if the law had existed:

- We would not have known about the Chernobyl explosion (but we did when Communists governed).

- We would not have known about the fraud in the Foreign Debt Servicing Agency, which was supposed to secretly buy Polish government debts on international markets, 16 to 20 cents for a dollar.

- We would not have known about corruption in the Poznan police, where businessmen bought our under-equipped cops some fast cars and modern faxes in exchange for closed eyes, or even active assistance in smuggling truckloads of goods into the country.

- We would not have know that the State Protection Bureau issued Instruction 0015, which ordered agents to collect information on political parties (which I think is the right thing to be done, given how many and how unpredictable those parties are).

- We would not have known how much new baths installed in the presidential palace cost.

- And many others.

The list was promptly lengthened by historians, who found that "strict secret" information concerning intelligence and counter-intelligence were to be kept for 80 years! Not only Major Zacharski, but also Stalinist interrogators (who contended they were fighters against American and other capitalist spies and not agents of political terror) would thus be shielded.

I do not think there is any political sympathy of neo-leftist government for arch-leftist criminals. It is rather a lack of belief in the strength of civic society, and excessive belief in the power, authority and interest of the state.

### Sorry, We Can't Inform

The vote in the lower chamber on 15 September brought no surprise: neo-communists and farmers voted yea (362 votes), the opposition voted no (75 votes), minorities abstained. What was surprising, though, was the reaction of the media the next day. Almost all dailies recalled the marks of censorship in

newspapers during Communist rule:

[ - - - -Cens. Law no. - - - - ]

Every reader must have thought: have we gone such a long way since 1989 in order to come back to censorship?

That idea must have hit even the politicians. Their front, never united, began to melt even more. Some congressmen promised they would make use of their immunity and read forbidden news aloud in Parliament. Some, who had voted for the law, conceded they made a mistake, that they subordinated their views to party discipline and would change their votes, if possible. All journalists' associations, whatever their political differences, protested. Some editors promised to go to jail rather than obey such a law. A radio station in Gdansk, the cradle of Solidarity, announced an information boycott of parties that voted in favor of the proposed law. The announcer said, "we can't inform on what that party's position was because we do not want to insult the law on state secrets."

Not surprisingly, other associations of writers, lawyers etc. supported the journalists. But the most outspoken support came from the people whom we serve, from the readers, watchers, listeners. In two separate public opinion surveys the question "should a journalist be able to reveal a state secret, if it is useful for the society?"—61 and 80 percent answered "yes." President Walesa promptly said that he would probably veto the measure, because "I had always very good relations with the newsmen."

### Emergency Gate

No matter that in order to become law it had to go through the Senate and be signed by the president, one could feel the bureaucrats beginning to look down at reporters. The refusal to grant information, formerly rare, became more common. To check how the pending law would work, a reporter of "Zycie Warszawy" asked the general staff of the army how much peas they had stocked. The answer was "state secret," of course.

But as serious and mocking forms of protest multiplied, legislators were soft-

ening their positions. An emergency exemption for serious investigative reporting was proposed: if there is apparent social gain at stake, the reporter could apply to the supreme court to have the state secret law suspended in that particular case.

The coalition parties, which constitute a majority in the lower chamber, are even stronger in the upper one, so nobody expected what happened: the senators, who defended the law the previous day, smashed it the next. The virtue of truth wins over the dark of silence? The impact of democratic public opinion? The respect for our professional organizations?

No, unfortunately. That night the leaders of governing parties convened and decided that if the Senate passed the law, President Walesa would veto it and gain the sympathy of the public. Better to steal the show and reject the controversial law.

A happy ending? Not quite. The same day the Senate voted, a plan to reorganize the national Polish Press Agency was announced. It is clear that the plan would lead inevitably to the reduction of the agency to the level of a government public relations office. It seems that the brackets with four strokes will accompany us, one way or another, for quite a while. ■

*Andrzej Wroblewski is Editor in Chief of Gazeta Bankowa and a 1983 Nieman Fellow.*

# Taking Sides on the IRA Cease-fire

BY EMILY O'REILLY

One of the funnier incidents of the post-IRA cease-fire media jamboree took place at the security entrance to the Taoiseach's office in Dublin. The press had arrived en masse to witness the historic handshake between Prime Minister Albert Reynolds and Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams and were being filtered through a security screening post.

One man was having some difficulty in getting clearance. His colleagues, a BBC reporter and camera crew, said that no, he wasn't a journalist, or a technician or a member of the administrative support staff. He was, they finally admitted with some embarrassment, an actor. He was in fact Gerry Adams's "voice," one of the handful of actors employed by the BBC and other British broadcasting organizations to "subvert" the legal ban on the broadcasting of the voices of Sinn Fein members. Throughout that week, with the British government still refusing to lift the ban despite the cease-fire, the BBC and other crews were forced to bring the actors to every press conference and other Sinn Fein media events in order to produce legal live reports on the biggest breaking story in years. This was naturally a source of great hilarity to the rest of the media ending only when the government had the sense to end the ban some weeks later.

The broadcasting ban was just one of the ways in which both governments (the Irish government banned Sinn Fein from the airwaves until just before the cease-fire was declared) sought to control media coverage of the conflict in Northern Ireland. Certain British programs which attempted to explore the seamier side of Britain's role in the North were either banned or came under heavy pressure to "adjust" the editorial line in advance of being broadcast. One such program, about Sinn Fein leader Martin McGuinness, was banned on the ground that he wasn't sufficiently "demonized" by the program makers.

Media attempts to discover the truth behind Britain's "shoot to kill" policy in the 1980's, in which suspected IRA members were shot on sight by British security forces, were frequently frustrated by the government. This pressure inevitably led to in-

creasing self-censorship among journalists and media outlets themselves.

Reporters felt that even mildly sympathetic portrayals of the Northern nationalist/republican views ran the risk of at best government interference or at worst prosecution. In addition, certain sections of the British establishment media were quick to dub those who wrote in this manner about the nationalist community as "provos" i.e. IRA sympathizers—a highly dangerous charge.

Even in Ireland, where sympathy for the nationalists was understandably greater, the media itself divided into two camps. No other single issue had such a polarizing effect on journalists, with anyone who wrote on the north quickly labeled either "unionist" or "provo" depending on the perceived bias of the piece.

Arguments about the merits of the broadcasting ban raged throughout the tight little world of Irish journalism with a large minority of journalists actually supportive of government censorship in this area. Reporters who would think nothing of talking to "terrorists" in other countries—Serbia or Rwanda for example—held to a completely different set of "principles" when it came to coverage of a conflict on their own back door. Issues about the public's right to know and the need for balance on all issues were sacrificed on the altar of smug integrity, with reporters piously claiming that they would never interview anyone with blood on their hands.

Individual political prejudice naturally informed these views plus the fact that the further away the conflict the more emotionally detached one could be. Thus it was easier to schmooze with a rogue Serbian commander than it was to do likewise with a member of Sinn Fein living practically next door.

So those of us who sought to apply "normal" journalistic principles to the job of covering the North frequently found ourselves targeted by columnists in other newspapers whose editorial line was blindly anti-republican. I was vilified for a British Esquire piece I wrote last year that portrayed the human side of Gerry Adams. Yet even writing that piece, I had to make sure to pad it out with lengthy details of Adams's alleged past involvement in the IRA in order to

sanitize it for British consumption. In fact the editors of that magazine did take a risk, a brave one, in running the piece, knowing that this type of Sinn Fein coverage did not adequately pander to the views of the British media/political-establishment. Naturally the result of all this government and self imposed censorship led to most media outlets getting the story absolutely wrong.

Many British reporters in particular took virtual dictation from either government officials or sources in the security forces and rarely bothered to talk to Sinn Fein/IRA themselves to find out what the real story was. So when anyone who had done his homework could quite clearly see that a major change of policy was taking place within the republican movement, others resolutely refused to see this change and produced extremely seedy news and analysis reports for their readership.

When the IRA did declare the cease-fire there were many red faces in the media. Some reporters had the good grace to acknowledge they had got it wrong; others continued to rubbish Sinn Fein motivation and insist that the cease-fire was a sham and wouldn't last. This was particularly true of the Rupert Murdoch stable of papers, The Sunday Times in particular. Even with the cease-fire holding, with Gerry Adams's being welcomed in the U.S. by senior politicians and government officials, The Times and other papers continued to demonize him—to trawl through every past and present statement and act of the man and seek to find justification for the continuation of their own prejudiced "reporting" of the issue. The fact that the more that Adams was embraced by constitutional politics the less reason he would have to return to past practices, meant nothing to these newspapers. In fact Adams would have gladdened many a heart if he had told the IRA to end the cease-fire. They could then had smugly declared that they were "right" about him all along. ■

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# The Silence Of the Editors

## *Freelancers Face Frustration and Rudeness in Attempts To Get Response to Their Submissions*

BY MORTON MINTZ

In 1988, after more than four decades as a staff reporter—for twelve years at two now-defunct newspapers in St. Louis, and then for nearly thirty years at the funct Washington Post—I began a new career as a freelancer. Here's the upside: I've been published four times by The Post, three times each by The Washington Monthly, The Nation and Legal Times, twice each by Nieman Reports and Newsday, and once each by Village Voice, The Progressive, City Paper and Nonprofit Times.

While my overall earnings have been laughably small, despite a relatively hefty check from The Village Voice, I fortu-

nately needn't depend on freelancing to stay funct in my nominal retirement. Besides, I've had the psychic income that flows from doing only those projects which I choose to do (mostly investigative pieces about under- and non-reported corporate misbehavior and crime and judicial misconduct, and critiques of press performance).

I've also enjoyed several dealings with editors who are highly professional and, because professional, courteous. I would praise none more than the late Erwin Knoll at The Progressive, who was unfailingly fair and kind. And I've even appreciated editors for knowing how to say no gracefully, particularly

Cullen Murphy at The Atlantic and Hendrik Hertzberg at The New Yorker. For example, when they turned down a major investigative report ("Allies: The ACLU and the Tobacco Industry"), they did so promptly and explained why. I disagreed with some of their reasoning, but so what? (In the end, by the way, I contributed the report to the Coalition on Smoking OR Health, Public Citizen and other public-interest sponsors, which coalesced to issue and publicize it with news releases and a press conference.)

As the reader has surely guessed, however, the focus of this article is the downside of freelancing. Its dirty little widely known but unpublicized non-secret is that in-your-face rudeness is a way of life for many editors in dealing with freelancers, most of whom are mostly downright helpless most of the time.

Starting in mid-1993 this freelancer has marinated in pits of incivility dug by editors at several periodicals and newspapers. Unlike the editors of my half-dozen books, they've been gratuitously discourteous—over long periods and



*Morton Mintz, Nieman Fellow 1964, is in good health and spirits despite (because of?) the battles with editors for which he is slightly if justly famous (infamous?). To hear him tell it, editors who treat him decently melt his heart. Of course, one must be wary of self-serving claims made by a claimant zipping toward senility. Improbably, however, senility remains so distant that he's able to recall working at The Washington Post for nearly 30 years before departing in 1988.*

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without apology—for no visible good reason. Here I blow a whistle on such abuse the best way I know how, which is to document my experience—naming names and citing specifics—in the most egregious episode.

I offered an investigative piece to a series of editors. My request was merely to be told if it was wanted—to be told yes or no. Despite repeated queries, one executive editor took four months to break her silence and say no (while pronouncing the article “excellent”). Later, top editors at another publication who were at least as ill-mannered created an even tougher water torture. They held the piece for more than five months before the editor-in-chief found a moment to divulge a disingenuous equivalent of no (“a small likelihood that we can use it”) and more than seven months before he actually said no.

At one level, the experience is reminiscent of the song of the girl in Oklahoma! “who cain’t say no.” But at a deeper level, it exemplifies the self-indulgent needless nastiness of some editors. Not to imply that some freelancers (myself included) don’t behave badly on occasion, but every freelancer I know has an angry and/or anguished complaint (or complaints) of painfully unjust treatment. Too often, they say, too many editors are self-important, nonresponsive, insensitive—quick to do unto others what they sure as hell would not have others do unto them.

I’ll begin my story with essential background and follow with a chronology. Does it all end happily? Do I find an editor with whom I walk hand-in-hand into the sunset? Be patient.

## The Background

In 1976, U.S. District Judge Robert R. Merhige Jr. in Richmond levied a \$13.24 million criminal fine against Allied Chemical Corp. for causing the Kepone pesticide catastrophe in Virginia waterways. Sixteen years later, in the last of three articles I did for *Legal Times*, I made an astonishing disclosure: Merhige and Allied’s Richmond lawyers had cut a secret deal in a series of ex

parte meetings. These off-the-record sessions, held without the knowledge of the prosecutor, blatantly violated the canons of judicial conduct.

The essence of the deal was this: Merhige would reduce the fine to \$5 million; Allied would make a payment of \$8 million—\$240,000 shy of the the amount by which the judge had slashed the fine—to start up the Virginia Environmental Endowment. What particularly stained the offer was Merhige’s particular interest in the VEE: he and he alone would appoint all of its directors (those he’s named include acknowledged “old friends”).

The enticement for the company was the prospect of a tax deduction worth approximately \$4 million. Allied claimed the deduction in 1977, but the Internal Revenue Service disallowed it in 1989. Allied-Signal, Inc., as the company is now known, appealed to U.S. Tax Court. At trial, the ex parte sessions at which the deal was cut were documented by memos and stenographic transcripts prepared by or for the company’s Richmond lawyers, including an old friend of Merhige. The record of the ethically barred sessions “certainly stuns the court,” Tax Court Judge Edna G. Parker said from the bench. It’s “something I’ve never heard of...I am shocked at this.” Parker ruled for the IRS. Allied is seeking to overturn her ruling.

*Legal Times* led the paper with the story on May 11, 1992. Few read it with more interest than Joseph W. Luter III, chairman and president of Smithfield Foods, Inc., a Fortune 500 corporation in southeastern Virginia. He was struck by similarities between Merhige’s conduct in the Allied case and his conduct in a lawsuit in which two environmental groups sued Smithfield’s Gwaltney subsidiary for polluting a river with meatpacking effluents in violation of the Clean Water Act.

Luter displayed a kind of courage and integrity too seldom seen in the business world by coming out of the woodwork to tell his story. Unable to reach me—I was on vacation at the time—he called Daniel Klaidman, the *Legal Times* senior reporter who had worked with me and shared the byline on the Allied-Signal story.

Luter alleged that in at least three post-trial ex parte meetings with Gwaltney’s Richmond lawyer, Anthony F. Troy, Merhige confided that he expected to fine Gwaltney \$1.9 million and held out the prospect of a tempting deal: a contribution by the defendant of, say, \$500,000 to the VEE could shrink the fine by between \$1 million and \$1.5 million. Luter said that Troy counseled him to accept, but that he refused.

For months, Dan Klaidman, consumed by other assignments, was unable to work on the story. Finally, in early 1993, he agreed to step aside so I could. My initial move was to interview Luter, and I found his charges so stunning that I asked him if he would repeat them under oath. He did, making a detailed, eight-page affidavit at his prominent Washington law firm, Hogan & Hartson, in which he accused Merhige of nothing less than “judicial extortion” and “judicial coercion.”

Luter had strong albeit inconclusive supporting evidence. Five persons affirmed to me that the allegations to which he was swearing in 1993 coincided with the allegations he’d made to them contemporaneous with Merhige’s ex parte meetings with Anthony Troy nine years earlier. Two of the five were business associates of Luter who gave me affidavits to this effect. The others were lawyers at Hogan & Hartson, which was pivotally involved because Luter had retained it to appeal the fine—\$1,285,322—that Merhige finally imposed on Gwaltney.

Over a period of several weeks, I studied a thick stack of court decisions and briefs generated by Luter’s defiant decision to litigate rather than cut a covert deal with Merhige. Thick because the appeal went up and down, and up and down again: from Merhige to the Fourth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, then to the Supreme Court, then back to the Fourth Circuit, then back to Merhige, then back to the Fourth Circuit, and, finally, back to Merhige once again. But it was a Supreme Court ruling that laid the foundation of a triumph for Luter. As it played out, the ruling put Merhige at judicial gunpoint, forcing him to reduce the levied fine by more than 75 percent, to \$289,822.

Gwaltney paid this amount.

I thought it was a hell of a story, not least because the press generally does a poor job of monitoring judicial conduct (in Richmond, The Times-Dispatch is highly protective of Judge Merhige). It went without saying that I would offer it to Legal Times. It was this Washington-based weekly that had published the Allied-Signal story that surfaced Luter, and, as noted, he had first told his story to a LT staffer. In 1989, moreover, the paper had published my investigative report on Merhige's highly questionable handling of the voluntary bankruptcy of A.H. Robins Co., maker of the disastrously defective Dalkon Shield IUD.

Not once did it cross my mind that the executive editor and the publisher—uncritically supported on the record by Steven Brill, who effectively owns Legal Times—would jerk me around for four months before finally rejecting the story. Nor did it occur to me that a succession of other editors—particularly at The National Law Journal and The Washington Times, but also at the ABA [American Bar Association] Journal, Forbes and Fortune—would not embrace an exclusive story about a top corporate executive going far out of his way to savage a senior federal judge for alleged ethical improprieties. Nor did it occur to me that for months at a time, editors at The National Law Journal and The Washington Times, would ignore my oral and written pleas to do no more than tell me whether they would take the piece. How naive can a guy in his eighth decade be!

## Chronology

### 1993

**June 7.** In a cordial meeting at Legal Times I gave a printout of the story to Editor and Publisher Eric Effron and Executive Editor Ann Pelham. Effron proposed a survey of other federal judges to learn if any had permitted or encouraged polluters to divert fines to environmental groups. The idea struck me as a gimmick, although I didn't say so. It seemed to me that even if there

**If you do want the piece please say so. If you do not want it please say so. I am perfectly prepared to accept the consequences of going elsewhere with it. I'm even prepared to live without publication at all. What I am not prepared to do is to let this demeaning process fester indefinitely.**

were diversions, none would rank with Merhige's allegedly secret and unethical proposed deal with Gwaltney, and none would deserve more than an indifferent insert.

**June 22.** A day past the two-week mark I phoned Pelham to ask for a yes or no, saying half-apologetically that freelancing is difficult enough without being kept in prolonged ignorance of a publication's intentions. Empathizing, she said that editors regularly inflicted grief on her freelance husband, Robert Cullen. But she left me hanging, on the ground that she'd assigned an unidentified Legal Times staffer to the survey of judges, and he'd been too busy to do it.

Disclosing my ho-hum reaction to the idea, I ventured that the reporter was most unlikely to find another federal judge who could be shown to have lobbied the violator in *ex parte* meetings to divert fine dollars to an environmental organization in which—crucially—the judge had a special interest. And, I said, it was almost inconceivable that the Legal Times reporter would turn up another corporate executive who under oath—and voluntarily—has accused a federal judge of anything remotely approaching “judicial extortion” and “judicial coercion.”

Seemingly out of the blue, Pelham asked if I wanted to withdraw the piece.

I did not. My sole purpose in calling, I told her, was to find out if Legal Times would print it. I came away chilled by a feeling that the executive editor was neither enthusiastic about nor committed to the article.

**July 5.** In a letter to Publisher Effron, on which the above June 22 entry is mostly based, I wrote: “Ann also said by way of explanation of the assignment to the reporter that the events related in my piece happened years ago. As the editors, of course, you and Ann are entitled to assign apparently controlling importance to this. I must say that I don't, because—without or with the insert—mine is a holy-shit! story. Moreover, the age wrinkles on the events at issue are ironed out by the stark newness of the affidavits about them and the supporting statements from Hogan & Hartson. The writing of the Dead Sea Scrolls occurred two millennia ago. Was their discovery news?”

“If you do want the piece please say so. If you do *not* want it please say so. I am perfectly prepared to accept the consequences of going elsewhere with it. I'm even prepared to live without publication at all. What I am not prepared to do is to let this demeaning process fester indefinitely. So what I propose is this: if for any reason you cannot by 6 p.m. Monday, July 12, tell me that you will publish the story—no later than the issue for the week of July 26, I suggest—consider it withdrawn.”

For better or worse, I cooled off and decided that I'd written one of those letters that had best not be sent.

**On or about July 26.** Still seeking a yes or no, I phoned Effron and Pelham at the seven-week mark. My calls went into his and her voice mail, there to vanish like pixels from a computer screen.

**Sometime in August.** I sought counsel from Deborah Levy of The American Lawyer, whose office was at Legal Times. In 1989 she had edited my first piece for Legal Times (on Merhige's conduct of the Robins voluntary bankruptcy), and I liked, respected and trusted her. On hearing my account she generously offered to read the piece. Agreeing that it was a good story, she volunteered to speak to Pelham. Although they were

friends, she said, she could be tough with her. I thanked Debbie but declined.

**Late August or early September.** Increasingly frustrated, I phoned Debbie to accept her offer to intervene.

**A few days later.** Debbie told me that Pelham had admitted to her that she had "no defense" for not calling me, but nevertheless offered one of sorts: she wouldn't have known "what to say" to me. Even so, Debbie said, Pelham committed herself to call me. She never did. (Incidentally, she was subsequently promoted to associate publisher.)

**Late August.** My friend Charles R. Babcock, a Washington Post reporter who read and liked the story—and who shares my belief that the press inadequately monitors how federal judges exercise their enormous and often unchecked power—offered to submit it to Steve Luxenberg, Assistant Managing Editor for Special Projects. I was grateful but also pessimistic, partly because The Post, despite its huge Virginia circulation, had ignored my Legal Times story of Merhige's conduct in the Allied-Signal case. Luxenberg passed the piece to Douglas Feaver, the Deputy Financial Editor. Feaver sent word that he was willing to take the piece if I would hold it to 30 inches. For newspaper readers, I would gladly scrap a huge chunk, the material about the lawsuit and its ups and down that was of interest mainly to lawyers. But I believed firmly that a cut to 30 inches—meaning a cut of 77 percent—would be ruinous. Believing, possibly mistakenly, that Doug wouldn't hudge, I ignored the offer.

**September 16.** My anger at Pelham erupted into probably the roughest letter I've written in my entire life. It suffices here that I began by saying that I was writing—late in the fourteenth week since I'd submitted the story—"in hopes of deterring Legal Times—you, primarily—from ever doing unto another freelancer what LT has done unto me. The essence of what you've done strikes me as indefensible: abusing your power over a person who asked nothing more than a response to the most reasonable, most straightforward, and simplest of requests: say whether you want the

story." To fax is to risk the loss of privacy for the recipient, so I FedEx'ed the letter to Pelham with copies to Effron and Levy. No one replied.

**October 4.** Pelham broke her silence—four days shy of four months after she had received the piece—by FedEx'ing a letter to me. The text:

"Thank you for your story proposal on Judge Merhige.

"As you are perhaps aware, the fact that the incident took place eight years ago means that the story requires some context for our readers. I had hoped to use your work as the center of a piece on judges who are requiring polluters to do unconventional things as penance—join the Sierra Club, contribute to a special clean-up fund, and so on—and had gotten a reporter started on the idea. The press of other stories had delayed his effort: in the meantime, that story appeared in The Wall Street Journal (without the excellent Judge Merhige example, I might note).

"I still find your information on the judge very interesting and would like to find some way of getting it into our paper. However, I do not have a means of doing that at the present time. As a result, I must decline your story proposal."

Obviously, the letter—which arrived while my wife and I were frantically preparing for our departure forty hours later for a nearly six-week trip to Asia—ignored my efforts to elicit a response in reasonable time as well as Pelham's long-ago pledge to Debbie Levy to phone me. Obviously, too, it made the putative survey of other federal judges pivotal. Thus did Pelham transform Legal Times's failure to produce a gimmick into the justification for rejection of a serious investigative report.

**November 23.** My unavoidably delayed response disputed Pelham on every point. As to defining "context" to mean that publication of the Merhige story should hinge on the putative insert: Pelham herself had edited the Allied-Signal story, which built on an event (the \$8 million fine-reduction deal) that "happened not eight, but [sixteen] years earlier. *What was the 'context for our readers' that suddenly made this ancient event news?* Why, the evidence

that had only recently been revealed in Tax Court of what had really happened in Merhige's ex parte meetings with the company's Richmond lawyers. Could you explain to me why the disabling editorial standard you now invoke should not have been brought to bear against the Allied story—and why would it not also bar stories about, say, the KGB archives or the Dead Sea Scrolls?" As to judges who openly require a polluter to do unconventional "penance":

"This struck me, and Debbie, too, as an indifferent insert, at best..." As to The Wall Street Journal story: it was off point.

I ended by telling Pelham that her letter was "both incredible and not credible, and your conduct throughout disturbing and sad. Justice Brandeis once wrote that sunlight is the best disinfectant. Maybe someday you will learn that apology is a pretty good one." None ever came.

I also re-mailed an accidentally misaddressed letter to Steven Brill, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of American Lawyer Media, owner of Legal Times: "I don't know whether you care—give a damn—about how executives of your publications treat freelancers. If you do, surely you will want to read the enclosed letter [the Sept. 16 eruption to Pelham], which describes the most appalling treatment I've experienced in my forty-seven years as a reporter."

My primary rationale for going over the heads of Effron and Pelham was that for months neither had found a moment to call or write me. But I was also teed off by a disheartening surprise ripple effect: "Pelham/Effron effectively killed the piece not only at Legal Times, but—albeit inadvertently—also at the ABA Journal," I wrote to Brill. "How did they accomplish this double-whammy? When the managing editor of the ABA Journal [Kerry Klumpe] phoned [on September 30] to say he was rejecting the piece, he explained that he was suspicious of it to the extent that he thought it would have to be 're-reported.' Why suspicious? Because it hadn't been taken by Legal Times, which had published my two related pieces and consequently was the obvious natu-

ral venue." To be told that a piece of mine had to be "re-reported" was unprecedented and insulting.

**November 29.** Brill swiftly replied. The text of his letter:

"First, I know you're not a kook. In fact, you've always been one of my heroes. Your 'America, Inc.,' is one of my favorite books on my bookshelf.

"But I must tell you that I would have been more skeptical than Ann or Eric because the piece was so dated and relatively narrow.

"As for the speed of their reply or lack thereof, I'll leave the answers to them."

**December 8.** I wrote Brill a thank-you for the kind words but said that in leaving it to Effron and Pelham to explain "the speed of their reply or lack thereof," he was implying that he in fact does not "give a damn" how his executives treat freelancers. (I thought, but didn't tell him, that it was ridiculous to denigrate as "so dated and relatively narrow," an investigative story that was intended for a mainly regional legal publication and that would vindicate its two previous major pieces on Judge Merhige's questionable judicial conduct.)

**December 14.** I sent the piece to Ken McIntyre, Metro Editor of The Washington Times.

## 1994

**January 10.** Letter to McIntyre: "Having heard nothing from you in the nearly four weeks since I sent you the piece on Judge Merhige, I'll assume that you do not want it unless I hear to the contrary by 5 p.m., Wednesday, Jan. 12."

**January 12** (on or about). McIntyre phoned. He was interested but needed time, he said, and if I didn't hear from him by January 24 I should call him.

**January 19** (on or about). Fred Strasser, Managing Editor and former Washington Bureau Chief of The National Law Journal, called to inquire about a job applicant who had used me as a reference. I took the occasion to ask why editor-in-chief Doreen Weisenhaus had ignored the query I'd left in her voice mail a few months earlier. I'd identified myself, recalled the large piece on Judge Robert Bork I'd done for NLJ

in 1987, said I had a piece in which she might be interested, and requested her to phone me. She never did. Strasser offered no explanation but did ask me to describe my piece. On hearing the description he invited me to send it to him if The Washington Times wouldn't take it.

**January 26.** I phoned McIntyre, as he'd requested, but was routed into his voice-mail limbo.

**February 1.** "It's time for a resolution, one way or the other," I wrote McIntyre.

**February 14.** Two months to the day after sending the piece to McIntyre, I wrote him that "I expect you will also brush off my request that you promptly return my article as well as my reluctant conclusion that you have behaved abominably." He never responded.

On the same day I mailed the piece to Strasser at The National Law Journal.

**Early to mid-March.** In response to a what's-happening? query, Strasser told me on the phone that my mailing may have been lost in the confusion created by The National Law Journal's move to new offices in New York. A few days later he said he'd found it.

**April 2.** Six weeks having gone by since I'd sent the piece to Strasser, I wrote him "that the time for a yes or no has come" and set a deadline of April 11 for acceptance or rejection. He ignored the letter.

**May 3.** A big surprise: Editor-in-Chief Weisenhaus and Strasser phoned. The call was so unexpected—it was eleven weeks since I'd mailed the story—that I blurted out that I'd been contemplating an article on the horrors of freelancing to be titled, "The Silence of the Hyenas." Weisenhaus told me that she was leaving The National Law Journal to become Legal Affairs Editor at The New York Times Magazine; Strasser, who was being promoted to Executive Editor, would now be responsible for the piece.

Trying to justify the long delay in responding, Weisenhaus said she'd been carrying the piece around in her briefcase but had been too busy to read it until now. She and Strasser clearly liked it. But she was concerned by the absence of comment from the judge and

Smithfield's lawyer. I reminded her that I'd affixed a note to the piece saying that I'd contact Merhige and Anthony Troy for reaction when and if I had a commitment to publish. Now, I said, I would contact them immediately. The editors gave at least implicit consent to this procedure.

For a giddy moment I was tempted to believe my ordeal was ending—tempted until Weisenhaus raised a startling and deeply disturbing possibility: if Merhige and Troy, or perhaps either, would decline to comment, The National Law Journal might not print the story.

Weisenhaus also raised a secondary question whether the story was too old, the ex parte meetings having occurred nine years earlier. Relying on the Dead Sea Scrolls, I contended—and I do believe—that what made the piece new and news was Luter's *recent* sworn allegations. She and Strasser seemed to accept the contention.

As soon as I put down the phone I phoned Troy, a former Virginia Attorney General. He said his "initial reaction is to talk it over with the powers-that-be" in his Richmond law firm, Mays & Valentine, and that he would "have to have permission of the client to comment..." I then phoned Smithfield Chairman Luter, who at once cured the problem by calling Troy to release him from the lawyer-client privilege. It would be "perfectly fine" for him to discuss the allegations with me, Luter says he told Troy.

To assure Troy and Merhige a fully informed and completely fair opportunity to comment on Luter's allegations, I faxed each of them his eight-page affidavit and a request for comment.

**May 9.** Having heard nothing at all from Merhige and nothing further from Troy, I faxed reminders to them. Merhige's secretary phoned promptly to say that she and the judge had both been away, but that on his return from Europe on May 16 she would show the materials to him. Because my wife and I would be leaving for a three-week overseas vacation the day before his return, I requested her to forward Merhige's comments to Strasser, and I gave her his phone and fax numbers and address.

In a fax to Strasser reporting these developments, I wrote that Weisenhaus's worries about the possible lack of comment from the lawyer and the judge raised a serious issue of journalistic independence: "...whether NLJ will effectively abdicate to Troy and Merhige its editorial right" to decide whether the story runs. I added, "I can't believe you would do that, but I must tell you I was stunned that such a possibility even came up."

"It's hard indeed for me to imagine non-responses or effective no comments that are owed a stronger presumption of constituting implicit admissions, and that more strongly entitle a publication wanting to be ethical and fair—to do the right thing—to publish an important story that ought to see the light of day, and that will certainly interest its readers."

Revisiting the question whether the story was too old, I also wrote Strasser that three days after the conversation with him and Weisenhaus, I could have cited that day's "news story disclosing that Mary Todd Lincoln stole White House property about 130 years ago. The next day, I would have cited the stunning page-one story in The New York Times disclosing how more than 100 documents, letters and cables from the 1960's and 1970's provide a rare look at discussions among tobacco executives in which it's admitted that nicotine is addictive."

**May 13.** Because my wife and I were to leave the country in two days, I faxed Strasser a request to "let me know before then that you are committed to publish." No response.

**June 5.** On arriving home from vacation, I found a May 19 letter from Troy. He tried to absolve Merhige—before whom he and his law firm colleagues practice—while neither meeting Luter's sworn allegations head-on nor denying that he and the judge had met *ex parte*. He wrote:

"The only comment that I will make is that the affidavit contains a number of inaccuracies, especially in confusing and erroneously attributing to the Judge whatever legal advice that I may have been giving to my client. Beyond this, I would have no further comments that I

would be interested in giving."

This "only comment" was substantive, so—logically—it should have satisfied Weisenhaus and Strasser—if they truly wanted the story.

**June 6.** I faxed Strasser an insert based on Troy's letter and a reminder:

"...I sent the article to you on Feb. 14. It's nearly four months later. I've done what you and [Weisenhaus] requested. Please let me know by week's end whether you will publish the article." I spiced the message with a request for a kill fee in event of nonpublication, but I apparently failed to get his attention.

**June 27.** In another fax, I told Strasser that I felt "compelled to entertain the possibility that your discourtesy is boundless, and that were I to submit further inquiries or requests I would only demean myself. If you do not notify me [whether NLJ will publish the article] by 5 p.m. Friday [July 1], please return the draft immediately and destroy any copies you may have made. The draft is my property. If you require a stamped, self-addressed envelope, I'll gladly provide one on request.

"Did Judge Merhige send a comment to you? If he did, please forward the comment to me immediately. Please bear in mind that the Judge's comment, if any, was intended for me—that so long as there was no agreement to publish you were to be merely a temporary "mailbox" while I was on vacation.

"Finally, National Law Journal, through Weisenhaus and yourself in our three-way May 3 conversation, effectively commissioned the story. If NLJ does not publish it, consequently, it owes me a kill fee. Considering the great frustration and grief you have caused me, nothing less than \$500 would be reasonable and fair."

**July 1.** Strasser's boss and Weisenhaus's successor as Editor-in-Chief, Ben Gerson, who'd been Sunday opinion editor of Newsday and New York Newsday, offered a soothing message on my answering machine and in the ensuing phone conversation. He said that my June 27 fax had been routed to him because Strasser was vacationing that week in an Adirondacks cabin without a phone. He went on to say that

he'd never heard of the entire matter, wanted to resolve it, and had written "Mintz" in big letters on his office calendar as a fail-safe reminder to take it up with Strasser on his return on July 5. He also said that he and the staff had been extremely busy, partly because a new computer system hadn't worked.

After thanking Gerson "for your courteous, unexpected and welcome" call, I tried to be as helpful as possible by faxing him an updated and improved version of the article and copies of all of my correspondence with Strasser.

**July 11.** Fax to Gerson: "I certainly don't want to be a nuisance, but I'd appreciate hearing what National Law Journal intends regarding my Merhige piece, having heard nothing since your phone call on July 1."

**July 15.** "What, I wonder, am I supposed to believe?" I asked Gerson in a burst of faxed exasperation. "That you were so terribly busy for two whole weeks that you could not find a moment to ask a secretary or assistant to phone to apprise me of such a (hypothetical) situation and ask me to be patient?..."

"If the powers that be (and have been) at your publication had tried to devise a scheme to torment this freelancer you could not have done better. I do not believe any such effort was contemplated, let alone made. But I must say that I am truly surprised and truly disappointed that Ben Gerson, having shown sensitivity and understanding about this, should have left me hanging for two more weeks.

"The situation as it stands is intolerable, and self-respect compels me to end it. Accordingly, I will modify and update the June 27 fax that I sent to Fred Strasser" to demand by July 22 a yes or no, return of the draft and any or all copies that may have been made, and relay to me of any comments Merhige might have made during my vacation. Hoping to increase my (mythical) leverage, I upped the ante on the putative kill fee to \$750 but ended by saying, truthfully, that "I can't tell you how sorry I am to feel that I had to write this letter."

**July 18.** Gerson expressed regrets in a message left on my answering ma-

chine and asked me to phone him the next day after 12:30 p.m.

**July 19.** It was 1 p.m. when I returned Gerson's call, but I was entrapped in his voice mail anyway.

**July 23.** Gerson phoned at 3:35 p.m., a mere five minutes before my return from an errand. His message on my answering machine was that he'd just put the paper to bed and was going to lunch. To avoid more telephone tag, he would call me; I should not try to call him. He didn't call.

**July 26.** My wife and I flew to Colorado for an eight-day stay in my sister's condo, which has a phone but no answering machine, and from which I would regularly check my home answering machine for messages.

**July 27.** Another frustrating near-miss: Gerson phoned my home again. Partly because it's two hours earlier in Colorado than on the East Coast, it was too late to return the call when I checked my answering machine. His message was that he'd be at the office for a while, but if I didn't reach him I should call tomorrow. He'd apparently gone home, but I left the condo phone number in his voice mail.

**July 28.** A third non-connection. Gerson phoned the condo while we were out to dinner. He said in a message on my home answering machine that he found the situation "very frustrating," particularly because he'd "reviewed the file in its entirety" before each attempt to reach me. "I will compose a letter and fax it to you," he said. "You are entitled to an elaborate explanation of my thoughts." I sensed bad news was coming, and it came instantly: there is "a small likelihood that we can use it."

**July 31 (Sunday).** I expressed my regrets to Gerson over his frustrations in a voice-mail message. Saying I would be back home the night of Aug. 2, I asked him to "address the finder's-fee issue in event the 'small likelihood' evolves into rejection" and to relay Merhige's putative comments.

**Aug. 8.** Feeling defeated, I protested to Gerson in a presumptively final fax that he had neither sent the promised letter nor "attempted to contact me even to try to lock in a time when we

could talk." Saying the "'small likelihood' sounds to me like a disingenuous way of rejecting the piece," I wrote: "If that's what it is, why, for heaven's sake, haven't you said so?" I also protested the lack of response to my repeated requests for whatever comments Merhige may have made, noting that this "obviously bears on my opportunity to sell the piece elsewhere if, as I suspect, 'small likelihood' means no." Finally, I protested his silence about a kill fee.

"You will surely recall that you phoned me the night of July 1 to indicate that you were soon going to resolve this matter," I wrote. "As I said in my July 31 phone call, I'm sorry that you were unable to reach me on July 27 and July 28. But to drag this thing out as you have is rotten treatment, of a piece with the treatment I've had from National Law Journal over the course of nearly six months."

**Aug. 17.** I indulged myself with a sarcastic and useless fax to Gerson: "It would be a shame to let today pass unmarked. It is, after all, the start of the seventh month since I mailed my article to National Law Journal. And the day must be observed, as you know, without the letter that you were going to send me (or so you said on July 28); without the information on Judge Merhige I've been requesting since July 15, and without a response to my demand for a kill fee if you are not going to use the story."

**Aug. 20.** Reversing course, I made a new run at The Washington Post financial section by sending the piece to Assistant Managing Editor David Ignatius with a letter summarizing the dismal history of my efforts to get it into print. Effectively, I knew, I was asking David to veto the extreme (in my view) demand of his deputy for a 75 percent cut.

I also inquired of the local chapter of the National Writers Union whether I had a viable grievance against National Law Journal.

**Sept. 18.** Real news: in a Sunday phone call, the NWU's local volunteer grievance chair, Steve Askin, told me that he will prepare a grievance asking NLJ for an apology, for disclosure of

whatever Merhige may have told NLJ while it was my "mailbox," and—on the ground that Weisenhaus and Strasser had constructively commissioned the piece in their May 3 phone call—for the payment I would have gotten had NLJ published the piece.

Askin profusely apologized for the month-long delay in responding, but it turns out that I had inadvertently caused most of it by addressing my Aug. 20 letter to the chapter president rather than to the grievance chair.

**Sept. 20.** I asked The Post's Ignatius for a response to my letter of Aug. 20, reminding him in a fax that I had requested only "a yes or no in reasonable time." A few hours later, David phoned to apologize for the delay and to lift my hopes. Tactfully, he agreed with his deputy on the need for a drastic cut. But he went on to indicate that 30 inches was not sacrosanct. I said that was fine with me and that I would begin to slash away. I cut the piece 63 percent, to 47 inches, by deleting the material of primary interest to lawyers, and I ended up feeling more strongly than ever that to kill an additional 17 inches would be ruinous. As so often happens, the cutting sharpened and improved the story.

With a real possibility of publication in the Post, I faxed Ben Gerson that it was "urgently important" that he tell me what comment, if any, Merhige had forwarded to National Law Journal.

**Sept. 21.** For the second time in two days, I prodded Gerson for Merhige's comment or non-comment, and he responded by fax a few hours later. He disclosed that Merhige had not commented and, not that it was a surprise, that he was saying no ("We will pay you a kill fee—\$325, half of our standard front-page fee"). His explanation of why NLJ had taken eight months to say no was pained ("Things have gone too far along for me to apologize for not getting back to you. All I can say is I deeply regret it."). Inadvertently, he had aborted the potential union grievance, of which he had no knowledge. Finally, he offered an explanation of why he was saying no to the piece. I strongly disagreed, but—I have to say again—so what?

**Nov. 3** The kill-fee check arrived

(made out to "Morton Mitz").

Nov. 7 David Ignatius of The Washington Post phoned to discuss editing matters, thereby implying that publication was assured—just when, I didn't ask, and he didn't say. One of his requests resulted in a brief insert—written after three quick phone calls—that focused on the National Resources Defense Council, one of the environmental groups that had brought a citizen lawsuit against the Gwaltney company under the Clean Water Act:

"Under an Environmental Protection Agency guideline, several defendants in Clean Water Act lawsuits won by the NRDC have opted to contribute money to environmental projects run by groups other than the NRDC, rather than to pay the same amount of money in civil penalties. However, they exercised the option in open court proceedings presided over by federal judges with no special interest in the projects or groups."

For me, at least, the insert affirmed the absurdity of Legal Times's rejection of my article on the ground that its reporter never-done survey had not made it "the center of a piece on judges who are requiring polluters to do unconventional things as penance—join the Sierra Club." Meanwhile, David said he would himself press Merhige for comment and attorney Troy for further comment.

Nov. 23 Today—more than 17 months after I'd submitted the story to Legal Times—was the Nieman Reports deadline for changes in this article. I'd not heard further from Ignatius, but was expecting the piece to run in The Washington Post.

## Q. & A.

Q.—At the start, when I submitted the piece to Legal Times, did I err in not asking Effron and Pelham for a specific commitment in writing as to what my payment would be, and as to a kill fee in event of nonpublication?

A.—Yes. In mitigation: what Effron and Pelham said, what they didn't say, their body language, and my record of having three pieces published in LT—all of this disarmed me so completely

that I blindly assumed publication was a given.

Q.—After a few weeks, should I have tried to retrieve the story from Legal Times?

A. Probably. But I'd boxed myself in by making four seemingly logical assumptions:

1) LT would be pleased to print a story that significantly advanced and validated its publication of my earlier pieces questioning Merhige's judicial conduct in the Allied-Signal and Dalkon Shield cases.

2) The Washington-area lawyers who constitute the bulk of Legal Times's readership were the most natural audience for the piece, not least because many of them practice before Merhige.

3) The prospects for publication elsewhere were dimmer, in part because a rejection by Legal Times could cast a shadow over the story (as noted, this indeed happened at the ABA Journal).

4) Effron and Pelham would behave professionally.

Q. What about Forbes?

A.—A friend who is a former Forbes bureau chief read the story in the fall of 1993 and forwarded it to a Forbes editor who never contacted me.

Q. What about Fortune?

A.—I queried Washington Bureau Chief Ann Reilly Dowd last June 27. She asked to see the piece; I faxed it at once with a request for a prompt yes or no. On Aug. 3 I asked again for a yes or no. She has not responded.

Q.—Do I allow sufficiently for the burdens borne by the nonresponsive editors, such as a heavy workload?

A. Yes. But over weeks and even months it's surely possible to find a moment to phone or write, or to have an assistant do so. Besides, the editors I dealt with didn't try to justify their protracted silence. Here's a stark contrast to such rudeness: I filed a major Freedom of Information request with the Justice Department in June 1990. It got snails-pace processing. Finally, in November 1993, I made a written complaint and sent a copy to Public Affairs Chief Carl Stern. He has a thousand deservedly higher priorities, but he got on the case and has phoned me three times to make progress reports. I re-

**Now I wanted to fight back—for myself, to be sure, but also for freelancers generally. So it was my choice to spend—or waste—time and energy. I have no right to complain on that score.**

ceived the FOIA materials on Sept. 22.

Q. Considering the negative reactions to the story, did I overrate it?

A. Not by the standards of serious journalism.

Q. Did I waste a great deal of time and energy battling The Silence of the Editors?

A. I certainly spent a great deal of time and energy on this. Whether I wasted my resources is another matter. The ugly behavior I experienced came atop numerous bad episodes over the years with arrogant, inconsiderate editors at numerous publications. Now I wanted to fight back—for myself, to be sure, but also for freelancers generally. So it was my choice to spend—or waste—time and energy. I have no right to complain on that score.

Q. Who appointed me as an advocate for freelancers?

A. I did.

Q. As an editor, would I not do unto other freelancers what was done unto me?

A. God forbid that I should do what was done! But were I to do it, Steven Brill is hereby empowered to have me shot at sunrise. His firing squad would be composed of: Eric Effron and Ann Pelham of Legal Times, Ken McIntyre of The Washington Times, Kerry Klumpe of The ABA Journal, Fred Strasser and Ben Gerson of The National Law Journal, Doreen Weisenhaus of The New York Times Magazine, and Ann Reilly Dowd of Fortune. Oh, yes: their rifles would be equipped with..... silencers. ■



# Showdown at Communicology Gap

BY ALFRED BALK

Since John Seigenthaler, Nieman Fellow and former Kennedy Administration Department of Justice official, spoke at a Freedom Forum Media Studies Center meeting at Columbia University on June 23, he has tended to attract more on-campus attention than usual. A former editor of both *The Nashville Tennessean* and *USA Today*, he has served as president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, chaired its Education for Journalism Committee, and now is Chairman of the Freedom Forum's First Amendment Center at Vanderbilt University. His audience that day was an annual journalism/communications educators' leadership institute.

"As I see the trend in mass communications education," he told the group, "it no longer serves the enlightened self-interest of editors." He was, he explained, referring to a trend to marry journalism education to "communicology"—emphasis on sociology oriented mass communications studies—and its academic, credentialist value structure.

A gauntlet had been thrown. In his quiet, courtly manner, Seigenthaler may have signaled a long-expected showdown at what cartographers might call Communicology Gap. The gap is the result of a seismic shift over two decades.

In that time the former Association for Education in Journalism (AEJ) has become the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (AEJMC). Nearly half of some 90 accredited programs now are named in part "communication" or "mass communications." Almost all offer courses and more than 30 award degrees in academic communications studies. The field's oldest journal (founded in 1924),

the AEJMC's *Journalism Quarterly*, now gives as its mission statement [Summer, 1993]: "The journal should provide leadership in developing theory and introducing new concepts to its readership. [It] should challenge the boundaries of communication research, guiding its readers to new questions, new evidence and new conclusions. Articles should be written in a style that is accessible to all communications scholars."

To journalists? The media industry? Its managers and line practitioners? This omission, Seigenthaler and like-minded critics believe, reveals the problem: Journalism has fallen to the margins of "journalism education"—itself never a concept universally accepted, on or off campus.

In 1992, the AEJMC's annual census showed only one-third of students to be in print and broadcast journalism. This, Seigenthaler said, means that "communication schools, with their enrollments

now including only a fractional number of journalism school students, will never again have the sort of relationship with the industry or its news and editorial organizations that existed in the past."

The 1992 census encompassed 413 programs, 95 of them accredited (*Journalism Educator*, Autumn, 1993). Within an estimated undergraduate enrollment of 133,122, AEJMC projected these percentages from majors reported in designated (an in places illogical) categories:

News-editorial	12.6
Broadcast news	10.9
Journalism	9.4
Magazine	1.6

Advertising and PR/advertising majors virtually matched that total, at 33 percent.

Remaining majors were scattered among: radio-TV/telecommunications, 13.1; photojournalism, mass communications, mass media, agriculture, science, speech, English, theater, film/cin-



*Alfred Balk, a former Editor of The Columbia Journalism Review and World Press Review and Feature Editor of Saturday Review, is a Northwestern journalism graduate (B.S., M.S.) who has taught journalism at Columbia and Syracuse Universities. He has served as a media-programs consultant to the Ford and Markle Foundations and to the Twentieth Century Fund's Task Force on a National News Council. The author of several books and many magazine articles, he now is a writer and consultant based in Syracuse.*

**For editors, then, the issue has become not so much the existence of journalism education, under which most U.S. working journalists have been trained, but whether its surviving form will be consistent with its original *raison d'être*. That is, will the programs provide the specialized expertise along with the comprehensive general education needed to fulfill First Amendment imperatives for public affairs reporting and intelligent discourse?**

ema, and "other."

Particularly, one might conclude, given this reality: Though print-broadcast's segment of total AEJMC 1992 enrollment, which slumped by 3,700 compared to five years earlier, increased 5 percent, public relations and advertising enrollees accounted for nearly one-third of the journalism/mass communications majors.

Add one other recent phenomenon, and a showdown at Communicology Gap seems assured. That is a nationwide wave of downsizing and interschool and department restructuring. This wave, said University of Maryland Professor Maurine Beasley, AEJMC's 1993-4 president, has "ominous overtones."

"A number of schools are in trouble, some being threatened with closure and extinction," Everette E. Dennis, Executive Director of the Freedom Forum Media Studies Center, reported in the Center's newsletter in June "...Schools currently at risk include the University of Michigan, whose communication department has been placed 'in receivership' [under an academic dean]; the University of Arizona's journalism department, whose closure has been recommended by a powerful planning committee; and Ohio State, whose programs will likely face downsizing and possible consolidation. Several other schools clearly are unhealthy...."

In June, more than 50 AEJMC leaders were alarmed enough to assemble at the University of Texas at Austin to discuss these signs and portents. They appointed a task force and agreed to

reconvene. The AEJMC convention in August also devoted a session to the restructurings. Because the downsizing and mergers, as in the corporate world, connote value judgments about missions, staffing and leadership, and the Information Revolution as well as campus economic realities impel program reevaluations, the field could end up significantly reshuffled before the year 2000.

For editors, then, the issue has become not so much the existence of journalism education, under which most U.S. working journalists have been trained, but whether its surviving form will be consistent with its original *raison d'être*. That is, will the programs provide the specialized expertise along with the comprehensive general education needed to fulfill First Amendment imperatives for public affairs reporting and intelligent discourse?

As I can attest, for faculty journalists fresh from the media the change wrought by the communications research model is a shock. A quarter-century ago, in my first teaching hiatus, at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, journalism education's courses and curriculum design, its umbrella organization (AEJ) and its conventions, faculty writing and the field's textbook brochures all were primarily journalism-oriented. "Name" journalists graced several faculties: Fred W. Friendly and Norman E. Isaacs, for example, at Columbia, where Edward W. Barrett, a former Newsweek Editor, had been the most recent dean. Fewer than 10 journalism programs offered

Ph.D.'s.

Three years ago, when I reentered teaching at Syracuse University's large (1,700 students) and respected S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, I found that under the AEJMC most activities and journals are oriented toward communications studies; most programs are headed by non-journalist Ph.D. career academics; curricula and textbook brochures emphasize academic sociological courses; prestigious faculty journalism practitioners are relatively rare; and some three dozen programs offer Ph.D.'s. I occupied an office near that of a colleague who regularly publishes such passages as this: "Other researchers (Churchman, 1971; Horne, 1983; Wilson, 1989) have conceptualized information need as proceeding from a series of cognitive processes driven by the need 'to know,' and can be observed in the form of questioning behavior."

Nearby, another office lodged a mentor of Ph.D. candidates. One, who has a master's degree, wrote this passage:

"Using Lexis/Nexis as the sampling source rendered two benefits. First, an adequate representation of days-of-the-week and months-of-the-year (see Tables 1 & 2) was obtained efficiently. Second, the articles selected satisfied keyword conditions, which yielded a selection of newspapers that published reports, thus enabling analyses at the level of the newspaper."

Compared to elsewhere, I found, these were tame. Authors for Journalism Quarterly regularly perpetrate such passages as these [Spring, 1994]:

• "Validating a Scale for the Measurement of Credibility: A Covariance Structure of Modeling Approach."

"One of the few theoretical constructs of mass communication research to have found widespread application in the newspaper industry is credibility. Quantitative research into credibility has, however, been criticized as unduly reliant upon unvalidated measurement instruments constructed using statistical methods which make cross-study comparisons and reutilization of measurement instruments difficult."

• "Knowledge Gaps, Social Locators, and Media Schemata: Gaps, Reverse

Gaps, and Gaps of Disaffection."

"Education has long been a key concept in the study of the knowledge gap hypothesis, which states that those 'with higher socioeconomic status' would acquire information from the mass media at a higher rate than those with lower SES. In that study, and in others, SES is indexed by education alone, though conceptually SES involves more than education."

At last year's AEJMC convention, suburban editor/part-time professor Don Corrigan culled these items for the St. Louis Journalism Review:

- "Message Discrepancy on Recall of News Information Over Time." "The study investigates the impact of thought over time as a variable that may influence recall of discrepant information encountered in the media. This study builds upon previous work which indicates that human subjects are capable of improving their recall of consistent sets of news information over time without the benefit of additional exposure to media information...."

- "Community Editors' Views on Extralogical Coverage."

"A study of orientation toward extralogical news coverage was conducted among a purposive sample of 92 Minnesota editors. The hypotheses, based upon considerations of pluralism and patterns of community change, were that such ratings of importance of extralogical coverage would be associated with a) community pluralism and b) publication frequency...."

And in Journalism Educator, another AEJMC product in collaboration with its alter ego Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication, one regularly confronts such reform proposals as this [Winter, 1993]:

- "Symbolic Communication: Reading Material Culture."

"The sophistication of today's media consumer makes it essential for students of mass media to develop an understanding of symbolic communication. While courses in visual communication introduce students to the role of signs and symbols in photography, the study of semiotics (Berger 1989a; Solomon 1988) or science of signs is usually reserved for courses where stu-

dents learn to interpret symbolic meaning for the purposes of media appreciation or criticism....Communications courses at all levels and orientations should provide students with a grounding in media-related areas of study, especially semiotics."

Are writers, writing, and mindsets like these key parts of journalism education? They are now. Out of the blue, in a meeting on the mix of skills/craft courses to those on, say, violence and the media or communications and society, one may hear, "All our courses are skills courses—we're here to teach critical thinking."

Or in budget discussions, "Why should we authorize Editor & Publisher, Broadcasting & Cable, Folio, and the journalism reviews in the career-counseling/reference room when the mass communications journals are only at the university library?"

Schedule more people from the media industry to speak? "Doesn't that invite the fox to roam the chicken coop?"

Two worlds—and world views of missions—are in collision. Communications researchers are not and don't pretend to be media professionals. Many never have set foot in a newsroom or know beyond second-hand "book" knowledge how journalism works. Their mantra is to study that process and communicate findings to peers in what seems to journalists a bizarre exercise in English as a Second Language. Collegial though most are, some cannot conceal an air of superiority toward the unwashed journalists whose mores, folkways and impact on society are their research objects.

Mass communications studies evolved for two primary reasons: 1) to conduct meaningful research on and to teach about two key democratic institutions—mass communicators and the mass communications media—and their impact on society, and 2) to raise the academic quality of the perceived trade/vocational enterprise of journalism education. To many masscom specialists, their campus provost and peer supporters on campus, it seemed that both needs could be met with a curriculum oriented toward producing Ph.D.'s and the academic-writing rituals of the rest

of academia.

But Parkinson's Law, the Peter Principle, and the Law of Unintended Consequences took over. The postwar explosion of higher education produced a mutation.

Proliferating community colleges and state university branches needed curricula and faculty. *Voilà!* Introduce communications studies and research, under freshly minted Ph.D.'s.

Traditionally, journalism education meant print and broadcast reporting, writing, and editing. Rather narrow, is it not? For tidiness and structure (empire?) building, why not, if not already done, add advertising, possibly public relations and perhaps graphics? Then how about film documentaries—they're communications—docudramas and even fiction-film scripting and production? Music? It's part of audio and visual productions and films. Add music production? And what about speech communications? All, after all, about communication. Now, of course, there are the Internet, the information highway and the interactive media that faculty mission-review committees are scrambling to tap into.

The maximum administrator? Since this administrative camel encompasses graduate work, and other campus programs are headed by Ph.D.'s, shouldn't the rider be a Ph.D.? Since this is not really a journalism enterprise, why be fixated on a dean with journalistic experience? Sign one or two journalists to oversee those majors. And, since journalism skills courses now are so tiny a slice of the pie, staff them if necessary with low-stipend, part-time, usually young and hungry local media practitioners.

Classroom loads? A Catch-22 for journalists: For the Ph.D., a lecture format, perhaps one term paper, and several exams, possibly easily graded multiple-choice, all with the help of a graduate-school teaching assistant. For the craft courses, an intensive lab or workshop format, daily or weekly papers to critique, and probably no teaching assistant.

Tenure and promotions? Publication and academic association activities first; teaching excellence (difficult to quan-

tify) second. The most desirable targets for publication: academic journals and periodicals, or conference presentations.

Relevance of research or writing to the mass communications industries or their public policy environments? Sir, if you please! In one survey, researchers David Weaver and G. Cleveland Wilhoit found that nearly one-third of surveyed journalism/mass communications faculty members read no industry trade publications—let alone wrote for any. Only 35 per cent read *Columbia Journalism Review*, 31 per cent *Editor & Publisher*, and 24 per cent *The Quill*.

No wonder that a survey of 1,400 AEJMC members revealed journalist faculty members to feel disadvantaged by, as Edward C. Pease of the Freedom Forum Media Studies Center wrote in *Journalism Educator* [Autumn, 1993], a "two-tier system" with scholarly researchers on top. "Many [faculty journalists] who actively pursue media industry connections off campus," he noted, "say they are made to feel like second-class citizens.... Consulting and part-time work in the media help them stay attuned to constantly changing industry practices...[but] such professional activities not only weren't encouraged by their colleges and departments...[and] outside work either didn't count in promotion and tenure decisions or worked against them in academic advancement..., [all of which provide] new evidence of the attitudinal gulf between media workplaces and college campuses."

Outside money flowing into journalism/mass communications programs reinforces these trends. Most significantly endowed faculty chairs are for mass communications studies linked to training of Ph.D.'s. The biggest single

recent benefactor—the Annenberg Foundation—epitomizes those priorities, with this consequence of a \$120-million grant to the University of Southern California: a new Annenberg Center for Communication that places journalism alongside mass communications studies, cinema/television and engineering.

Seigenthaler's complaint—that apple trees aren't oaks and get stifled beneath them—might be expressed by communications researchers more polysyllabically: it has empirical anecdotal proof.

What should journalists who care about education for the field do? For a beginning, consider:

- First, we need more active, enlightened media industry involvement. The California Society of Newspaper Editors, for example, has founded a California Journalism Advisory Board to work statewide with surviving journalism programs and, as retired professor M.L. Stein reported in *Editor & Publisher*, use "clout to influence university administrators, regents, and legislators to treat journalism education more benignly—or at least equally." Such liaison and support are needed nationwide. The dwindling numbers of journalism education champions on campuses can't succeed alone.

- Second, since mass communications studies are an irresistible force well past critical mass, as suggested by Seigenthaler at the leadership institute: help form a new affiliate of AEJMC: a "second alliance of accredited schools whose commitment to that mission is productive, rewarding, and appreciated.... Each alliance would—or could—interact and well might continue to share membership in professional organizations. But the mission of each alliance would be clearly delineated and clearly understood—by students, by the industry and by society."

- Third, with reinforcement from the industry and the new "second alliance," help make the advanced-study principle more meaningful to the real journalistic world. Advanced-degree programs need not be for inbred "communicology" goals only. The Columbia Graduate School of Journalism, for instance, has drafted a Ph.D. pro-

gram under which campus international relations, economics, history, science, and other faculties would help it oversee teaching and writing (including a dissertation) focused on content in fields a working journalist would use in practicing the craft with scholarly distinction.

- Fourth, help inaugurate a new journal, perhaps underwritten by or produced at a media think tank such as Seigenthaler's, to fulfill the franchise that *Journalism Educator* has vacated and *Columbia Journalism Review* and *American Journalism Review* can't or won't undertake: intellectual leadership in education *for* as well as the practice of journalism.

- Fifth, (dare one suggest it?), support a successor to the Hutchins Commission, this time under joint media foundation and think-tank auspices. Nearly a half-century ago the original commission warned that our democracy needs a more systematic, intellectually based, interdisciplinary industry-campus rubric than either the marketplace or academia can provide. Those were halcyon days compared to now. A possible first task-force assignment for the new commission: education, including mid-career study, for journalists. The gaps in first-stage and mid-career journalism education are related and may be solvable together—perhaps by involving professionals as reporter/editor-scholars in residence on campuses.

Now, more than ever, the resources as well as the imperative for thought-leading experiments, are there in media foundations and think tanks.

Action, instead of hand-wringing, anyone? ■

**... (dare one suggest it?), support a successor to the Hutchins Commission, this time under joint media foundation and think-tank auspices.**

# The Decline and Fall Of Labor's Stepchildren

BY WILFRID C. RODGERS

New England labor's stepchildren, survivors of two World Wars, numerous recessions and the Great Depression, are dead, victims of automation, foreign competition, industrial and union mergers, lost strikes, and the decline of manufacturing. Their disappearance may be one reason for the decline of labor reporting, at least in New England. (Nieman Reports Fall 1994).

For more years than labor historians can recall, these local unions, without national union affiliation, could be found along the rivers and valleys of Connecticut, the mountains of Vermont and New Hampshire and the coasts of Maine, Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

At the height of their success, they represented more than 30,000 workers in 173 local unions in New England. They were found in New England's basic industries of textiles, fish, shoes, leather, rubber and wood products. They produced goods and services that touched the lives of most New Englanders. Some were wool sorters, gunsmiths, newspaper editors and reporters, radio broadcasters, photographers, makers of watches, sneakers, matches, golf clubs, shoe lasts, bicycles, furniture, pet foods, and even toilet seats.

There were local unions in such nationally and locally known firms as Timex, Bachrach Photos, A.G. Spaulding, Savage Arms, LaPage Glue, Diamond Match, Hood and Converse Rubber, the Yankee Network, Columbia Bicycle, Hearst's Record American and its successor Rupert Murdoch's Boston Herald, Armstrong World Industries, American Sugar and John Hancock Life Insurance.

They came in all sizes. There was the 42-member local of sardine packers in Lubec, Maine, and the 5,500-member Hood Rubber local in Watertown, Mass.

Even their names varied over the years. In the early days of the American Federation of Labor they were called Local Unions. Then they were renamed Federal Labor Unions. Each was given a different number. With the merger of the AFL and CIO they were christened Directly Affiliated Local Unions or DALUS, for short.

George Meany, the late AFL-CIO President, dubbed them "wards of the American labor movement." The large AFL craft unions believed they had been born on the wrong side of the blanket and were illegitimate. John L. Lewis had unprintable names for them. They led to his downfall as a federation leader. Actually with Lewis it was a love-hate relationship. Federal labor unions in autos, rubber, aluminum, electrical and radio and to a lesser extent steel, joined Lewis in leaving the AFL and helped him form the large national unions that became the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

Later after Lewis had left the CIO in

a huff and rejoined the AFL as a vice president and Executive Council member, he had his famous fight with Meany, then AFL Secretary-Treasurer. Their battle was over the signing of the non-Communist affidavits, provided for under the Taft-Hartley Act. Lewis balked. Meany insisted that for the protection of the smaller Federal Labor Unions all Executive Council members should sign the affidavits. Meany won the fight. It was the first time Meany had stepped out of the shadow of President William Green.

Frank Myers, New England Regional AFL-CIO Director, believes it was Meany's defense of the Federal Labor Unions against the much feared Lewis, that led to Meany's succeeding to the AFL presidency upon Green's death.

"I believe Meany thought that incident was one of the milestones of his career. From that day until his retirement as president he was a stalwart defender of the Federal Labor Unions or DALUS. His victory over Lewis gained



*Wilfrid Rodgers was in the Nieman class of 1959. Five years earlier Victor O. Jones, then Managing Editor of the morning Boston Globe, told him: "I hear the AFL and CIO may unite. If so I guess labor is here to stay and I want you to cover it." In his 45-year stint at The Globe, Bud Rodgers was a labor columnist, a Washington correspondent and a City Editor. Now retired, he lives in Scituate, Mass., on the shore, just south of Boston.*

1965 PHOTOGRAPH, THE BOSTON GLOBE

him the support of the powerful AFL leaders," Myers said.

Lewis, upset by a tongue lashing from Meany, pulled his miners out of the AFL with this terse note scribbled on a piece of waste paper: "Green: We disaffiliate. Lewis." Lewis's departure and Meany's succession to the AFL presidency made possible the later merger of the AFL-CIO. That merger marked a new beginning for the old Federal Labor Unions with their new name of DALUS. It was also to start the decline of one of the oldest segments of the American labor movement.

Just how old were these local unions? Joseph O'Donnell, retired Executive Director of the Harvard University Trade

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**"I'll fire the first official who forces a DALU to merge against its will. I will also fire any official who prevents a local from merging if that is its wish."**

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Union Program, traces their roots back at least to the mid-1800's and the Knights of Labor, predecessor of the AFL.

"The knights were considered a radical movement of their day, giving membership to anyone that worked for a living except doctors, lawyers, bartenders, bankers, stockbrokers, and professional gamblers. Many of the Knights' rituals were carried over in the Federal Labor Unions' meeting procedures in the early days of the AFL," O'Donnell points out.

The Knights also advocated such radical ideas for the 1800's as equal pay for women and free public schools and textbooks. It was because of their activist roles and liberal leaning that the conservative craft unions, founders of the AFL, looked upon them with suspicion. In particular the organizing of workers along industrial rather than craft lines was abhorrent to the craft unions. President Samuel Gompers of the AFL gave charters to these local

unions but with reservations. Each was given but one vote at the national AFL convention despite the size of its membership. He and the craft unions were taking no chances that these radical locals would ever become a major political factor within the AFL.

Beginning in 1934, the worst fears of the craft unions were realized. Within two years, thanks to the passage of the Wagner Act, the number of Federal Labor Unions grew nationally from 307 to 1,798. By 1947 there were more than 220,000 members of these locals in the AFL to the dismay of the craft unions. Nevertheless, the AFL continued organizing these industrial unions if for no other reason than to keep them out of the CIO.

The CIO had trouble in New England in wooing Federal Labor Unions. For two primary reasons these locals opted to stay in the AFL: Yankee independence and thrift. The regional directors of the AFL paid little attention to the Federal Labor Unions except during strikes or negotiations. This gave the local leadership a sense of autonomy it could never enjoy under the CIO. Then there were the union dues. They were cheaper for the members under the AFL then they would be in a national union either from the CIO or the AFL. Even after merger of the AFL-CIO these local unions were skittish about joining national unions.

One of the first mergers of a New England local with a national union after the 1955 joining of the AFL and the CIO came when the A.G. Spaulding local in Chicopee, Mass., merged with the Boilermakers union. Others were more reluctant to merge and they had Meany on their side. He gave them a sense of importance in drawing up the AFL-CIO constitution by giving each DALU one vote for every one of its members. He also made his feelings about merger plain. In Boston to accept an honorary degree from Boston College, he had this to say:

"I'll fire the first official who forces a DALU to merge against its will. I will also fire any official who prevents a local from merging if that is its wish."

Meany's dictum slowed down the disappearance of the DALUS but didn't

halt it. Prior to the AFL-CIO merger there were 124 locals in New England. By 1964 they had shrunk to 63 with 44 in Massachusetts, 12 in Connecticut, three in New Hampshire and two each in Maine and Rhode Island. The downturn in the economy devastated some and mergers with national unions accounted for the rest. The end for the New England DALUS became clear when Meany retired and was succeeded by Lane Kirkland. Nationally the AFL-CIO membership was on the decline. Staff cutbacks in the regional offices became a necessity. There were few staffers left to service the DALUS.

New England's last DALUS disappeared when the production workers at Armstrong World Industries (formerly Armstrong Cork and Tile) in Braintree, Mass., turned in its charter. It merged with the International Union of Electrical Workers. Currently even the fate of that local is questionable. Management announced recently it plans to move some of its production to Germany. There are about 340 workers in the plant that makes insulation products, cork and rubber gaskets and rubber components for textile spinning equipment.

Nationally DALUS outside of New England also face a dire future. AFL-CIO Director of Organization Joseph Shantz reports the one-time 220,000 membership has dwindled to 6,225 workers in 23 locals in 10 states and the District of Columbia. Of the DALUS left, 15 have a membership of less than 50.

Whatever these local unions were called they made a major impact on the American labor movement. Despite this impact these local unions reluctantly have refuted the battle cry of "We Shall Overcome." As a result their epitaph may well read:

"We were overcome...but not without a fight." ■

## RESPONSE

# The Iraqgate Controversy— Stretching Beyond the Facts

### To the Editor:

In "Iraqgate"—Stretching Beyond the Facts" (Spring 1994), Zachary Karabell correctly states that journalists went "beyond the facts to leap to conclusions." He is also right that most journalists "detach[ed] the allegations from evidence," had no solid evidence that any criminal offenses were committed, and never were able to provide a motive

for why the U.S. Government would have engaged in illegal arms sales to Iraq. However, Karabell makes his own leap beyond the facts when he asserts—without support—that the Bush Administration *willfully obstructed* efforts by Representative Henry Gonzalez and the House Banking Committee to investigate the BNL banking scandal.

## Lyons Award Honors Algerian

**T**he Nieman Foundation is honoring the winner of its 1994 Louis M. Lyons Award for Conscience and Integrity in Journalism at a symposium in Cambridge December 7. The winner is Abdelhamid Benzine, Editor of *Alger Republicain*, which was closed by the Algerian government and its editor put under a death threat by fundamentalist Muslim leaders early this year. The foundation delayed the award ceremony until it learned that Benzine would be able to attend.

In accepting the award, Benzine wrote to the Nieman Foundation: "I consider this precious distinction not only as a personal honor but also as a message of sympathy and encouragement to those Algerian journalists who, in spite of political pressure and prosecutions from the authorities, in spite of threats on their lives, shootings and kidnappings by Islamic fundamentalist gangs, have fought and continue to fight for truth, tolerance and freedom of speech."

The 1994 Class of Nieman Fellows selected Benzine to win the Lyons Award from a record number of entries sub-

mitted from all parts of the world. Named in honor of the long-time, former curator of the Nieman Foundation, the award cited Benzine's determination to resume publishing despite the government's opposition and threats against him by religious radicals.

"As you know, *Alger Republicain*, for the fourth time in its 50 years' struggle for freedom and democracy, has been brought to silence again," Benzine wrote. "I must not neglect any possibility, if there is one, to have it published again."

Now 68, Benzine has devoted his life to the newspaper founded in 1938. It was closed by French colonial governments in 1939 and 1955 and by Algerian governments in 1965 and this year.

"The plight of Abdelhamid Benzine and the press of Algeria has received very little attention in the Western world," Bill Kovach, curator of the Nieman Foundation, said. "We hope that through our symposium we can generate more concern for the loss of the rights of free expression and a democratic press in Algeria and other parts of the world." ■

Karabell goes on to characterize the alleged obstruction as "immoral and unconscionable," but his assertions are simply not correct.

To the contrary, the Bush Administration sought on many occasions to communicate the facts about "Iraqgate" to both the Congress and the media, but with little impact on either. Numerous Bush Administration officials appeared before the House Banking Committee and several other congressional committees during 1992, thousands of documents were provided to the Congress (and to Representative Gonzalez until he refused to agree to stop leaking classified material), and the claim of executive privilege was never invoked. If anyone, including Karabell, was really interested, I and others would have happily pointed to the detailed information made available on whatever material issues prompted concern. After almost five years of hearings and investigations by various executive branch, congressional, and judicial bodies, during both the Bush and Clinton Administrations, no one has demonstrated that any of the "Iraqgate" charges, including those of obstruction made by Karabell, are true. It is in fact a crime to obstruct or impede a congressional inquiry. See 18 U.S.C. § 1505. Accordingly, if Karabell has evidence that the Bush Administration did obstruct or impede such inquiries, he should promptly bring it to the attention of the Office of the Attorney General. Otherwise, Karabell has engaged in the very practice—wrongfully claiming that crimes were committed—which he so rightfully criticizes others for doing.

Sincerely,

Kenneth I. Juster

*Kenneth I. Juster, a partner in the law firm of Arnold & Porter, served as the deputy and senior adviser to the deputy secretary of state during the Bush Administration. He was not involved in the formulation or implementation of U.S. policy toward Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.*

# WINTER READING

## Buzz Words of Education, Business and Newspapers

### The Monster Under the Bed

Stan Davis and Jim Botkin

Simon & Schuster. 189 Pages. \$20.

BY DAVID DEJEAN

“The Monster Under the Bed” is a buzz book: it is built out of a collection of buzz words, buzz phrases, and buzz ideas that have such pervasive circulation that it’s next to impossible to identify their source, or their validity. They are cocktail-party chatter, talk around the water cooler, magazine cover lines, politicians’ catch phrases, radio talk-show crusades. They are what everybody knows, just because they know it.

The buzz in this case is about education and business. The unhelpful title of “The Monster Under the Bed” refers to a story about a little girl who uses computer technology to exorcise her personal fears. The authors also use the monster as a symbol of the bad things that lie in wait for companies that fail to take advantage of technology, or education, or educational technology. It helps to know that the book’s subtitle is “How Business Is Mastering the Opportunity of Knowledge for Profit.”

It also helps to know the credits of the co-authors. Stan Davis has written “2020 Vision” and “Future Perfect.” Jim Botkin is the author of “No Limits to Learning” and is a consultant to a consortium of U.S. corporations on strategic opportunities in education. Both have been associated with the Harvard Business School.

As a buzz book, “Monster’s” blood-

lines are the best—by “Megatrends” out of “In Search of Excellence.” And it doesn’t hurt the book at all that it buzzes off in a remarkable number of directions in less than 200 pages of text.

Davis and Botkin provide a list of “the seven major ways in which business is mastering the opportunities presented by the knowledge revolution.” While the ways amount to a catalog of buzz phrases, rather than a closely reasoned argument, they are individually interesting:

“1. Business is coming to bear the major responsibility for the kind of education that is necessary for any country to remain competitive in the new economy.

“2. The marketplace for learning is being redefined dramatically from K-12 to K-80, or lifelong learning, whose major segments are customers, employees, and students, in that order.

“3. Any business can become a knowledge business by putting data and information to productive use, creating

knowledge-based products and services that make its customers smarter.

“4. A new generation of smart and humanized technologies will revolutionize learning by employees and customers in business before it affects students and teachers in schools.

“5. Business-driven learning will be

How \_\_\_\_\_  
Business Is  
Mastering the  
Opportunity  
of Knowledge  
for Profit

THE  
MONSTER  
UNDER THE BED

Stan Davis \_\_\_\_\_  
and Jim Botkin



organized according to the values of today's information age: service, productivity, customization, networking, and the need to be fast, flexible, and global.

"6. Schools will embrace business-like practices to improve their own performance. The three R's will be complemented by the new six R's: risks, results, rewards, relationships, research, and rivalry.

"7. The revolution in the way we learn will worsen the already grave division between social classes, requiring us to redress human and social inequities."

What all this buzz amounts to appears to be this:

The public school system in the United States is an abject failure. The metric for this failure is public education's inability to deliver the quality and/or quantity of education that fuels the all-important economic engine of a country facing increasing global competition. The reason for the failure is that public education is run by government, which has overloaded the educational system with a social agenda—goals of racial equality and elimination of class distinction.

The solution is technology, particularly computers. The authors lovingly list a number of "humanizing" technologies such as voice recognition and touch screens that the buzz says are right around the corner and which will make computers ideal teachers.

And what's the ideal vehicle for delivering this improved education? Business. Technology is making every company an information company, and as the information content of their products rises, every company will become a teaching company, devoting a substantial portion of their efforts to educating customers and employees alike.

Business, according to Botkin and Davis, is doing a great job of educating. The authors dwell on the employee-education programs of Holiday Inn and Xerox and Saturn, and they point with special pride to Arthur Andersen. The accounting giant runs an education division complete with a 150-acre campus near Chicago and "comparable in budget to the University of Virginia's

and larger than the budgets of Purdue University, Syracuse University, or the University of South Carolina" (of such detail is the best buzz made).

The bottom line for Davis and Botkin is a classic buzz phrase: we could fix education if only it were run like a business. Here "Monster" begins to sound like the feel-good book of the year for MBAs: "Radical reform is definitely needed in our schools, but the old education system cannot fulfill our future learning needs." Why turn to business? "Businesses take risks and glorify risk takers," we are told, while "educational organizations are filled with risk-averse bureaucrats and administrators."

This way lies danger, but the authors plunge on headlong. They skirt the shallows of ideas like for-profit management of public education ("...sounds like a bright idea, but it hasn't caught on") and voucher systems ("...strong support for...competition in the school system...but great skepticism that voucher programs administered by local, state, and federal governments will result in the intended effect").

They are finally swept away in the current of the very moral dilemma they seek to have business avoid. The seventh item on their list of megatrends is a clear-eyed acknowledgment that technology and an information economy are widening the gap between the haves and the have-nots in this country. But they can't identify anybody to take responsibility for the problem.

It's not the job of business. Just because business creates the information economy and an uber-class of knowledge workers, it "cannot be blamed for also creating the underclass—and eliminating it is not [business's] principal task."

Social justice is not the job of the education system, either, they conclude. So where does responsibility lie? The best they can do is note that, "Technology is pushing us to value knowledge, but only society can push us to lesser or greater equality in the distribution of knowledge products and services." But what Botkin and Davis fail to demonstrate is why business, or the schools—or writers of business books—are not

part of this responsible society.

The issues raised by "Monster" should be doubly interesting to media companies. First because the media have to cut through the buzz and report insightfully and fairly on the changes that underlie Botkin and Davis' megatrends. And second, of course, because they are businesses, too, and subject to those changes, and the best and worst of the buzz attitudes "Monster" reflects.

If Davis and Botkin are right about the increasing role of business in education, how will newspapers move beyond self-congratulatory newspaper-in-the-classroom programs to take a real role in education? Newspapers have historically claimed the moral high ground of social responsibility and looked down on the amorality of Big Business. If change comes, will they be able to keep faith with their own rhetoric? And will radio and television and cable, which have lagged far behind newspapers in even making any claims, find that they have abdicated all credibility as teaching businesses?

Finally, just to push the symbolism to its limit, what do we take responsibility for? Will we in the media business face the monster under the bed and help defeat it—or find that it is us? ■

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## *E. L. Doctorow on Journalism*

*"Waterworks," by E. L. Doctorow, is a tale told by a New York newspaper editor named McIlvaine of the disappearance of a freelance writer, Martin Pemberton, in post-Civil War New York. For journalists this novel offers special interest because of the editor's philosophic musings about his profession. Following are excerpts from the book (The ellipses are the author's.).*

**I**n one sense it's regrettable that I became personally involved in what I'll call, for the moment, this Pemberton matter. Professionally you try to get as close to things as possible, but never to the point of involvement. If journalism were a philosophy rather than a trade, it would say there is no order in the universe, no discernible meaning, without...the daily paper. So it's a monumental duty we wretches have who slug the chaos into sentences arranged in columns on a page of newsprint. If we're to see things as they are and make our deadlines, we had better not get involved.



The Telegram was an evening paper. By two or two-thirty in the afternoon the issue was set. The press run was over by four. At five I would go to Callaghan's around the corner and stand at the big

oak bar with my stein and buy a copy from the lad who came in to hawk them. My greatest pleasure...reading my own paper as if I had not constructed it myself. Summoning the feelings of an ordinary reader getting the news, my construed news, as an *a priori* creation of a higher power—the objective thing-in-itself from heaven-poured type. What else did I have to assure myself of a stable universe?



That night I sat at my desk reading the ledgers of the most brazen and colossal cabal in the history of the Republic. I will never forget that night. Can you imagine what it meant to a newspaper wretch to have it in black and white under his reading lamp? After all, what do we live for? Not wealth, certainly, not philosophical enlightenment...not for art, or love, and not in any hope of salvation, certainly....We live for proof, sir, we live for the document in our hand....The glory we seek is the glory of the Revelator. And here it was, all recorded in neat columns. I think I wept for joy—I felt as privileged as a scholar holding in his hands fragments of Mosaic scrolls, or a parchment of Homeric verse, or a Shakespeare folio.



He was not comatose, according to Dr. Mott, who had determined that he re-

sponded to sound and turned his head toward light. It was as if he were engaged in some philosophic meditation that rendered the other demands of consciousness insignificant. I remember sitting by his beside...and wondering what a philosophical meditation was, exactly. What its content would be—some depth of thought that allowed you to hear God, perhaps, or his music. You know...there are severe limits to a newspaperman's metaphysics. I understand our breed, and not just from myself. We start out young, full of beans, with a dislike of routine, order, and repetition—all the virtues of American commercial life—and a boyish, irresponsible love of the new, of the ever-changing...challenge. My first job in the business was to ride the pilot boats out to Sandy Hook, and try to get the European news from the transatlantic ships before anybody else. After a while we had our own boats, our news boats....But as I say, all this means we are souls much too....in life....Our life and times are all and everything. We're totally occupied with social and political urgencies....And death...death is no more than an obituary. Anyone's death, including our own, is yesterday's news.



So there was every reason to go ahead...except that—I confess it here—it was despicable, but I felt I had...time. The more of the story I could get, the more it would be mine. Exclusively. Did that mean I found myself prepared to put the interests of the story ahead of the lives of the people involved in it? I'm not sure. Possibly it can't be

rationalized...but there is some instinct that prefers...unintruded-upon meaning. That whoever tells our moral history...must run behind, not ahead of it. That if, in fact, there is meaning, it is not tolled out by church bells but suffered into luminous existence....Maybe I felt that to print the story now, or what I knew of it, would be an intervention...a trespass of the reporter into the realm of cause and effect...that would change the outcome. Still secret, these events could unfold naturally or unnaturally. If you're not convinced, let's just say that I didn't think the story was reportable, accurately, until it was all in. That there was no story...until I saw Sartorius.■

*From "The Waterworks" by E.L. Doctorow. ©1994 by E.L. Doctorow. Reprinted by permission of Random House Inc.*



E. L. DOCTOROW

A NOVEL

THE WATERWORKS

## The Middle East Revisited

### Sandcastles

#### The Arabs in Search of the Modern World

Milton Viorst

Alfred A. Knopf. 416 Pages. \$25.

BY DALIA SHEHORI

The big and the most interesting question that one should consider, so it seems, upon reading Milton Viorst's book, is the question of Arab fundamentalism: what is its real weight; does it jeopardize the existing trends in Arab society toward democracy and modernization; could it have a negative impact on the chances to resolve the Palestinian problem and on the peace process between Israel and its neighbors; does it have a potential to destroy peace in the Middle East, if and when achieved? The book deals with fundamentalism a lot but refers to it in a depictive way, as a phenomenon that one finds in every Arab state in a different shape, rather than as an entity that deserves serious discussion, analysis and prediction.

The author—this is his third book on the Middle East—writes in the first chapter, which is on Iraq, that “the tug-of-war between secularism and religion is, perhaps, the central issue the Middle East faces today.” He portrays Islam as indifferent to the idea of human progress—an indifference that “permits ‘modern’ Muslims to make their case only with arguments external to the faith, and encourages in extremists a fanaticism which insists that a higher order of life may be found only by going backward.” He describes the extremists of Islam, “called fundamentalists in the West,” as a dynamic force everywhere in the Arab world, which shares a determination to impose its definition of Islamic life on society as a whole. He talks about a culture war between the secularizing forces in the Arab world and fundamentalism, and says that “most

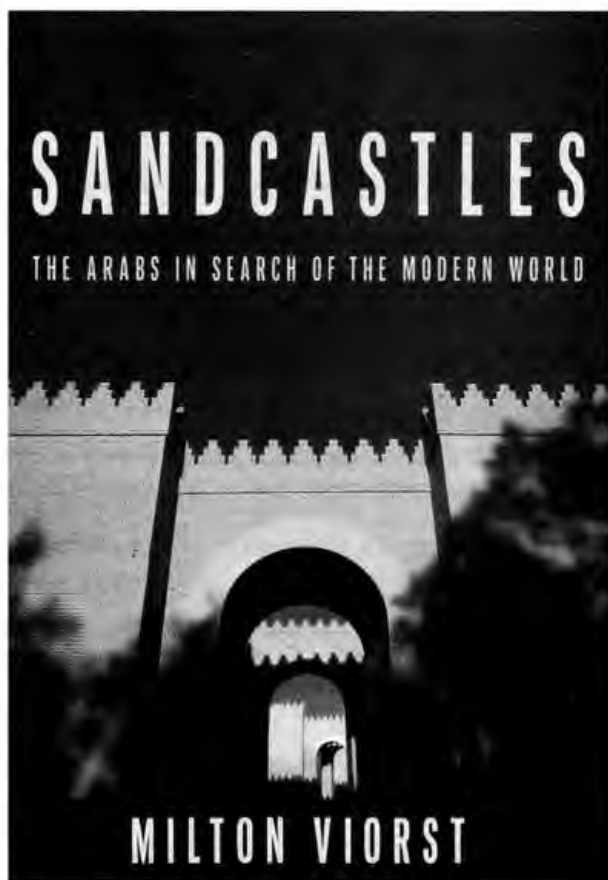
Arabs perceive it as a contest between modernism and medievalism, and recognize that its outcome will establish for decades or more the character of the world in which they live.”

Yet there is no real discussion on the fundamentalistic movement, not in this chapter nor in the others. The author brings some encouraging statements of one of the ideologues of the Iraqi Baath, the party of Saddam Hussein, Dr. Elias Farah, a Christian. “Baathism,” says Farah, “is a secular philosophy...It does not reject Islam. It could not. Islam is not just a religion, like Christianity. It is our civilization. It has forged the unity of the Arab world.... Baathism's goal is to strike a balance between cultural authenticity, of which Islam is the central element, and modernity. What we cannot accept is abuse of power by religion for political ends.”

Farah has also a kind word for Zionism. “We [Iraqis],” he says, “have much in common with Zionism, whose goal is a Jewish renaissance. Ours is an Arab renaissance, based on the creation of a new man and a new woman, liberated not only from colonialist dependency but from the shackles within our own civilization.” This common goal, so to speak, did not prevent Saddam from

throwing some Scud missiles on Tel-Aviv during the Persian Gulf War. Had we not known the authoritarian character of his regime, we could have believed that Iraq was paving its way toward democracy. Under these circumstances, an explicit note from the author to clarify the gap between Baathi ideology and praxis, could help. It could also put in context what seems to be slim hopes for fundamentalism to thrive in Iraq.

Historians agree, writes Viorst, that



the crucial explanation of the decline and fall of the Ottoman empire was its technological backwardness—in agriculture, industry and military weaponry—that was “a by-product of a basic antagonism to creative thinking that had come increasingly to characterize Islam.” The Muslim community never had its Copernicus or Rousseau, he writes. But Turkey did have its savior, Kemal Ataturk, who “transformed a civilization, leaving practically nothing of the old orthodoxy undisturbed.” He abolished the sultanate and shifted the orientation of the Turkish society from East to West. The army, usually a conservative element, played in Turkey a constructive role, keeping order, no matter the ruling party, and spreading secularism and democracy. Yet, 95 percent of Turkey’s population is Muslim. Turkish critics say that 65 percent of the people practice Islam, and the rest percent identify with it. A foreign editor in one of Istanbul’s daily newspapers notes, “We’re not Islamic like Iran.” Since religious parties are banned in Turkey, no one really knows the potential of Islam. But what would have happened if Islam ran as a party for elections in Turkey? Is it a likely occurrence? Could Turkey turn into a theocracy? Could fundamentalism rise and flourish in Turkey? To what extent is democracy rooted in Turkish society?

Viorst brings different views as possible answers to those questions, but leaves the reader puzzled. One might find a hidden clue in the closing remark of the chapter on Turkey. Viorst writes that the Arabs never had an Ataturk and that they can scarcely expect one to appear among them any time soon. “In the absence of such a figure, Arab societies slog along on their own, progressing fitfully, a step forward inevitably followed by a half-step back. It is not certain, given the handicaps, that even Turkey’s achievement will be equal to its ambitions. It is still less certain for the Arabs.”

The late president of Egypt, Anwar el-Sadat, was the first to do peace with Israel. He was killed by the fundamentalists of Egypt, a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood called Jihad. The Nobel Laureate for Literature Naguib Mahfouz

contends that the Brotherhood did not kill Sadat because of the peace with Israel, as is commonly thought, but because he did not establish an Islamic state. “They knew his popularity had collapsed. They killed him thinking this was Islam’s big chance to seize power,” says Mahfouz, as if being assassinated out of religious fanaticism is of more consolation than being assassinated out of political fanaticism. Sadat’s predecessor, Gamal Abdel Nasser, suppressed the Brotherhood and established the principle of separation between state and religion. “Religion is for God and the Nation is for all” was the motto of his regime.

Sadat adopted the same concept, but did not notice how powerful the Brotherhood had become. When he finally took action against them, it was too harsh and too late. One night, September 1981, he arrested 1,600 dissidents; the next month he was assassinated. His successor, President Hosni Mubarak, sees his goal as building democracy, asserting that democracy, and especially the right to express ideas freely, is “the only way to govern the country.” He insists that Egypt will not adopt the shari’a, the code of Islamic law, and argues that democracy would help satisfy the fundamentalists and discourage violence. But Mubarak’s democracy retains all important decision-making in the presidency, and often it is referred to as paternalistic and even as “guided” democracy. A well-known Egyptian columnist says that Islam needs a Jan Huss or a Luther “if Islam is to lead the Muslims into the modern world.” But is Islam really going to lead Egypt? And if not, is Egypt heading toward a real democracy? Should it feel threatened by the Brotherhood or the Jihad and act against them?

One gets a picture, upon reading the book, that the degree of openness in every Arab state is determined by the character of its government and the niche that it is willing to or must allow its fundamentalists. This distinction, that each state has its individual approach toward fundamentalism, is encouraging and somewhat refreshing, considering the widespread tendency to generalize and talk about “The Arab World”

and “Fundamentalism.” Yet, since Islam is not only a religion but a culture, a way of life, the lack of a good analysis as to the chances to narrow its influence and to prevent it from standing in the way of human rights, modernization and progress, is deeply felt.

There is also no reference in the book to recent ideas according to which there is a higher probability that the peace in the Middle East, if and when fully achieved, would bring to the area instability and unrest, rather than stability and “a brave new Middle East,” as envisioned by Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres. The implications of peace are not fully dealt with in the book. In the epilogue, where the author has an opportunity to express his thoughts after doing so many interviews in so many countries, he seems to be satisfied with general propositions such as: it is not clear where the Arab society is heading; democracy is not yet deep rooted there; there is a question whether Islam is capable of offshoots that reflect liberal values.

The book goes sometimes beyond Viorst, suggesting that so far every Arab state, except for Iran, succeeded individually in dealing with its fundamentalists. The author himself is ready to say only that his book is no more than a snapshot taken today of the Arabs, and “a snapshot tells little of the past, and even less of the future. Surely Arab society is still unfinished.” He also adds that “in recent years more Arabs have come to recognize that building a civilization on tyranny or fanaticism... is like building sandcastles.” If so, are we marching toward an era of human rights and rule of reason and freedom? “Few are optimistic,” writes Viorst, “that the idea [of freedom] will soon prevail. But it’s much too early to despair; the process continues.”

A clearer view, maybe prejudiced but still interesting because of the tremendous change it symbolizes, is that of King Hussein of Jordan. The destiny of the Arabs now, he says, is “a unity of equals along European lines.” He foresees “a revival of the spirit of the Arab people, much of which was lost in the Arab revolt in 1917-1918. The Arabs never enjoyed the fruits of their revolt.

Now I see the chance for the Arabs to regain a place in the modern world. Islam is a progressive religion. The Arabs in their history have contributed to human progress. My hope is now for a new openness to the rest of the world, to enrich others as well as ourselves." King Hussein says he is tired of being asked if Israel is a threat. "The threat is our own doubts about our self-worth, our doubts about our ability to measure up with the rest of the world. Arabs are threatened by Arabs. If we succeed in our democratic undertaking here in Jordan, we will succeed beyond our borders."

This article is written after the signing ceremony of the peace agreement between Israel and Jordan. The book was finished on November 1993, which seems like decades ago. So much had happened since: the easing of the Arab boycott on Israel; the decision to grant the Nobel prize for peace to the prime minister of Israel Yitzhak Rabin, the foreign minister, Shimon Peres, and PLO chairman Yasir Arafat; the kidnapping and killing of Israeli soldier Nahshon Vaxman by Hamas; the booby trapping of a bus on its passengers in the heart of Tel Aviv by Hamas; the hard inner discussion that has evolved in Israel as to a full withdrawal from the Golan Heights; the Aliah that was made by the chief rabbi of the Jewish community of Syria; the Casablanca economic summit. All of these developments come to show how risky it is to write a book on an on-going process. The first prime minister of Israel, the late David Ben Gurion, used to say: "Newspapers, today you read, tomorrow you forget." A book strives for a better fate, but when being so close to the events, it might be consumed by them.

In the case of "Sandcastles" the nearness to the events is a source of strength, but also a source of weakness. The reader gets a good idea about every country that the book deals with—Iraq, Turkey, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Kuwait, Jordan and the Palestinians. But, events that had occurred since the completion of the book are not only missing, but also sometimes make details in the book redundant, or meaningless or much less important. This is the case with

parts of the reviews on Iraq and Kuwait, or on the Palestinians, Syria and Jordan, concerning the peace process. Such is the view of the spokeswoman for the Palestinian delegation to the peace talks, Hanan Ashrawi, about what Rabin's election offered to the peace process.

This is the place to point out the lack of a respective chapter on Israel in the book. The reason is that the author wrote a book on Israel in 1987. But since the reader might not have that book at hand, and since some changes have occurred in the last seven years, the most prominent of which is the change of government from Likud to Labor, the absence of such a review is much felt.

Since the book is divided into chapters according to states (and the Palestinians), there are sometimes unavoidable repeats, concerning overlapping events in old and recent history of the Middle East. These repeats, that are sometimes tiring and annoying, could be avoided by having a comprehensive history chapter in the beginning, and then dealing with each state in its turn.

The author clearly prefers oral history wherever he can get it—which makes the history passages vivid, colorful and credible. On the other hand, it raises the question of the need to learn some well established historical facts from history tellers rather than from a plain reading of the facts. This structural journalistic method of bringing the facts by interviewing people, can also be misleading sometimes. The reader, who is flooded with facts and stories, does not have a compass to direct himself to know when the interviewee represents a current view or a consensus in his country, and when he expresses a thought that he overheard the other day in a street corner. In a police state like Syria there is no substitute for inhabitants talking about the regime and their daily life. But that method is less effective or needed in a relatively open society such as Egypt, where the author chooses to write almost the whole chapter through the eyes of Naguib Mahfouz.

Speaking of Egypt, there is no mention in the book to what is called in Israel "the cold peace" between the two

states that bothers a lot of Israelis. Egyptian tourists do not visit Israel. The Egyptian intelligentsia has not yet come to terms with the peace with Israel. Hosni Mubarak, the president of Egypt for the last 13 years, has not paid a formal visit to Israel. On the other hand, the peace with Egypt withstood the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the Intifada (the Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories), and Egypt has become a credible supplier of good offices to Israel and the PLO. The Cold Peace explains the overwhelming joy in Israel with the "warm peace" with Jordan, and the Israeli concern and will to know from the president of Syria, Hafez al-Assad, what sort of peace he has in mind when talking of peace with Israel. The place to find the answer to the disturbing question about the cold peace is definitely Egypt.

There is no doubt that the reader of Viorst's book will gain a much better knowledge of the Middle East and the powers that play part in the arena. But sometimes one gets the feeling that the book falls between the chairs: it is not knowledgeable enough for the expert, but it is a little bit too heavy—and in some areas not up-to-date—for the accidental intelligent reader, who would like, perhaps, a less detailed report and some more insight into the countries. ■

*Dalia Shehori was a Nieman Fellow, class of '84. She was then the diplomatic correspondent of Al-Hamishmar in Israel. Now she is with Ha'aretz and writes on law affairs.*

## Two Contrasting Views of Japan

### Looking at the Sun: The Rise of the New East Asian Economic and Political System

James Fallows

Pantheon. 517 Pages. \$25.

### Blueprint for a New Japan: The Rethinking of a Nation

Ichiro Ozawa

Kodansha International. 208 Pages. \$25.

BY MARCUS W. BRAUCHLI

When he lived in Asia, James Fallows sometimes found it convenient to misrepresent himself. In Tokyo, he liked to put on a "Kissingerian accent" and pretend to be from the Ruhr Valley, to disguise his American nationality and elicit new reactions from the Japanese he met. In the Philippines, Fallows exaggerated the number of his children to six from two, to test the response of that country's prodigious Catholic majority.

Now that he is in America, Fallows apparently finds it convenient to misrepresent Asia. He describes Tokyo ice-cream parlors where every scoop must weigh exactly 150 grams; a visit to a Japanese barber who measures and records each strand of hair to ensure its length, and a Japanese company bidding less than a penny for the chance to install a city's massive new computer system.

What Fallows hopes to show by these examples is the peculiar nature of Japan, that it is not the "normal nation" it seeks to be. But such extrapolation rings as false as his German accent and flexi-size family. True, some ice-cream parlors weigh their ice-cream scoops, but so do they in the U.S.; it may even be that Fallows encountered a freakishly meticulous barber in Japan, though it sounds odd, and while a Japanese company blatantly lowballed a computer system bid in hopes of locking in the city's business, the government ultimately rejected the bid.

In his new book, "Looking at the

Sun: The Rise of the New East Asian Economic and Political System," Fallows, Washington Editor of *The Atlantic*, juxtaposes detailed and often revealing reporting with innuendo and misguided analysis to suggest that Asia's—or, more precisely, Japan's—rise is inevitable, different from the West's experience and thus perhaps vaguely threatening.

It is fascinating to contrast his book with the experience and knowledge of Ichiro Ozawa, the smooth Machiavellian power broker behind several recent Japanese governments. In outlining his agenda for Japan, "Blueprint for a New Japan: The Rethinking of a Nation," Ozawa centers on Japan's need to become a more normal nation—and in the process tells far more about the failures and weaknesses of his country than Fallows can.

He writes, for instance, of the toothlessness of the Japanese prime minister, whom Ozawa calls a mere "master of ceremonies" in a system so weighted by consensus that it can barely move; of "the politics of irresponsibility," in which no politician wants or dares to be held to account for any decision, and of the tight, dangerous relationship between the long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party and business.

Fallows would find solace in Ozawa's

# LOOKING *at the* SUN

*The Rise of the New  
East Asian Economic  
and Political System*

JAMES FALLOWS

complaints about the Japanese system. But while Fallows wonders whether the West must become more like Asia—adopting mercantilist policies and strengthening its social cohesion—Ozawa ponders the need of his country to become more like the West, and the U.S. in particular.

Ozawa argues that Japan's Kantei, the Prime Minister's Office, needs the same powers and support that the White House has, for Japan to respond more quickly and decisively to international crises. He thinks Japan should rewrite

its U.S.-drafted constitution to abolish the strict confines of Article Nine—which renounces the use of force to settle conflict—and develop a military capable of participating in international peace-keeping missions under United Nations command. He wants Japan to participate more actively in international forums and regional dialogue, partly to spread its ideas about development and nationhood.

That might alarm Fallows, who plainly considers Japan a threat to U.S. hegemony. Indeed, Fallows represents the very same domineering America to which Ozawa believes Japan ultimately must stand up and compare itself.

Like many Washington-bred internationalists, Fallows is really a nationalist. It is an elemental flaw. He sees some grand design, for instance, in Japanese semiconductor makers grabbing 16 percent of the global chip market—at a time when U.S. makers still held a vastly larger share. He finds something wrong with integrated Japanese companies supplying their own subsidiaries in the U.S., instead of giving the business to U.S. rivals. (The U.S. suppliers may offer better prices, but there can be equally sound economic reasons for buying from your parent company—such as depriving your rival of needed revenue.)

His sinister view taints much of his economic analysis. “When the yen doubled in value against the dollar between 1985 and 1988,” Fallows writes, “retail prices in Japan should have fallen significantly—but they barely budged.” Not really. Japan imported very little, so external price changes didn’t necessarily translate to dramatic domestic price changes. Besides, as American consumers have learned from their manufacturers, lower producer costs often don’t benefit consumers, just manufacturers’ bottom lines.

Both Fallows and Ozawa probably wish they could have written their books slightly later. In the four years since Fallows left Tokyo, Japan’s stock market crashed, its property bubble imploded and its economy finally started to respond to the exigencies of economic law. U.S. chip makers are winning back market share from Japan; importers sell increasingly large vol-

umes of foreign-made goods to discerning Japanese consumers; and, figures like Ozawa are clamoring for a more responsible, activist role for Japan in the world.

Though Ozawa’s book has just come out in English, it was first published in June 1993, just before the Liberal Democratic Party was swept from power after four decades governing post-World War II Japan. The “ultimate goal” of Ozawa’s tract, the emergence of an “autonomous individual,” seems nearer than ever. With his adroit political skills, Ozawa led a mass defection from the LDP and was able to form two coalition governments that espoused his notions of strong political leadership, decentralization away from Tokyo’s mighty bureaucracy, and deregulation.

But, defying both logic and Ozawa’s own predictions, Japan’s traditional opposition, the Socialists, formed a bizarre alliance with LDP to reclaim the government. The political reforms that Ozawa describes in his book are still actively discussed, but now among politicians out of power.

Both these books are politically relevant. Fallows writes clean, clear prose, and Ozawa’s shorter book is forthright if a bit leaden. But beware Fallows’ conclusions and myriad asides. His view of Japan’s economic expansionism as historical ambition, not U.S.-style greed, is wrong, and many of the dark inferences that flow from that theory are misled. ■

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*Marcus W. Brauchli, NF '92, is The Wall Street Journal's Asia correspondent and covered Japan from 1988 to 1991.*

## Nieman Foundation Going On-Line

The Nieman Foundation is establishing its own server on the Internet as a place where Nieman Fellows will be able to exchange ideas and information. We are seeking the electronic addresses of all former fellows for an on-line directory. If you can be reached through any public or commercial on-line service, please send your e-mail address to the Nieman Foundation at [nreports@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:nreports@fas.harvard.edu)

An on-line electronic version of Nieman Reports is already available on the Internet through the Electronic Newsstand. Net surfers can examine the entire table of contents or read selected articles from the current issue and one year of back issues that are presently archived there. One way to reach the Electronic Newsstand is to “gopher” to “internet.com” from your computer.

The Nieman Foundation’s May 1994 Conference on Journalism and the New Information Technologies, reported in the Summer 1994 edition of Nieman Reports, is also available on the portion of the Internet known as the World Wide Web, courtesy of Nando.net, the on-line information service of North Carolina’s News & Observer Publishing Co.

To access the on-line report of the conference, readers must have access to a WWW browser such as Mosaic, Netscape or Lynx. The address (or URL) of Nando is <http://www.nando.net>. ■



## A Missed Opportunity by a Talented Columnist

### Self-Inflicted Wounds

From LBJ's Guns and Butter to Reagan's Voodoo Economics

Hobart Rowen

Times Books. 447 Pages. \$25.

BY MURRAY SEEGER

If a single word could describe the work of Hobart Rowen, the doyen of journalists who specialize in the economy, I would nominate "indefatigable."

Rowen, now well into his 70's, writes a twice-a-week column that reflects his half-century of work in trying to explain and interpret the ebb and flow of the world economy. He started before World War II as a copy boy for the *Journal of Commerce*, reached one peak as a Washington correspondent for *Newsweek* and mounted a higher pinnacle in 30 years at *The Washington Post*.

Even a serious bout with cancer could do no more than briefly interrupt the flow of his copy and his tooling around town in his ragtop. Ever the professional, he used the trauma of poor medical treatment as the basis of an article.

This book tracks the record of economic policymaking from 1965, when Lyndon Johnson attempted to finance the Vietnam War without raising taxes, through the Reagan and Bush years when conservatives, behind the screen of phony budget cutting, managed to triple the total official debt of the country.

The title says a lot: the problems the economy has faced in the last 30 years could have been lessened, if not avoided, if the politicians had followed good economic advice, such as given regularly by Rowen. This book is Bart Rowen's magnum opus, the summation of a remarkable career during which he single-mindedly scolded politicians for dodging the facts of economic life and avoiding their responsibilities to protect the health of the country.

Through his years at *The Post*, where he became an Assistant Managing Editor, Rowen never removed his running shoes. He was a diligent reporter even when he was supposed to be an executive.

Ben Bradlee, when he went from *Newsweek* to *The Post*, took Rowen along. A confessed economics illiterate, Bradlee accepted Rowen's news judgment on major breaking stories as well as giving him a column for his opinions. The result was that *The Post* put on page one stories on subjects such as balance of international payments and gold policy that other papers buried with the stock tables.

Rowen raised the level of economic reporting through his example of tireless work. Other reporters were forced to follow his stories because he showed how economic policy and economists could produce news that warranted more attention than they previously received.

The book illustrates both the strengths of Bart Rowen and his weaknesses. Through his long career, he has been consistent in supporting an activist economic policy and protecting the verities, especially free trade. He is notable for his staunch support of Japan's policymakers, even when more qualified observers disagree.

Clearly, Rowen is nostalgic (as I am) for the Keynesian economists who went to Washington with John F. Kennedy and stayed through the Johnson period. Unlike the later supply-siders and monetarists, the Keynesians were optimists: they truly believed that good policy decisions could break the apparent inevitability of the business cycle.

We will never know if the Keynesians



FROM LBJ'S GUNS AND BUTTER TO  
REAGAN'S VOODOO ECONOMICS

HOBART ROWEN  
ECONOMICS COLUMNIST OF THE WASHINGTON POST

were right because their formula for policymaking was never fully tested. No congress would cede to the White House arbitrary power to adjust taxes and spending in the same way that the Federal Reserve adjusts money supply.

The Carter Administration, remembered mostly for its rapid reversals on economic policy, accelerated the end of "the golden era of Keynesian economics" in the 1960's, when fiscal and monetary policy combined to yank the economy out of the Eisenhower recession and into a stable period of economic growth with low inflation, especially during the brief Kennedy presidency," Rowen recalls.

It was the Nixon Administration that started the debt buildup after making a ritualistic pledge to balance the budget and leave more money for the private sector to dispose of. The deficits only got bigger in the ensuing years.

As an unreconstructed liberal, Rowen exposes the failures of airline deregulation and "voodoo economics and the triumph of greed," the era of Reaganomics. He also reports of the personal conflicts he encountered in the Nixon Administration and with Rob-

ert McNamara, when he was president of the World Bank.

Herbert Stein, a Nixon advisor, wrote of Rowen in an inner office memo, "understand, despite his protestations, that he is an implacable enemy of this Administration...." Rowen had a more serious run-in with McNamara in 1975 over reporting on the World Bank's apparent effort to maintain good relations with the oil producing nations during the OPEC pricing crisis.

These complaints "had created an uncomfortable situation for me with the publisher, Kay Graham, who was a close friend of McNamara." Relations with McNamara were patched up rather quickly, but it was not until 1991 that Rowen reached a "rapprochement" with Mrs. Graham.

Rowen's book would be more interesting if he told more of these personal anecdotes instead of repeating so much of the reporting that he did over the last three decades. Other writers have produced more interesting histories of the failures of economic policy in the same period.

He has missed an opportunity to reflect now on the personalities of the presidential advisors who, after Rowen, are the main characters in the book. Instead, Rowen largely reproduces the reporting he did at the time and uses his columns and articles as confirming footnotes.

While he is right that U.S. policymakers and business leaders for too long ignored the development of Asian markets, he is wrong to ignore the accumulated evidence that Japan does not play by the same trading rules as most other industrial states and that it does not have an obligation to be a better international citizen.

Rowen also refuses to re-examine his views that in the U.S. anything less than "free trade" is "isolationism" or that the U.S. should not continue to put pressure on Japan to further open its trading system.

Free trade is something like free love; everyone talks about it but no one practices it. ■

*Murray Seeger, special advisor to the curator of the Nieman Foundation, succeeded Bart Rowen on the Washington economics beat at Newsweek.*

## 100 Years of Slavic Sadness in Pictures

### The Russian Century A Photographic History of Russia's 100 Years

Text by Brian Moynahan  
Random House. 320 Pages. \$45.

Every week, it seems, new, raw historical materials tumble forth from the archives, files and attics of the Russian Federation. In this heavy, handsome volume there are photos that were found in an elevator shaft, apparently hidden by someone fearing arrest, as well as other arcane sources.

There are pictures from amateur and professional photographers, many of them never published before. And there are some of the propaganda photos of happy natives that look more ironic than ever.

Photo Researchers Annabel Merullo and Sarah Jackson are the stars of this all-British production. The pictures are beautifully reproduced and printed on heavy, glossy paper. Given the heavy, depressing images, it seems appropriate that they are all in black and white.

The pictures start with pre-revolutionary contrasts between human degradation and unseemly wealth and waste and end with the era of Gorbachev and Yeltsin. In between, we have cold evidence of the cruelties and crimes committed in the name of scientific socialism.

In his commentary Brian Moynahan leans heavily on anecdotes and florid language to tell the long, complicated Russian story in few words. The photos,

# THE RUSSIAN CENTURY



## A Photographic History of Russia's 100 Years

TEXT BY BRIAN MOYNAHAN  
FOREWORD BY YEVGENY YEVFUSHENKO  
PHOTOGRAPHS COLLECTED BY ANNABEL MERULLO AND SARAH JACKSON

he wrote, "bear vivid witness to the century's madcap progress." It seems a strange conclusion for what most observers would describe as a history permeated with tragedy. ■—MS

## Trashing the Media's Political Coverage

### All's Fair: Love, War, and Running for President

Mary Matalin and James Carville with Peter Knobler  
Random House/Simon & Schuster. 493 Pages. \$24.

BY CURTIS WILKIE

Sometimes, both Mary Matalin and James Carville sound like sore losers. Instead of giving an inside account of the 1992 campaign, a duet delivered by modern-day Montagues and Capulets, the authors of "All's Fair" have turned out a rambling journalism review in which more words are spent on the perfidies and shortcomings of the "media" than on the activities of once and future presidents of the United States.

The two lovers, who awkwardly took opposing sides in high councils of the last presidential campaign, are generally protective of their old bosses, though they manage to settle a few in-house scores. Matalin accuses John Sununu, the ousted White House chief of staff, of conducting a "reign of terror" in which he employed "a Gestapo method" and exhibited "the political acumen of a doorknob." Carville is a bit more subtle in reducing Betsey Wright from a longtime Clinton loyalist to an erratic figure responsible for the memorable expression, "bimbo eruptions," and the admission that Clinton raised taxes in Arkansas 127 times.

As for their joint enemy, Ross Perot, Matalin calls him a "crackpot...little runt...little twit." Carville says Perot is "...just wacky, and very deceitful, and about as politically dishonest a person as I've ever run across."

This is the kind of trash-talk that might be expected from a pair of irreverent political pros: Matalin, the fierce partisan who branded her husband-to-be "serpenthead" when he went to work for Clinton; Carville, antithesis of McLuhan's concept of cool, ranting on TV in Clinton's defense, wearing a vivid

sweater the color of the sins the candidate stood accused of.

They tell their story in alternating passage, but early in the book they take a detour from campaign '92 to Journalism 101.

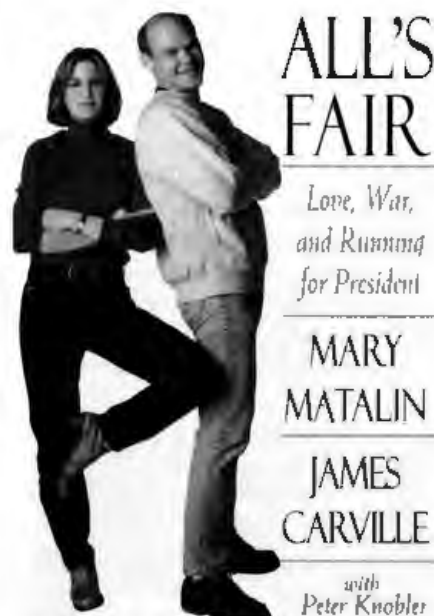
Though Matalin and Carville enjoy reasonably good relations with many reporters, friendships built on a fondness for storytelling and contempt for conventional behavior, they take out their frustrations on an imperfect press. "Animals," Matalin calls them. To Carville, they were "the Beast." The description is perfect, he writes, "You can just see the media in a pack, howling for raw meat."

Collectively, reporters are called cynics and wimps, gossips and confidantes; they are variously described as gullible and manipulative, lazy and vain, cunning and ignorant, quick to judge and loathe to admit error.

Carville detects a bias against Clinton: "...a bunch of Yankee yuppie reporters decided that he was Slick Willie." Matalin, meanwhile, writes, "I was always nervous about the press covering Clinton, because I thought they were pro-Clinton." For all of her carping about unethical press behavior, she uses an off-the-record conversation with John Harwood of *The Wall Street Journal* to record his acknowledgment "that we really do like Bill Clinton. We like the energy of the campaign. We relate to his generation...."

Ambiguity abounds throughout the book.

The authors treat the "media" as though it were a single-minded institution. "No one understands the power of the media in this country....The power



they have is staggering," Carville writes, either in awe or disgust.

Actually, the "media," the authors should understand, is just as inchoate as a political campaign. Carville's lament about out-of-control candidates could easily apply to reporters struggling to find the proper lead. "There's this huge myth," he writes, "which the media perpetuates, that candidates do what they're told. They don't. The press wants to write, and the elites want to believe, that everything in a campaign is scripted and contrived and organized. The truth of the matter is that a lot of it we try to contrive and organize, but very little of it ends up that way...."

Since the authors make a living dealing with members of the "media" and appearing on the "media," they should also realize that the "media" is no more monolithic than a political party. It is composed of thousands of individuals with varying quirks, biases and foibles. Some reporters are hard-working and conscientious; others are hacks. The "media" ranges from the magisterial opinions of *The New York Times* to

tabloid sleaze; from the aeries of network headquarters in Manhattan to the one-lung radio stations in the provinces.

Some of the Matalin-Carville criticism is fresh and well-placed, some is accurate but no longer novel, and some is simply wrong-headed.

Carville has a wonderful discussion of what he calls the "Quote Sluts," those ubiquitous oracles who are too often called upon by the "media" to dispense their wisdom.

Both authors have good observations about reporters' obsession with polls. Carville: "They worship the polls. If you want to find a hundred reporters, throw a poll; they'll be out there sniffing at it, writing whatever conventional wisdom they can all find together." Matalin: "The idiocy of the reporting on election night in New Hampshire was staggering." After samples taken earlier in the day at polling places indicated that Pat Buchanan was in a dead heat with President George Bush it affected much of the reporting and analysis that night, even though Bush wound up winning by 16 points.

Matalin, who was, of course, on the losing side in the general election, maintains the harshest voice throughout the book. She attacks the "jaded" White House press corps, a group accustomed to comfort on the road. They are, she insists, members of a special culture who share opinions and determine the "Line of the Day" that the rest of the "media" will follow. "We called them the big feet," she writes.

Her complaints of pack journalism are at least as old as Timothy Crouse's chronicle of the 1972 campaign, "The Boys on the Bus." Journalism was blessed with the term, "Big Foot," by B. Drummond Ayres of *The New York Times*, when he was a beat reporter on Ted Kennedy's campaign in 1980. Ayres used the expression to describe his bureau chief, Hedrick Smith; the term was also used as a verb to depict Smith's propensity to take over good stories.

While campaign coverage is always fair game, there are assertions in "All's Fair" that are either unfair or arguable.

Matalin says reporters "hate Democratic conventions because the facilities

are no good, they can't find anybody, everything is discoordinated." Actually, reporters love the heat and passion of Democratic conventions. It's like going to the circus. Republican conventions are like church.

Of l'affaire Jennifer Flowers, Carville says "the media...didn't know how to cover it. The networks didn't know what to do with it, the dailies were starting to pick it up. The way the media gets around this is they say, 'We're not going to cover the story, we're going to cover the media covering the story.' At which point the media evades all responsibility and gets to cover its favorite subject, which is, of course, the media." The "media" was indeed unsure, and agonized over a decent way to handle the story. In the end, the press covered Flowers' accusations and Clinton's denials. Not themselves.

After making his claim about "media" covering "media," Carville later writes that reporters "have turned journalism into the one institution in America with the least capacity for self-examination and self-criticism." He contradicts himself and ignores ombudsmen, journalism reviews and press criticism, the self-critical devices that no other institution uses publicly on itself.

From beginning to end, Matalin simmers over the coverage of "Bushspeak," the peculiar syntax of the former president. It made an early appearance in New Hampshire when the president garbled the name of the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band and blurted, "Don't cry for me, Argentina." The problem arose again in the waning days of the campaign, and Matalin says the press reported "that in his desperation he was resorting to unseemly and inappropriate displays of language and emotion. They made it sound like he was having a meltdown." Here is some of what the president said that day in Michigan: he called Clinton and Al Gore "two bozos," and tagged Gore "Ozone Man.... This guy is so far off in the environmental extreme we'll be up to our neck in owls and out of work for every American. This guy's crazy. He's way out. Far out, man."

The authors raise the strongest questions for debate over campaign cover-

age when they single out cases instead of relying on sweeping generalizations.

Matalin challenges Andy Rosenthal's account in *The New York Times*—which was based on a pool report—of how Bush marveled at a grocery scanner. She calls it "a legendary example of factual and editorial unfairness."

Carville says *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* deliberately upset Clinton's primary schedule by insisting on a lunch with the candidate when its editorial board had already decided to endorse Paul Tsongas. "That sham meeting was one of the great chickenshit maneuvers of American journalism," he writes.

Carville describes the coverage of Jennifer Flowers' lurid press conference as "the worst piece of journalism I have ever seen" and suggests that CNN chose to telecast it live as a "payback" for Clinton's decision to cancel an appearance on CNN in order to make his case on "60 Minutes." He also reveals a "brilliant" suggestion by Clinton aide, Mandy Grunwald, shortly before Clinton went on "60 Minutes" with Steve Kroft: "If you really want something to stay off the cutting-room floor and make it on the air, she said, use his name. In the middle of the interview say, 'You know, Steve, the whole point here is...'"

All of this is prologue to a scene near the climax, when angry Bush admirers turned on the press on election night in Houston. "The crowd started pushing and shoving and cursing and screaming at them," Matalin writes. "Punches were being thrown and a dangerous, full-scale rumble was in the making. The press guys weren't fighting back, just trying to defend themselves...."

So much for the theory of "the Beast."

*Curtis Wilkie, a Boston Globe reporter based in New Orleans, finally has what he longed for—a house in the French Quarter with a balcony.*

## A Guide to the Lost, Misplaced, Misguided Reporter

### Real Places

#### An Unconventional Guide to America's Generic Landscape

Grady Clay

University of Chicago Press. 307 Pages. \$34.95.

By MICHAEL J. KIRKHORN

Reporters usually know whether they are here or elsewhere. Here is the office, the newsroom, the crossroads where large or small events converge or collide. It's a comfortable place; the faces and the furniture are familiar; the pace is brisk; the outcome of each day's work is predictable—the newspaper comes out, the broadcast reaches its audience.

Elsewhere is wherever else journalists might find themselves—on assignment in strange towns or landscapes, chasing down interviews with celebrities, politicians or warlords, recording local color, trying to find the hotel or an especially useful source, locating a satellite or a computer repair shop.

When reporters are elsewhere you can often tell by their costumes. Crouching in a khaki shirt at the edge of a banana grove in Haiti and confiding the local political gossip, Dan Rather clearly believes that he is elsewhere and he wants us to know it. So does any foreign correspondent who wears a rumpled shoulder-strap shirt or a little vest with a hundred pockets.

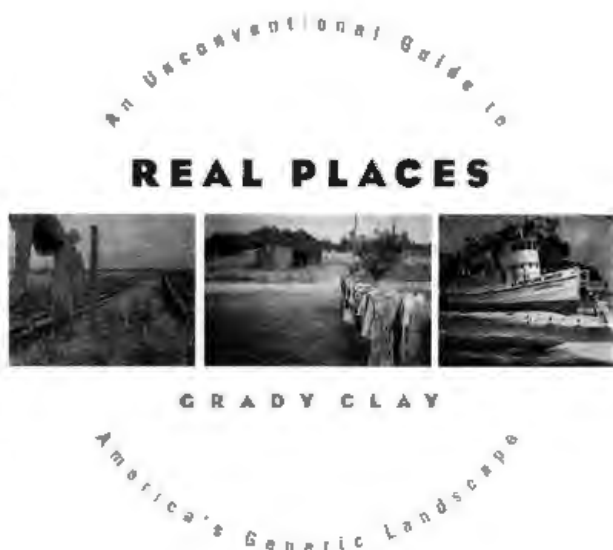
Shirt and vest are, as any amateur semiotician would know, significant apparel, a declaration of exotic purposes, the sporting togs of a journalistic adventurer as immune to tsetse flies and flying bullets as Richard Harding Davis, who set the dashing style with his cork helmet and bush jacket. He even wore his safari outfit to political conventions.

There are other recognizable journalistic elsewheres and elsewhere costumes. As election time approaches, reporters embark on expeditions to that familiar elsewhere called "the heart-

land," where they amble around in Levi's, talk shop with Chevy dealers, hunker down with farmers and risk disfiguring haircuts in local salons so they can find out what real people think about the candidates and "the issues." The Levi's and down home style tell us they are elsewhere.

But when they are neither here nor there, journalists often are as lost as anyone else. They inhabit the same environments as other people. They are expected not only to live in these environments but also to observe them on behalf of the public and do the job with special astuteness. But they often see, hear and understand no more than the untrained Chevy dealers and farmers.

Fortunately, the lost, misplaced and misdirected among us now have a guide. Grady Clay has written a book, perhaps the masterwork of his long career as one of the most valuable and unconventional of all environmental reporters. The book identifies and defines American places. It tells the reader what a shortcut is, explains why, from sod huts to trailer colonies, "temporary housing developments" last forever, defines blast sites and bypasses and fall color country. Each of these definitions traces the evolution of an idea about our surroundings, and the evolution is both a tribute to human ingenuity and a warning of excesses that diminish the common heritage.



Clay's reputation as an imaginative observer of the environments we create for ourselves is known, not widely but well, to those who have been privileged to share his odyssey through "the built environment"—by reading his books and articles, by subscribing to the *Journal of Landscape Architecture*, which he edited after his newspaper years at *The Louisville Courier-Journal*, or by being gently instructed how to detect what he has called the "hidden order" and the "concealed possibilities" in some familiar locality, "whether Boston's Combat Zone or Louisville's sturdy old riverfront blocks."

He is a thoroughly local reporter, and one who insists on the human scale. In an age in which other kinds of observers are learning more and more,

as he says, about the infinitely small and the infinitely large—the gene, for example, or the universe—he ranges the middle distances where we all live. Because he has traveled so broadly through American cities, towns and countrysides, he is able to convert his knowledge of localities into something resembling an inclusive understanding of the common life. His quest, as he wrote in an earlier book, is to help us do what he has done: find in our “visible landscape...an observable and universal order.”

For five decades or so—in newspapers, magazines and books, as reporter, editor and essayist—he has followed the often invisible paths and contours of the terrain we build, revise and rebuild and revise again. He knows the signs that tell the stories of that environment as intimately as a Bedouin tracker knows the otherwise featureless Negev.

He has given us a book that reminds us of the richness of the vocabulary that describes where we live. He names the places, provides strategies for exploring them and he does it with great verve and wit and the savvy of a reporter who has spent those decades teaching himself to do what, oddly enough, many reporters don't bother to learn to do well: observe.

Like any shrewd observer, he confounds us with the obvious. He enriches our understanding of the “twilight” by telling us what poets and philosophers have had to say about it. He tells us that the 480-square-mile ocean “wreck site” of the spacecraft Challenger was exceeded only by that of the Spanish Armada. He knows the difference between drop zones and spill zones.

Although this is a series of definitions, and perhaps has the weaknesses inherent in any series of definitions, Clay is not simply a lister. A sensible observer who knows the value of good human environments, he does not recklessly welcome change. But he accepts the fact that we all are involved in a succession of changes that is more or less inevitable. The quality of those changes matters to him.

The planet is durable but not inexhaustible. Observation will not save it,

but without observation we will neither recognize the value of what we have nor think clearly about the desirable features of our surroundings.

There is a philosophy at work here, and a conviction. Clay believes that through old-fashioned objective observation the disciplined and imaginative environmental reporter can exercise a redemptive influence. The journalistic observer is rightly situated to recognize the natural order of things, if only she or he will do what all good reporters must do, set aside prejudice and really see the world as it is. In an earlier book, “Right Before Your Eyes,” he said that if reporters observe carefully, “taking evidence from the real world rather than from invisible abstractions within ourselves, our psyche, or our prealigned consciousness,” they will reveal the natural order that our hurry and our perplexity obscure.

In the concluding passage of this book, Clay restates that theme. As we contend with one another to impose our purposes on “the huge complex we call Earth,” he says, “we learn with ever more certainty that we will need all the flexible customs and institutions we can invent to contain the conflicts and to redefine, while protecting, the public's right of access.

“All the more reason, then, for us to continue the sorting-out process which this book can only begin—digging out the functions, names, rights and obligations that go with everyday places, and blowing them into proportion. Once we learn to look at the world this way, there is no chaos, nothing is wholly foreign, and we are never lost.” ■

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*Michael J. Kirkhorn, Ph.D. and Nieman Fellow 1970-71, is Director of the Journalism Program at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington.*

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## Scrutinizing the Facts in Fatal Bus Crash

### Reckless Disregard Corporate Greed, Government Indifference, and the Kentucky School Bus Crash

James S. Kunen

Simon & Schuster, 379 Pages, \$23.

BY JACQUELINE THOMAS

Many newspaper journalists occasionally come across a book that makes them think, "I wish I had written this." "Reckless Disregard" may be just such a book for a lot of us.

Having lived and worked in Detroit, a city whose problems are linked to the ups and downs of the domestic auto industry, made "Reckless Disregard" an even more compelling read for me.

It's a book with something for everyone, though.

With great skill, James S. Kunen tells the story of events surrounding a May 1988 school bus crash in central Kentucky.

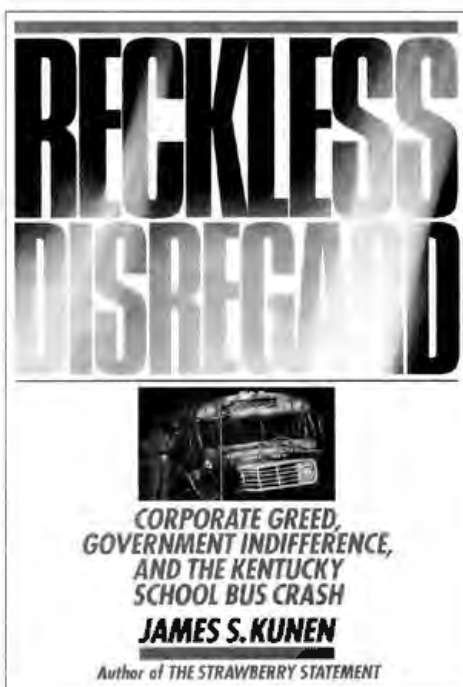
No one died from the impact—not the drunk driver of the pickup truck that collided head-on with the school bus, owned by a Kentucky church, or any of the 67 occupants of the bus.

What killed 27 people aboard the bus, all but three of them children, was the fire ignited by the puncture of the bus's unshielded gas tank.

Common sense and the testimony of experts suggest an accident of major proportion had just been waiting to happen.

The gas tank was located in the front right quadrant of the bus, near its main entrance and chief route of escape. There was only one emergency exit—in the rear. The fire spread quickly through the highly flammable interior of the bus, releasing toxic gases.

Kunen, who at 19 wrote "The Strawberry Statement," an account of the 1968 student strike at Columbia University, has done a fine job of going beyond the excellent reporting of The Courier-Journal in Louisville and other



Kentucky newspapers. He has woven a riveting tale of the crash and of 14-year-old Shannon Fair, whose amusement park excursion ended in death, and her parents, who became crusaders for school bus safety.

The Fairs' chief target was Ford Motor Co., which built the bus's chassis—and ultimately paid them \$5 million in an out-of-court settlement.

A careful calculation of cost vs. benefit by Ford set events in motion. The frame of the bus on which Shannon was riding had holes drilled in it to attach a steel cage to protect the gas tank. But no cage was ever installed.

Ford—whose then-president, Lee Iacocca, once said: "Safety has really killed all our business"—felt it was under no obligation to do so: a federal law,

effective April 1, 1977, required installation of the cage, but the frame of Shannon's bus was manufactured a little over a week earlier.

Possible similarities to the current controversy involving at least 4.3 million 1973-1987 GM pickup trucks, also built with their gas tanks outside the frame rails, makes "Reckless Disregard" even more interesting reading. The federal government has taken the first step toward the vehicle's possible recall. GM has sworn to fight in court, if necessary.

In light of the fact that no recall of the pre-April, 1977 school buses ever seems to have been seriously considered, this might be taken as evidence of progress in the area of safety regulation and enforcement.

But Kunen reports that many of the dangerous school buses remain on North American roads, so I doubt Shannon Fair's parents find much comfort.

*Jacqueline Thomas, Nieman Fellow 1984, is the Washington bureau chief for The Detroit News. After Thomas's Nieman year, from 1985 through part of 1986, she was associate editor of The Courier Journal and Louisville [Kentucky] Times.*

## An Old Handbook Gets Fine Companion

### Speaking of Journalism

#### 12 Writers and Editors Talk About Their Work

William Zinsser and others

HarperReference. 182 Pages. \$20.

#### On Writing Well (Fifth Edition)

William Zinsser

HarperReference. 300 Pages. \$27.50 (\$12 paperback).

Professors of journalism have long had a strong ally in the difficult task of teaching students the principles of good, clear expository writing. They simply sent them to the campus bookstore and told them to buy William Zinsser's classic, "On Writing Well." One of those secret bestsellers (700,000 copies) that keep legitimate bookstores in business, that book has just been reissued in its fifth edition. To augment the lessons in that book, Zinsser has issued a new shorter book that picks up where the larger book left off: he has recorded and annotated remarks that some of his successful former students made during visits to his classroom at the New School. The result is another practical tool to be added to teachers' inventory or to be used by individuals trying to improve their writing and reporting skills.

The two books complement each other nicely. A graduate of The New York Herald Tribune school of good writing, Zinsser has long been a successful writer with 15 books to his credit. His original book on writing evolved from a course he taught for 14 years at Yale University. That course, Zinsser says, was aimed at "students in every discipline."

"I was looking for the next Rachel Carson, Lewis Thomas or David McCullough no less than the next White House correspondent."

As it turned out, a surprising number of his Yale students became successful journalists. When Zinsser started teaching another course at New York City's New School, he enlisted 11 of his former students to be guest lecturers. Their offerings give practical, important advice in the broad scope of journalistic writing: features, personal columns, sci-

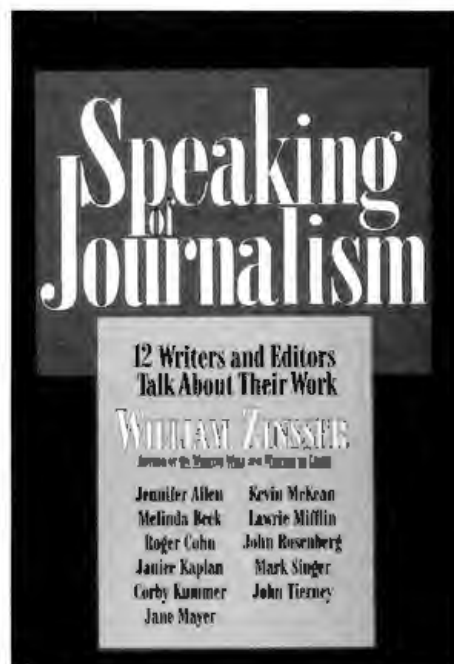
ence and technology, editing, politics, personalities, sports, health and social issues, nature and the environment, and regional topics.

The book is filled with reportorial "war stories," but anyone who has taught knows that students respond avidly when they are given specific examples of challenges faced by professional journalists. This is why the best journalism school faculties include professionals along with academics. "If it's a good story, the class will remember the point," Zinsser told his guest lecturers. The readers of this book will also get the points that are essential for anyone concerned about the future of print journalism. While "On Writing Well" extends Zinsser's lessons for making writing interesting and informative, the new book adds how-to-do-it lessons for gathering the raw material for good stories.

Jane Mayer recalled that working the White House for The Wall Street Journal was the worst beat she ever covered. She relates how "covering [President] Reagan meant having to say you never saw him." Sitting in the pressroom, "his voice was piped into us in a disembodied Oz fashion, and we would write our stories from that and pretend we had real contact, so that everyone in the outside world would think we were important."

Mayer found that an effective device was to ask the unexpected question, the kind that made the President's men wince. One result was a report of Mr. Reagan's discussion of Armageddon, quotations that the handlers later cut out of the interview transcript.

There are many more telling anecdotes like that throughout this book, along with Zinsser's comments. After a



class on sports writing, he expressed nostalgia "for the days when reporters covering a game had the modesty to come right out and say who won. Today the news can be a long time arriving. Half the current sportswriters think they are Guy de Maupassant, masters of the exquisitely delayed lead. The rest think they are Sigmund Freud, privy to the modern athletes' psychic needs and wounded sensibilities. Some also practice orthopedics on the side..."

The new edition of "On Writing Well" includes up-dated references and expanded chapters on interviewing, memoirs, travel, science, sports, criticism and humor. Citing recent, widely publicized examples of writers inventing quotes, Zinsser observes: "Such blurring of fact and fiction is a trend that increasingly annoys writers of non-fiction—an assault on the craft."

There may be communicators out there who will put down Zinsser's work as an anachronism when we are supposed to be entering an age of electronic media and preparing for the burial of the printed page. But for those of us who love the print media, it is comforting to have new affirmation of the virtues of good, honest writing and reporting that become the permanent record of our lives. ■—MS



## A Cartoonist Reports on the American Revolution

### Stan Mack's Real Life American Revolution

Stan Mack

Avon Books. 166 Pages. \$10 Paper.

BY JOSEPH E. MOHBAT

Let's see: there was the Boston Tea Party, where some colonists dressed up as Indians and threw tea into the harbor, and there was the Boston Massacre—how did that get started, again? And of course, George Washington—we all know he stood up in that boat and Valley Forge and all. And Paul Revere, of course. We were upset about “taxation without representation.” And Sam Adams—or was it John? Or both?—played a major role. But the darned dates: Did Lexington and Concord come before or after the Declaration?

What is it about the magnificent story of the American Revolution that blurs and obscures its details in the minds of us modern-day beneficiaries? For most of us who are not history buffs, it's almost as though it were enough that it happened and that Our Side won.

Our explosive and dramatic national birth somehow does not stir the late 20th Century blood the way the Civil War does. The reason may be in part the way American history was taught to many of us in the early grades: lots of dates and names, and little of the human drama, the sheer audacity of it all.

Part of it, too, may be the sharp difference between the mental images each of those bloody struggles conveys. The Civil War occurred after the invention of photography. We have seen, although in freeze-frame, Lincoln and Grant conferring in a military tent, the twisted bodies stretched across the meadows of Antietam and Gettysburg, the tormented eyes of the President. Those photographic images have come to life in Ken Burns's television epic.

The history of the Revolution was limited to words on a page, except for

heroic but bloodless oils on canvas by artists far removed in time and place. What was it really like?

Stan Mack brings the journalist's sensitive ear and the cartoonist's deadly eye to the events of 1761 through the Constitution and Bill of Rights in “Stan Mack's Real Life American Revolution,” aptly subtitled “The Sweep of History Told in Colorful Detail.”

Bringing Hitler's Holocaust to life, Art Spiegelman's two-part “Maus, A Survivor's Tale,” opened the way for serious, book-length non-fiction (and certainly non-comic) cartoon literature. “Maus” chronicled events that many are still alive to remember. Stan Mack, long-time cartoonist for *The Village Voice*, where his weekly “Stan Mack's Real Life Funnies” chronicles the craziness of New York City life, elevates the art form to a new level with his account of an event more than two centuries old.

Above all, Mack takes the starchiness out of this complicated history, tells it from the mouths of real people, and makes the whole exercise simply more inviting.

The tale moves briskly through the smuggling of rum (“England is having fits”) in the triangular trade that brings African slaves to our land, lightly touches on the writs of assistance allowing British sailors to board colonial ships, and introduces us to “chubby, inflexible 25-year-old King George III,” who now has to prove he can run an empire. “Those ingrates are part of the English Empire and will have to be taught a lesson!” the ermine-clad King storms.

Mack lards the tale with vignettes of daily life in the colonies. A pipe-smoking woman with an infant on her back handles a horse-drawn plow: “Colonial



women are no bashful lambs. They lead protests, smoke and swear, and, when their men die, run shops, ships, taverns and farms while teaching school and raising flocks of kids. But women have few legal rights. And they often die in childbirth,” the strip continues, as a man and his two children weep over a fresh grave.

Acknowledging in his introduction that historians debate how much of the leadership for radical action came from the wealthier and better educated and how much from the common people, Mack skews his history to the latter choice. And the elite colonists and the august Founding Fathers, while their deeds are respectfully reported, are presented as the mere mortals they were. Whether by word or the squiggle of a pen to twist a smile, virtually all of our

heroes are taken down a peg.

Once congressional delegates in sweltering Philadelphia have voted to declare independence, they decide it should be put in writing. "Oh, it's not that important," says one, heading into the Dragon Tavern for a cold one. "Give the job to Jefferson...Tom, write us something dignified yet magical."

Typical of Mack's art is the following panel, with the earnest caption: "Borrowing from the Enlightenment and the new Virginia Bill of Rights, Tom writes an eloquent statement of beliefs." But the panel shows a shirt-sleeved young Jefferson in candlelight, pen in hand, wondering "inalienable or unalienable, hmmm...?" And even then there were editors to mess up his copy: Adams, Franklin, and others surround him, fingers stabbing the page: "Keep 'equal.' Drop 'independent.'" "Why 'happiness' instead of 'property'? What's 'happiness'?" "Change 'sacred and undeniable' to 'self-evident.'"

Mack says his objective was to look at this segment of history through both ends of a telescope—the great events

that propel history alongside "the everyday stuff that flavors our lives."

He gives careful coverage to the roles of Indians, blacks, and women in the Revolution, and he finds a way to deal in cartoon art with the economic pressures of the times. "Four bags of paper money for the bread we paid two bags for last week?" angry consumers shout at a fat merchant. "I'm free to charge what I want," he retorts. "And we're free to throw you out of town," they reply, doing just that.

When the Constitution, with its seven short articles, is finally presented to the anxiously awaiting people in 1789, they say, "That's it?" "Simple is better," Madison explains. "Any questions, the lawyers will translate." But the people demand—and get—a Bill of Rights. ("You don't need it because you already have all these rights. But okay, okay, if it makes you happy and you vote with us, we'll add it.")

Perhaps those exchanges typify—along with the book's historical accuracy and skillful encapsulation of great events—Mack's best contribution: ab-

sent a true historical record of what was spoken, he has the characters of the Revolutionary time speak and react as we do. "Thirty-nine lashes for insubordination!" a pompous Washington—the target of Mack's gentle mockery throughout the book—screams at a ragged militiaman. "Lighten up, George. I went for a little walk," the rustic replies affably.

The modern vernacular is no mere cute device; it serves to connect us in humanity with our founders.

The drawings are rich with detail and gentle pranks—but as Mack points out, despite the caricatures and rubbery figures, "This is not a book of jokes. The humor comes directly from the (nearly three years of) research."

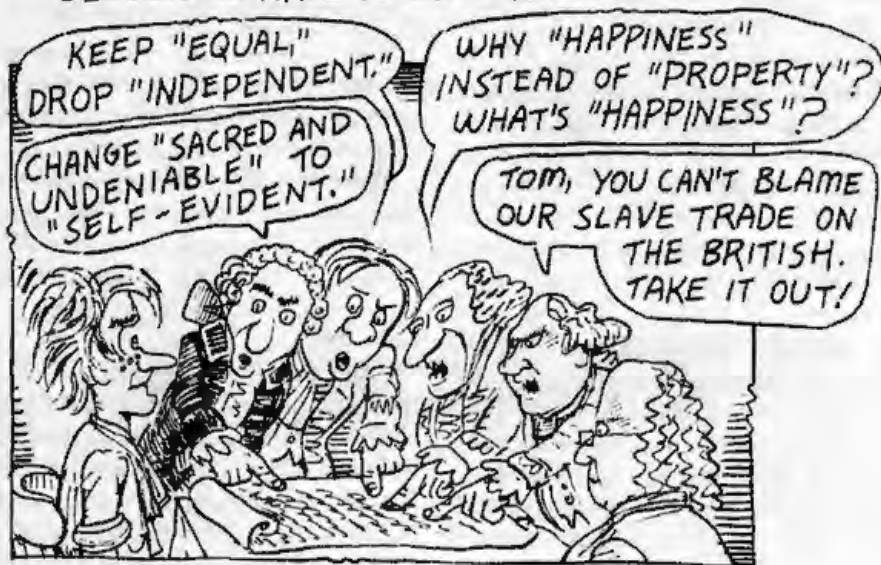
So, just as a smile comes to the reader's lips ("Why are we called Minutemen?") "Because in a minute I'm outta here," say two nervous militia as the British come into view at Lexington Green), the eye moves past a volley of musketry to the close-up of a young man's face on the ground, eyes wide and staring, blood seeping from his mouth—while in the distance the British (a whole platoon somehow squeezed into the space of a thumbprint) march away, musical notes above their heads as they stream proudly toward Concord—and humiliating defeat at the hands of a "leaderless country mob."

This is a graceful, friendly book that honors our history and honors us with the reminder that it was people like us who made it. Every kid should have it—if the parent will ever turn it loose.

At last we've sent a reporter to cover this great breaking story. ■

*Joseph E. Mohbat, a 1967 Nieman Fellow, is a writer and lawyer living in Brooklyn.*

OF COURSE, ADAMS, FRANKLIN, AND THE OTHER DELEGATES HAVE TO EDIT HIM.



*Jefferson being criticized for his draft of Declaration of Independence*

# NIEMAN NOTES

COMPILED BY LOIS FIORE

## Little Insurrections at The New Republic

Dorothy Wickenden of the Nieman Class of 1989, has edited "The New Republic Reader: Eighty Years of Opinion and Debate," published in August by Basic Books/A New Republic Book. Wickenden was the longtime executive editor of TNR and now is the national affairs editor for Newsweek. We asked her to give us some of her reactions as she looked back over the years of TNR material. Here is her report.

BY DOROTHY WICKENDEN

Right from the start, The New Republic was brash and cantankerous. That became clear as soon as I began leafing through crumbling old issues of the magazine. Along with the musty pieces about the labor movement and electoral reform ongoing arguments that were a lot like those of current editorial meetings, with editors and contributors taking each other apart over everything from America's role as a world power to the politics of race to the question of the viability of liberalism itself.

All of this ferment was intentional. The magazine's founding editor,

Herbert Croly, wrote that its aim was "less to inform or entertain its readers than to start little insurrections in the realm of their convictions." He and his colleague, Walter Lippmann, may have been stodgy intellectuals, but they also liked the idea, as Croly put it, of "throwing a few firecrackers under the skirts of the old women on the bench and in other high places." What he didn't foresee, and what I didn't expect, was how many firecrackers the editors would toss at each other over the years. Nobody could ever agree about exactly what liberalism was—let alone devise the best means to achieve it.

With the first issue, published soon after the eruption of World War I, the editors outraged many of their progressive friends by pronouncing "The End of American Isolationism." That began a seemingly irreconcilable dispute among liberals—which unfolded in the pages of the magazine—about when, where, and how this country should intervene abroad. The dispute repeated itself when World War II broke out, and writers bitterly argued over the merits of American involvement. And it happened again in 1986, after an editorial was published endorsing aid to the Nicaraguan contras. (The contributing editors banded together to issue an indignant rebuttal.) There were so many fights over the major political events of the century that I devoted the final

section of the book to them.

Still, some of the most remarkable articles I came across had little to do with domestic or foreign policy, and they weren't by famous intellectuals or journalists—but by ordinary Americans reflecting about their own lives. One essay, "The Graveyard of Youth," written in 1922, describes the Dickensian world of government clerks, prematurely shriveled and crotchety, looking with anticipatory terror upon their older colleagues, who have long been imprisoned by joyless work and compulsive habits. It is signed, "One of Them." Another, by an inner-city schoolteacher, describes her futile attempts to convince a smart but disaffected student in English class not to drop out of school; he is killed accidentally by a policeman in a scuffle on the street. And there is the essay I found in my first week of research, by a self-described "middle-class wife," which begins: "I have two babies; I hope they may never know how warmly at this moment I hate them. I have a husband; we were married because we were very much in love—and I hate him too." The article, which ends with a plea for day care, was written in 1917. It was one of those little insurrections that Croly and Lippmann took pleasure in inciting. ■

1939

**Irving Dilliard** is celebrating his 90th birthday on November 27 with his family in Chagrin Falls, Ohio. For this special event, his family has gathered birthday greetings, photos, articles, etc., from friends and colleagues and made a memory book to present to Dilliard. Dilliard was a member of the first Nieman class.

1942

**Thomas Sancton** has been named President of the Anglo-American Press Association of Paris. A 15-year veteran of Time magazine, Sancton currently is their Paris bureau chief, responsible for the magazine's coverage of France, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland.

Founded in 1907, the AAPA is the main professional organization representing the English-language press in Paris. It has 150 members, including correspondents of all the major U.S. and British media currently active in France.

Sancton's appointment will end in September, 1995.

1947

**Jack Foisie** of Monmouth, Oregon, a retired international correspondent for The Los Angeles Times, sent in a copy of an op-ed page column he wrote for The Oregonian about the coverage of Rwanda. His cover letter said, in part, "Unaccustomed as I am to praising my former colleagues—and former competitors—I read a lot of the reporting, and watched a lot of television and concluded that the world press in this difficult reporting situation had done a first-rate job. So to my typewriter, which for some reason is called a 'Torpedo,' I went."

Here are some excerpts from that column:

...before the vicious slaughter of more than half a million people in Rwanda by the followers of one tribe against the other is but a memory (hopefully the mass killing will not restart), I think an appraisal of how Rwanda was reported is in order.

At a time when criticism, often justified, is voiced about the performance of the television and print media, the coverage in Rwanda and the adjacent refugee situations in Zaire and Tanzania showed that the world press met the challenge. It could have degenerated into a mawkish melodrama. Instead, the reporting was crisp, speedy (thanks to modern communications) and as complete as possible.

That is the media's role: to sort out a confused and complicated situation; report in a measured way the relief efforts; be alert to the heroics as well as the horror.

The dedicated humanitarian efforts to save lives and reduce travail were the substance in both print and electronic coverage. The journalists in Rwanda deserve appreciation and admiration....

Lelah (Lee) Evans, wife of Nieman Fellow **Paul Evans**, died at her home in Norris, Tenn., on September 26. She was 80 years old. Evans, an accomplished pianist, was also organist for 25 years for the Norris Religious Fellowship, a piano teacher, member of the Tennessee Valley Choral Society and an accompanist for Norris Little Theater productions. She began her music career playing the piano at the Alpena, S.D. movie theater during silent movies.

She leaves her husband, Paul, her children, siblings, and 10 grandchildren. Memorial gifts may be made to the Norris Religious Fellowship or to a favorite charity.

1955

**Sam Zagoria** returned to Copenhagen last fall, where he was a Fulbright Fellow in 1987, to deliver a series of university lectures on U.S. media, politics, government, labor relations and Ombudsmen. Zagoria teaches a semester each year at the Wake Forest Graduate School of Management in Winston-Salem, N.C., and spends the other half year in Highland Beach, Florida, where he is an arbitrator occasionally in labor-management disputes. He and his wife, Sylvia, divide their free time between golf courses and grandchildren.

1960

**V.V. Eswaran**, chief of New Delhi News Bureau for Canara Times, wrote with information of a journalism award instituted in India in memory of **G.K. Reddy**, the second Nieman Fellow from India. At the time of his fellowship, Reddy was the Chief of the New Delhi News Bureau of the Times of India. His fellowship was supported by the Asia Foundation.

Eswaran says, "On return from Harvard, Reddy worked for some years as the New Delhi political correspondent of Blitz, a tabloid English weekly published from Bombay. Subsequently, he joined as the chief of the New Delhi News Bureau of The Hindu, a renowned English daily from Madras, and continued to hold that position till his death in 1989.

"Reddy's news analysis and editorial page articles were read with great interest by political leaders of all parties, administrators and diplomatic circles in New Delhi.

"In 1990, an industrialist-cum-philanthropist from Andhra Pradesh, Dr. T. Subbarami Reddy, instituted the G.K. Reddy Memorial award for excellence in journalism to one journalist every year. The award comprises Rs. 50,000 in cash [approximately \$1500], a gold medal and a shawl. Till 1994, five such awards have been given to outstanding Indian journalists. The presentation is made usually either by the President or the Prime Minister of India. There is an awards committee, whose present chairman is India's Foreign Minister, Mr. Dinesh Singh."

1961

**Lewis Nkosi** has received tenure in the literature department of the University of Wyoming, where for the past three years he has taught African literature and civilization and the African-American novel.

From 1979 to 1986 Nkosi taught at the University of Zambia, where he met his wife, Zadwiga Lukanity, who is Pol-

ish. They moved to Warsaw where he wrote and taught African literature at the University of Warsaw. At the suggestion of a friend at Harvard, he applied for the position at the University of Wyoming.

Nkosi was accepted in the 1960-61 Nieman class, but the South African government delayed issuing a unique "one-way exit permit" so that he arrived in Cambridge for the spring semester, 1961. Curator Louis Lyons arranged for Nkosi to return to Harvard and to finish his Nieman year in the fall of 1961.

After his Nieman year, Nkosi went to London to work for Drum Magazine as a British citizen, since South Africa was still a member of the British Commonwealth at that time. He did not return to South Africa until 1991 when, as a British subject, he attended an international conference of writers.

Nkosi has written two novels, "Mat-ing Birds," and "Underground People."

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### 1971

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**Hyuck-In Lew** writes to say that he has recently become chairman of the Korean Cable Communications Commission. He says:

"Since retirement from my government position I have been involved in academic activities such as Trustee of the Sejong Institute.

"The KCC is an independent entity, established by law and is supreme agency regarding the administration of Cable TV and the promotion of New Media, which are the new frontiers of broadcasting.

"I will keep on serving Sejong Institute as a non-resident Trustee."

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### 1973

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**Jim Jackson** writes to say that after a six-year tour in Bonn he and his wife Linda have moved to Brussels, "where I'll be Time's chief European correspondent, a new post that will let me range around doing stories that transcend the continent's increasingly porous borders. At the same time we've bought a wonderful house in Manomet,

Mass., on a bluff overlooking Cape Cod Bay where we spent an idyllic summer vacation. Linda will be staying on for part of the winter and I plan to slip back when story assignments and standby tickets permit. Perhaps one can be timed to coincide with the spring Nieman reunion."

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### 1979

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**Bill Gildea's** book, "When the Colts Belonged to Baltimore: A Father and a Son, a Team and a Time," was published in August by Ticknor and Fields. The book combines reminiscences of Gildea's boyhood in Baltimore with profiles of famous Colts players such as Johnny Unitas, Lenny Moore, Y.A. Tittle, and others. Gildea says the book "is a father and son book disguised as something else. The book is about the importance of parenthood and is a tribute to my father. It has something to do with parents including [a] child in family activities in a natural way." The way Gildea's father did this was to take him to all the Baltimore Colts games. In the process, they watched a not very good team become a championship team. Gildea says, "Like the Brooklyn Dodgers, they became mythic heroes, and people remembered where they were when certain things they did happened. Then they were taken away from the city, so there was a sense of loss and heartbreak as well as winning."

Among the many good reviews for the book is one Gildea is particularly proud of, from Robert Coles: "...Gildea has given us a great deal in these pages: the fascinating history of a sports team as it comes of age; a stirring, evocative history of a father and son sharing together a game and all it has to offer; and most poignantly, a collection of reminiscences which touches upon so much of what it meant to be an American growing up in the 1950's."

A sportswriter for The Washington Post, Gildea has been with that paper for 29 years. He has written four previous books on sports, and has won best sports story awards from Sporting News in 1985 and 1987. His work also was included in "Best American Sports Writing 1992."

Gildea and his wife, Mary Fran, live in Bethesda, Maryland. They have four children.

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### 1985

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**Carol Rissman** writes that nearly the whole class of '85 traveled to a reunion in Boston September 17, ten years from the day they began their fellowships, and that the conversation resumed as though it had never been interrupted. And while the kids had grown up amazingly quickly, the adults hadn't aged at all.

Many of the reunioners attended the opening reception for the 1995 Nieman class and a luncheon with the class on Sunday. They browsed through bookstores in Harvard Square and walked Harvard Yard.

Among those who attended were **Phil Hiltz**, science writer for The New York Times, **Deborah Johnson**, who is working on an MBA, and **Ed Chen**, who has been covering health care reform for The Los Angeles Times. Also **Joe Oglesby**, editor for Broward County, The Miami Herald; **Joel Kaplan**, a journalism teacher at Syracuse University; **Jeri Eddings**, recently back from South Africa for U.S. News and World Report; **Pam Spaulding**, photojournalist for The Louisville Courier-Journal; **Mike Pride**, editor of The Concord Monitor; **Lucinda Fleeson** of The Philadelphia Inquirer; and **Peg Finucane** of New York Newsday.

Foreign fellows included **Ching-Chang Hsiao**, who has been at the University of Minnesota for the last five years studying Western reporting on China; **Greg Weston**, a columnist for The Ottawa Citizen and author of "The Stopwatch Gang," soon to be a motion picture, and **Samuel Rachlin**, who is living in Washington and writing for a Danish magazine.

The reunion dinner was at the home of Carol Rissman, who is communications director for the Boston office of Families USA, a national grassroots health advocacy organization, writing policy reports and a newsletter for community health care advocates.

1986

**Roberto Eisenmann** announced his retirement as editor and publisher of *La Prensa*, Panama, as of March 1995. He writes, "I felt that the moment was propitious as the paper is consolidated by far as Panama's leading media outlet, the newspaper of record and the ethical reference of Panama journalism. The experimental participatory organization where we have 1,300 small shareholders (including myself) and all employees are 'Associates' as they all have equity shares, has been extremely successful...and of course we were able to maintain our equipment at the technological frontier and total editorial independence."

After retirement, Eisenmann says, "a book on the founding and building of a modern successful newspaper under dictatorial conditions is one of many possibilities."

1988

**Mitsuko Shimomura** will leave *Asahi Shimbun* after 25 years to become head of the nonprofit Tokyo Medical and Public Health Foundation.

Begun more than 100 years ago, the Foundation—originally the Tokyo Microscope Hospital—was destroyed during WWII. After the war, Mitsuko's parents took over the hospital and rebuilt it with the help of about 20 people. Now, the multi-faceted foundation is one of the largest in its field in Tokyo and employees 350 people.

Since Shimomura's father died five years ago her mother, Kazue Yamada, now 82 years old, has run the Foundation. She will stay on as an advisor to Mitsuko.

Shimomura will continue to write books, travel, and make speeches. And she says that while the decision to leave *Asahi Shimbun* was difficult, she is happy to continue her parents's work.

1990

**Goenawan Mohamad**, director, former chief editor and one of the founding members of "Tempo," a current affairs magazine in Jakarta, Indonesia, found

out in June that "Tempo" was one of three magazines that lost its publishing license. The loss of license means it is almost certain that Tempo will close and able to resurface only under a new name, with a new board of directors and editors.

Last fall, Hyland House, based in Australia, published in English "Side-lines: Writings From Tempo, Indonesia's banned magazine."

Here is a column written by Mohamad dated October 13, 1990:

### SIUPP Publishing Permits

Here is a sentence from a historical study of the press in the Dutch East Indies in the early Twentieth Century:

"The journalist must not venture to show that he has an opinion of his own or to pursue independent enquiries on the basis of the information supplied him, or (the height of absurdity) to criticize the actions of this or other mighty man. For he would run the risk of having the vials of official wrath poured over him, with all that entailed...." This sentence, from a 1930 book by von Faber, is quoted by Edward C. Smith in his thesis "The History of Newspaper Suppression in Indonesia, 1945-1965."

And we know—our memory is not always very long.

We have forgotten, for example, about a short, round-headed young man named Parada Harahap who, when not quite 17, wrote to the *Pewarta Deli* newspaper in Medan. He told of the sad fate of the indentured coolies in that year of 1916. But, as Soebagio I.N. tells in his book "Jagat Wartawan Indonesia" (The World of Indonesian Journalists), Parada didn't only explain, he accused.

At the time, there had been a spate of stabbings of Dutchmen by the coolies in the Dutch-owned plantations in Sumatra. The colonial government issued a special decree, the *pisohelatoronatie*, that forbade the coolies to carry daggers. To Parada Harahap, this was injustice. He wrote in the *Benih Merdeka* newspaper of Padangsidempuan that the violence was not one-sided: the overlords and their staff—all Dutchmen—also carried daggers that were hidden inside the canes

they carried around with them. How was it they were allowed to carry these weapons when the coolies were not?

Parada Harahap was not alone. He, who later moved to Jakarta and became a successful journalist and publisher (driving around everywhere in a car), was born at a time when journalism in Indonesia was not yet affected by self-directed cynicism.

Of course then there was insecurity on both sides: the journalists could at any time be stamped on by the colonial rulers, and the publishers could always run out of capital (this happened to Parada Harahap himself), yet they knew that they were active in doing something important for the people. For lots of people.

I, who live in our time, sometimes ask, "Weren't the journalists afraid then? Wasn't Parada Harahap afraid?"

No, answer my elders. No matter how colonial were the Dutch, they say, yet still the Dutch East Indies was a country based on law, and far away in Holland there was a free parliament. Of course there was misuse of power in the colony, yet there was a mechanism that seemed to promise hope that there would be improvements. And apart from this (the old people say) the period between the 1920's and the 1930's held a secret optimism: Indonesia would one day be independent. "The Golden Bridge" would open up. The rights that had for so long been negated by the colonists would flourish.

This could be why, when B.M. Diah established his newspaper *Merdeka* (Freedom) in 1945, less than three months after the proclamation of independence, he printed the following motto under the newspaper's logo: "Freedom in thought: freedom in speech: the rights of free people."

Diah and *Merdeka* are an expression of a time full of faith. At that time, freedom of thought was nothing frightening and freedom of speech was not to be worried about.

But that time of faith was so short. If we read "The History of Newspaper Suppression in Indonesia" we see that not even two decades later, in 1957, 10 newspapers and three news offices were closed down by the government.

This enforced closure lasted only 24 hours, but something much more widespread had already taken place. On the one hand there were the people of the press who were all frantically accusing one another. On the other hand, the

1992

people in power watched all this with fear, concluding—just like the government of the Dutch East Indies before them—that freedom is a dangerous sea.

Publication permits (SIT and SIUPP) are signs of this fear. It is astounding, indeed, that this fear has carried on since the Nineteenth Century, through the 1950's and right up to the present. And so it appears that things do not change. If anything has changed, it seems it is only that hope has been replaced with cynicism: now there is the assumption that, no matter what, we cannot "think freely and speak freely," even though it is forty-five years since independence.

**George Rodrigue** is now in Washington, D.C., covering Clinton domestic policies for *The Dallas Morning News*. Rodrigue had been that paper's European bureau chief, based in Bonn, Germany.

Rodrigue, his wife Wendy, and their two children, Pete and Susannah, live in Arlington, Virginia.

1991

**Katherine M. Skiba** married journalist **Thomas Vanden Brook** on July 16 in Milwaukee:

"The wedding was a midsummer night's dream. We said our vows at Villa Terrace, an Italianate property on a bluff above Lake Michigan. A brass quintet performed, a few rain drops teased, and a friend opened the festivities with a wedding poem by Aristophanes.

Tom and I chose vows from the 'Book of Common Prayer.' Nieman classmate **Betty Bayé** dazzled the gathering afterward with passages from 'Roman Epithalamion' by Catallus:

'Dweller on Helicon, son of the muse of the stars' slow turning through the night sky, god who hastens the tender bride to her bridegroom, we sing your name...'

Toasts, dinner and dancing followed under white tents in our garden. For our wedding trip, a romantic sojourn to France, Switzerland and Italy."

**Melissa Ludtke** has been named a Public Policy Institute Fellow for the 1994-95 academic year. The Institute, based at Radcliffe College in Cambridge, Mass., was created in 1993 and brings together scholars, students, alumnae, and representatives from the government, business and the media. One of nine Fellows, Ludtke, formerly with *Sports Illustrated*, *CBS News*, and *Time* magazine, is working on a book about unmarried motherhood.

1994

**Jaroslav Vcis** writes about his return to Prague:

"...from time to time I am thinking about last September and my first days in Cambridge. And as it is, being in Prague, I am longing for Cambridge.

"I returned back to my newspaper, but just now I handed my editor the note of resignation. The newspaper changed during the year I was away—and so did I. I am still writing for it, but I don't agree much with the orientation of it. Too much progovernment, too intolerant of opinions different from what is supposed to be just standard and conservative. Oh yes, Harvard is a liberal—in the best sense of the word—institution. So I started to work for Radio Free Europe, which is the most independent—not being connected with any political group—still of all the media in the country.

"I send the best regards...and hope to see you soon—somewhere."

**Frank Gibney** is in Hanoi reporting for *Time* magazine, covering Southeast Asia. In a note from Hong Kong last September, where he was visiting with his wife Kate and son Will, he said, "Everything about Hanoi is great—well almost everything. The food stinks and housing costs are astronomical. But the Vietnamese are terrific and it remains a beautiful capital, still with that colonial feel." Gibney had been Beijing bureau chief for *Newsweek* since 1990.

**Barney Mthombothi** has been named editor in chief of radio news for

the South African Broadcasting Corporation. Mthombothi joins three other Niemans in the senior management of South Africa's rapidly changing national broadcasters.

Previously, **Zwelakhe Sisulu**, NF'85, was appointed as chief executive of the SABC; **Joe Thloloe**, NF'89, was named assignments editor for television news, and **Ameen Akhalwaya**, NF'82, editor of actuality programs.

These appointments are part of a larger process of transformation within the SABC aimed at ridding the corporation of its reputation as a "state broadcaster."

The appointment of these executives follows a pattern of success for the Nieman Fellows who have come to Harvard from South Africa over four decades. The leading editors of the major English and Afrikaans-language press are also Nieman Fellows: **Salomon DeSwardt** (1983) is manager of the magazine section of *Nasionale Pers*; **Henerik van Deventer** (1977) is manager of the newspaper section of *Nasionale Pers*; **Andrew Drysdale** (1975) is editor in chief of *Argus Printing & Publishing Co.*, **Richard Steyn** (1986) is editor in chief of *The Star*, and **Ton Vosloo** (1971) is executive chairman of *Nasionale Pers*.

Of 900 journalists who have studied under the Nieman program, 39 have come from South Africa, more than any other foreign country. The South African Nieman alumni provide the financial support each year for one participant in the program through the U.S.-South African Leader Exchange Program.

The South African Nieman alumni are organized into a society, with **Tim du Plessis** (1993) as the present chairman. du Plessis is assistant editor of *Beeld*.

The 1995 Nieman Class includes **Barbara Fölscher**, a SABC television documentary producer from Cape Town.

# The Death Of Amerika

BY VLADIMIR VOINA

In September *America Illustrated*—the official name was *Amerika*—produced its last issue—and ceased to exist.

Begun by the U.S. Information Agency 38 years ago, this Russian-language magazine was a beacon for generations of Westward-looking Soviet citizens, a window to the free world, a source of information and wisdom otherwise banned by the Communist Party.

*America Illustrated*, along with two other cultural heroes for truth-seeking Russians—*Voice of America* and *Radio Liberty*—helped win the Cold War, and, ironically, have become martyrs of their own victory. Radio services are to be drastically reduced, too.

When no other American illustrated magazine could reach Russia's man-in-the-street, *Amerika* supplied him or her with visual information and ideas to compare with life in the Soviet Union. It visualized America's nature, city skylines, great bridges, modern highways, entertainment, sports, press, and political institutions. Russians could meet prominent American statesmen, businessmen, scientists, artists, architects, designers, actors, and musicians. The Soviets could learn how Americans work, dress, decorate their houses, teach their children, take care of their health, go to church, go shopping. Were these people inclined to launch a war against Russia?

Only in chosen cities did some rare newsstands sell this magazine. In 15 minutes all copies would be sold out! But each seller put some aside as favors for those trusted clients who were generous in their rewards. In Tbilisi, Georgia, 10 times the official price of one ruble had to be paid to put aside this magazine for someone.

The circulation of *Amerika* could have reached eight digits, but it was deliberately limited to 100,000, then to 150,000. The Kremlin permitted this modest distribution for a display of "good will"



while its real interest was to restrict "American propaganda"—and to propagate the Moscow-produced magazine *Soviet Life* in the U.S. on a reciprocal basis. Because the circulation of both had to be equal, and *Soviet Life* found almost no American readers, *Amerika* was limited to a token figure.

A Moscow friend, a Russian lawyer spending a year at Harvard some 15 years ago, was forced by the Soviet Embassy in Washington to "distribute" *Soviet Life* in Cambridge. The idea was he would present it to academics, even pass it free of charge in the street, or just leave it in public places, say, in parks. Not many Russian scholars attended Harvard at that time, so his strange activities could not remain a secret. My friend could easily imagine himself being caught in a park and accused of "subverting" America.

Still, he found a solution. At night he put magazines in a plastic bag which he left for the morning garbage truck, praying some Soviet secret agent did not catch him at his "crime."

As for the *America Illustrated*, it was really a treasured item in the USSR. Some people collected it for nearly four decades (I did it for two). Still, the majority of issues went to wrong—that is, "politically correct"—addresses. This

uncensored, "semi-secret" magazine was distributed mostly among members of the ruling elite, as a special privilege. But secrets are never kept: their children were glad to show it to their friends!

The KGB controlled the subscription lists. Rank-and-file editors of the USA magazine where I worked had this rare privilege. We were allowed to read what "the enemy" was writing—to beat our ideological adversary. But, instead of hating, we liked *America*, both the country and the magazine.

*Amerika* could not be found in Soviet libraries, which was only natural. Ironically, neither could it be found on sale or in libraries in this country: U.S. government publications for distribution abroad are not permitted to influence public opinion in this country. As a result, this nation does not know some of her heroes, the Cold War's unobtrusive soldiers.

In January 1991 *America Illustrated* published a story on Nieman Fellow Vladimir Voina, the first journalist from Russia to study with this program at Harvard, who felt so honored to appear on its pages! But it's not out of nostalgia or personal reasons that I feel sad about this death. *America* is losing interest in her former rival. Students stop taking Russian as a major course of study and newspaper reports from Moscow are far fewer. One may call it only logical, but for me the question remains: must Russia again become a threatening superpower, America's foe, before it can regain her recognition? ■

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