NIEMAN REPORTS

THE NIEMAN FOUNDATION AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Vol. XLIX No.4 Winter 1995

FIVE DOLLARS

The 1996 Presidential Elections

A Guide to Campaign Coverage

The Asian Media

The Status of the Press in Nine Areas

"...to promote and elevate the standards of journalism"

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

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Cover photo of Republican candidates by Stan Grossfeld

Cartoons by Thomas Nast

Curator's Corner

Opportunity in the Racial Divide

The O.J. Simpson trial and verdict.
The publication of Colin Powell's autobiography.
The "Million Man March" on Washington.

Three extraordinary events in the fall combined to generate the most focused and sustained reporting on race since the urban riots of the 1960's. They also give journalists one more opportunity to consider the implications of how the most challenging issue in American society is covered.

Now, as 30 years ago, the question is not so much how the major events are covered but how the story of America in black and white is told day by day. As the Kerner Commission put it in 1968:

"The Commission's major concern with the news media is not in riot reporting as such, but in the failure to report adequately on race relations and ghetto problems and to bring more Negroes into journalism... [T]hey have not communicated... [a] sense of the degradation, misery, and hopelessness of living in the ghetto... [t]he difficulties and frustrations of being a Negro in the United States... [a] sense of Negro culture, thought, or history."

Changes have been made since 1968. There are more black eyes and ears, voices and minds, at work in newsrooms. At the major news organizations blacks were intimately involved in the planning and coverage of the major stories last fall. But the larger challenge by the Kerner Commission to make "a sense of Negro culture, thought, or history," a part of daily coverage remains elusive.

Each event of the autumn had a story of deep importance to tell about 1995 America beyond the event itself. With each an opportunity was missed. The Simpson trial offered the opportunity to enrich public knowledge of how our values are changing. Juries are designed to tell just that story. It is the journalist's role to help us understand why. The story of General Colin Powell's obvious appeal beyond race is clearly based on a black man's stand on many issues, like affirmative action, which we believe divide many along racial lines. But the opportunity to examine this common ground has been sacrificed to calculations of his potential political odds. And the search for community renewal crying for attention during the Million Man March was distorted by the focus on Louis Farrahkan by journalists who usually warn us not to "blame the messenger."

Part of the failure of the press to adequately and accurately cover the world of black thought and history and culture is rooted in simple day-to-day resource management decisions.

The coverage of the lurid and painful quality of life is easier, and more cost-effective, in the central city. Centralized police files, welfare offices and hospital emergency rooms are easier to get to and they offer quick access to these stories of people, mostly black. Suburban life is diffuse. Covering the same subjects in the suburbs would be much more costly and difficult.

By visiting one police office, one emergency room and one central welfare office a pair of reporters can gather more crime and pain and heartbreak in a few hours to fill all the space available. As a result each day is painted from a myopically limited and controlled palette. This resulting picture continues to be presented despite all evidence of its distortions. Evidence which makes it clear that there are more white drug users than black; that there are more whites profiting from the drug traffic than blacks; that there are more white welfare recipients than black, and that whites are equally as murderous as blacks.

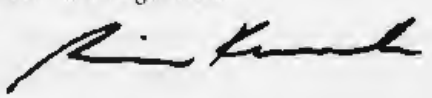
White suburban residents and central city residents of color seldom see each other portrayed in the news reports in ways in which they can recognize one another. The characteristics and habits and beliefs that connect them are seldom on display in daily portraits of "otherness."

It is a safe bet that the residents of any city in America and the residents of the surrounding suburbs know more interesting things about the way of life of the people in Tokyo or Jerusalem than they do of their inner city neighbors a few miles away.

All of this continues to be compounded by the lens recent history cast over the race issue. For decades during the Cold War programs to deal with the urban decline and underlying racial tension were reported in terms of budget competition. Cold war politics offered military preparedness or urban infrastructure. Race was an issue of competition for scarce resources.

Race and its attendant issues were seldom reported and examined in the context of a changing society. The non-white contribution to the well-being of each citizen of the U.S. is enormous now; by the end of this century we will be dependent as a country on a non-white work force. Seen in that context the education and socialization of non-whites may be more important than the education and socialization of whites.

The press could be a force that could move people toward a community of interest and a voice in their own governance. But too often it accelerates other trends that atomize communities and alienate citizens. Population dispersal has radically reduced the circumstances under which citizens meet face to face and exchange ideas, test notions. The fragmentation of community hurtles ahead as each of us has a different set of facts, a different understanding of what is important and what, if any, interests we share with neighbors.*n*



What They're Saying

Floyd Abrams

Playing by the Rules

Lawyers must play by the rules of the legal game—don't put a witness on the stand who you know will lie. But they are obliged, within those rules, to give their all to their clients, even undeserving ones, even evil ones.

Compared to that moral universe, the efforts of a journalist to cajole a source into telling the truth—even when the publication of that truth may be discomforting to the source—does not seem like a mortal sin. Finding the truth and telling it matters. It doesn't excuse going through every red light society establishes, but maybe a few yellow ones. Lawyers do it all the time. So do journalists.—*Floyd Abrams, New York lawyer who frequently represents the press, in an article in The American Lawyer, June 1995.*

Pearl Stewart

The Unqualified

I get the impression from that piece and from others—I mean this is not isolated...this is happening a lot—that there are no unqualified white people. The unqualified people are the minorities and they're taking the jobs from the qualified white people, especially the qualified white male. Now, I worked for years as a journalist, as an editor, as a reporter. I know some white people— some worked for me, some worked next to me, some worked around me— and other white people would say, how did this person get this job? It wasn't just a thing that minorities would say—oh, these white people don't know what they're doing. We all know there have been people in our newsrooms who are white who could not write....And that hasn't really caused a backlash of angry white people or black people or other minorities. I mean, they just exist everywhere in every newsroom and suddenly now, if there happens to be someone with questionable talent who happens to be a minority, this is an issue that creates a backlash.—*Pearl Stewart, a Shorenstein Fellow and former Editor of The Oakland Tribune, commenting on a New Republic article on the impact of diversity at The Washington Post, at a Nieman Foundation seminar, September 29.*

Patrick E. Tyler

Inscrutable Chinese

Now, after three years in the region, one spent living on Taiwan "reading in" on the East while studying Mandarin Chinese, and two as The [New York] Times bureau chief in Beijing, I have begun to think that China, and perhaps the other Eastern cultures, will never be able to bridge the enormous gulf that still exists between the people of the West and the people of the East.

In the West, so much of our culture has been affected by an arc of history that rises from the Mesopotamian plain into the Holy Land, and from there to Europe and eventually to America. We seem almost genetic prisoners of a single world orientation that, to be sure, covers much of the world.

But it doesn't cover China, where one-fifth of mankind is on an arc of history so different and profoundly foreign to our own that one confronts the region like some explorer who reaches the northern rim of the Grand Canyon for the first time. One is awestruck by the enormity of it all and certain that the East, thus riven, must exist in two separate and distinct halves. For the correspondent, landed on the opposite rim for the first time, the task of explaining the Chinese seems carried out with none of the touchstones of history, culture and religion that we reach for in Western culture to explain ourselves to each other.

If this sounds like it generates occasional feelings of helplessness, it does.—*Patrick E. Tyler in Times Company Report, Fall 1995.*

The 1996 Presidential Election

"Political Rally, Chicago, 1956"

If the Campaign's a Horserace, Why Not Report It That Way?

By Walter R. Mears

Add them up, and all the clichés about news coverage of presidential campaigns rival the volume of platitudes produced by candidates. It's all predictable every fourth year: horserace coverage, pack journalism, intrusive reporting on personal lives; a fixation with polls, imbalance, and more.

Clichés don't happen without some substance, and there's some truth in all those complaints. There also are valid reasons for the way such reporting is done, along with the flaws that persist and the changes that make it better than before.

About the only thing as certain as taxes and a presidential election every fourth November are the seminars every fourth winter, to weigh the way that last campaign was covered and, almost always, to find it wanting. Hours of them, at foundations, universities, editors' conventions, and all with the same notion: the system isn't working to textbook terms, so there must be something wrong with the way it is being reported to the voters.

There is something wrong, of course, but not the stereotyped flaws those forums find. Then the cycle begins again, as it has now. So, to be perfectly politically incorrect, forget the complaint about horserace reporting. Begin with the unspeakable premise that it is not a vice because a presidential campaign is a horserace. It's a race, anyhow.

Put a field of rival politicians in competition for one prize, in this sequence the Republican nomination for president, and that's what happens. To suggest, as the complainants do, that it should not be covered that way is to ignore reality. It's got wagering; the donors pick their favorites or hedge bets across the board. There is a permanent cadre of managers and consultants, choosing entries on their own terms if they have winning track records in prior campaigns, waiting for the telephone to ring if they don't. Call them political jockeys.

The best political reporting deals with the race—the competition that stirs interest and gets the attention of readers—and uses it to dramatize the competition of ideas. That means issues, which political reporters are regularly accused of ignoring. They don't, at least not the good ones. When a candidate comes up with a better idea for addressing a national problem, only an incompetent reporter is going to skip it in favor of another piece about who's ahead. But the winning story can be the one that combines issues and contest, because it captures and holds the interest of the people who really count—the readers who will be voters.

Voters have currency to spend in the primaries and in the November election: ballots. Candidates compete for the investment of votes. The best political reporting tells voters what they would be buying by spending those ballots on each of the competing candidates. That puts the competition and the issues together.

Long before the real, countable contests begin every fourth February, people start asking who's going to win. That's the first question in cocktail conversation, the first question after a dinner speech. They'll get to the discussion of proposals and policies, but first they want to know about the horserace.

Not that there's a reliable answer. Presidential campaigns can't be handicapped in advance; too many uncertainties, too much can change too quickly. The early lead can be transitory, and often is. There's no comfort for Bob Dole in the downfall histories of George Romney in 1968 and Edmund

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S. Muskie in 1972, frontrunners whose campaigns collapsed.

Their downfalls, incidentally, produced campaign mythology that points to one of the flaws in political reporting. Romney will be marked forever as the man who lost because he said he'd been brainwashed about Vietnam. One obituary said he uttered that line on national television while he was running. He didn't. He said it in a TV interview in Michigan the year before he ran. And while the line became the symbol of his quick collapse, he lost because he ran without focus and with frequent missteps, so that the unearthed quotation about the way the Saigon embassy tried to sell the war policy to governors in 1967 became an easy symbol for what went wrong.

Ironically, before he quit the race in New Hampshire, he outlined a war policy that foretold the policy eventually adopted by Richard M. Nixon as president, one of phased withdrawals turning the war over to the South Vietnamese to fight. (Nixon, incidentally, never said he had a secret plan to end the war in Vietnam; a reporter coined that line and it stuck.)

Muskie's undoing came to be symbolized by the tears he did or did not shed on a flatbed truck platform as he denounced The Manchester Union Leader for an unflattering story about his wife, Jane. The missing piece of that episode is that the story was old stuff, a reprint of a reprint already published by a news magazine and no surprise to the candidate. But his anger showed, his voice choked, and that temper was one of the reasons for his campaign fall. Another was a blundering strategy in which he tried to run everywhere rather than pick his targets. That was the first campaign in the remodeled system that made primary elections the decisive arena and dismissed the old-line leaders who once dominated choices, especially among Democrats. The Muskie people didn't understand it. George McGovern's did. After all, he ran the reform commission that wrote the rules of engagement.

The point is that there seldom will be a single moment or incident that makes or undoes a candidacy. The flaw is that political reporters tend to spot one, stick with it and, not infrequently, pile on—the pack journalism that's also a cliché. Let Dole falter in 1996 and the what-happened pieces surely will chorus that the turning point was his unex-

"Convention Hall—Chicago, 1956"

pected, improbable tie vote with Phil Gramm in an early straw poll in Iowa. It is said to have shown faults in his organization; it led to a shakeup in his staff.

But to keep lasting score based on a pre-season show vote in which the only real qualification was the $25 it cost to cast a ballot is to trivialize the process. That applies equally to those earlier campaigns. One incident didn't undo the frontrunner. In each case, it was an episode that fit a pattern: a blundering campaign by Romney, an irascible candidate in Muskie.

The latter was a Dole problem in campaigns before, and could be again. He is, after all, the vice presidential candidate who changed the subject from the Richard Nixon pardon in a 1976 campaign debate by declaring the armed conflicts of the 20th Century to be "all Democrat wars." He snarled at George Bush in 1988 to "stop lying about my record." Now he's the good cop, most of the time at least. Too good, apparently, for some of the Republican Party's zealous conservatives who prefer hard lines to the kind of legislative pragmatism Dole pursues as Senate majority leader.

Traits like those bear watching, and reporting. They can tell, and at times foretell, what will happen to candidates.

In Governor Pete Wilson's truncated campaign, the question quickly became when he'd drop out, not whether he would. After false starts, staff purges and signs of weakness at home in California, his was a campaign coming apart almost from the beginning. And that, in the case of a candidate who, on paper, seemed to have the makings of a strong challenge to Dole. He is governor of one state President Clinton needs to win, prompting his claim to be the candidate the White House feared most. He'd staked out hot national topics with his stands against government benefits for illegal aliens and affirmative action programs. But he'd reneged on a promise to stay at home and be governor, lagged in polls in his own state, lost his voice and saw his fundraising decline, and so he became the first man out.

To the critics, much of that is inside reporting, attention to personal style and the detail of campaign organization. But the issue papers of a fallen or falling candidate don't make a lot of difference. That's not a franchise to ignore their concerns; they're entitled to have their ideas explored, and readers are entitled to know all about them. But candidates are not entitled to immunity from reporting on what's happening to them in the horserace, whether they're gaining or faltering.

Nor should there be immunity for the people around the candidates, who come to office with them. Their strengths and weaknesses during a campaign are going to become national business if they reach the White House. They need to be covered on the way there.

And it is a long way, a year or more in the era of presidential primary marathons, which date from 1972 and Democratic reforms that stripped the old-line party bosses of their power in the process. John F. Kennedy courted the big city Democratic czars, proved his vote-drawing power in a handful of primaries and won in 1960. The primaries were meaningless in the Republican campaign of 1964, except for California's finale, and Barry Goldwater's people said, convincingly, that he would have won even without his narrow victory in that state.

After Democratic reform, the primaries proliferated and became the arena in which nominees are made in both parties. When state legislatures enacted primary laws to comply with Democratic rules, they set the terms for both parties.

In 1996, the Republicans have the open, non-incumbent nomination, and they have inherited the illogical conclusion of that process. The primaries are coming so thick and fast as to almost surely settle their race in the first six weeks, with about 65 percent of the nominating delegates at stake from Iowa's February 12 GOP caucuses to California's March 26 primary.

In most elections, there's a winner and one or more losers. In presidential primaries, winning isn't everything. Positioning can be almost as useful. Muskie won the 1972 New Hampshire primary by nine percentage points—and he was deemed damaged since that was his next-door state and his managers had forecast better. Twenty years later, Bill Clinton slipped as the frontrunner and lost New Hampshire by eight points, then claimed it made him The Comeback Kid. The numbers said otherwise, but Clinton and company made adroit use of that gimmick, and in a weak field it got him by.

Scoring the primaries is perhaps the most controversial journalistic role in the process. But somebody has to make sense of it, or try. In a contest in which one week's outcome can shape what happens the next week, the best way to judge results is by the politicians' own measures. They make forecasts, or their campaign allies do. They decide how to invest time and money.

When a candidate picks a spot, pronounces it pivotal, takes up political residence and spends heavily on advertising and organization, it's no stretch to measure the showing against the level of effort. That works even without such blunders as the enthusiastic governor's forecast that Ronald Reagan would win the 1976 New Hampshire primary by at least five points. He lost by one, and the prediction by a key supporter served to magnify President Gerald R. Ford's narrow victory.

The primaries are mileposts in the horse race. There's no reason not to rate and report them that way; passing enough of them in front makes a winner. What's wrong is to report them as more than that. The early ones can point a direction, but they don't end the race.

A parallel race in any presidential campaign is the money contest, waged not on platforms but in private receptions and by persistent telephone calls, sometimes from the candidates themselves. In the fall campaign, the government pays and the major party candidates are theoretically even at the treasury. But there are extras, services and money spent by other groups, supposedly without the knowledge or involvement of the candidates. That arms-length spending can be significant. The

The Golden Rule Of Political Analysis

...it is high time both social scientists and voters learned to read the handwriting on the wall. That Clinton strongly resembles a registered Republican and might well go down in history as the most conservative Democratic president since Grover Cleveland was entirely predictable. Anyone should have seen it who had followed what might be termed the "Golden Rule" of political analysis—to discover who rules, follow the gold (i.e., trace the origins and financing of the campaign...). Indeed, some people did see it—though many of those who bothered to look were active participants in financial markets and thus had no incentive to talk.

By contrast, the armies of people who live by words, who report, observe, and comment in public on American politics had virtually nothing of substance to say before, during or after the 1992 election. Instead, in the manner of a children's storybook or a morality play, the press and politicians talked incessantly about character, as if the key question facing America were whether it would be better to have a steady navigator, a street bully, a hockey goalie, a cancer survivor, a war hero, or a hillbilly from Oxford as president. When they didn't descant upon character or "toughness," they flapped about the horserace, about "spin," or "consultants" or "who was electable." When they spoke of issues, it was usually to debate details of a tax cut that was too small to do anyone any good and that was, in any case, unlikely ever to happen.

But it is a simple fact that virtually all the issues that both elites and ordinary Americans think about outside of or alongside campaigns—work and employment, free trade or protection, health care, the future of U.S. production, the cities, taxes—are critically important not only to voters, but to well-organized investor blocks, businesses, and industries. And it is another simple fact that many such groups invest massively in candidates.

During the campaign, however, we heard at best about fundraising totals. Or a few names, as though that told anyone anything. In a front-page story in early March 1992, for example, USA Today informed readers that actress Dixie Carter was backing Clinton, that Ed Asner had contributed to Tom Harkin and rock singer Don Henley had donated to Paul Tsongas. Quoting a study whose authors should have known better, the paper also indicated that "philanthropists" were the group most heavily represented among donors to Pat Buchanan's uniquely acerbic campaign.

In December 1991, when Jerry Brown first attempted to make an issue out of the corrupting effects of campaign finance, he was ridiculed by the Democratic Party's leaders, the other candidates, and the press. The networks, which have surely done more to lower public standards of taste in the past half-century than any group this side of Las Vegas, and party leaders, who virtually without exception double as handsomely remunerated lobbyists, claimed that any mention of Brown's 800 number for small donors during televised debates would demean the campaign. (This noble commitment to good taste, however, proved short-lived. Soon one issue about the leading Democratic aspirant dominated the airwaves and the newspapers: did he or didn't he? The reference was not to a hairdresser.)—*Albert Ferguson in "The Golden Rule," University of Chicago Press. $17.95 pb.*

Willie Horton prison furlough ads of 1988 were produced and broadcast that way, in behalf of George Bush but not by his campaign, but to his advantage.

Coverage of the money chase and that phase of the competition once was all but impossible. Richard Nixon's campaigns changed that, even before the Watergate scandals. Nixon vastly outspent any prior candidate in 1968, when his donors and his numbers could be concealed. Four years later, Congress voted to require disclosure of campaign contributions. The Federal Election Commission now is the treasury of data on campaign treasuries, and the money contest is, as it should be, part of the continuing story.

Without early money, a candidate is going nowhere. But riches don't always equate to victory; recall John B. Connally's $12 million delegate in 1980, the only Republican delegate he won for all that campaign spending before he quit the race. Senator Phil Gramm had spent about $15 million by October, with the campaign year three months away, and without signs that he will break through the Dole lead. Dole not only led the horserace polls, he also raised more early money than his Republican rivals.

But it is more than a story of who has how much at a given point in the competition. There also are the matters of what has been spent before, how close a candidate is to bumping against the legal limits on campaign spending in a state or nationally, and how well and wisely the money is being used.

The Gramm campaign spent about $1 million to gain his tie with Dole in the straw poll in Iowa, big money for a brief boost. Some politicians will argue that was a favor to Dole, a wakeup call in a caucus state he will have to win on Feb. 12 to hold his top-of-the-field status.

Advertising, particularly television advertising, is another phase of the presidential campaign competition that draws closer and better coverage now. The claims of candidate ads are weighed, and misstatements are reported. That wasn't always so. Beyond content, the reporting needs to deal with targeting, costs and aims. That phase of the competition likely will be particularly important in 1996, given the six-week logjam of presidential primaries at the start.

That sprint, 40 state contests by the time California votes in the biggest primary of the year, March 26, means a race so intense and concentrated that the candidates will have to pick spots, touch down elsewhere briefly if at all, do much of their campaigning by television and rely heavily on their organizations. As a result, the action will dominate the coverage, and should. The

votes are what count. That will put a premium on early reporting on the issues and the differences in candidate positions. Those won't change much. There won't be time.

Another phase in all this is the polling, by news organizations and by the campaigns, to different ends. The polls that rate who's up, who's down and who's gaining are the competitive, easy-reading side of the survey business. Candidates and campaigns track that information, too, to see what's working for or against them.

One thing that could work against the major party candidates is the none-of-the-above mood reflected in 1995 polling. It prompts majorities, nearly two-thirds in some surveys, to say they'd like another choice, an independent presidential candidate or a third party. Not that they would necessarily vote that way; most of the same people hedge the bet by saying that,while they want another option on the ballot, that doesn't mean they would choose it. The number saying they probably would vote for a third man is in the range of Ross Perot's 19 percent performance in the 1992 election.

George Wallace got nearly 14 percent as a third party candidate in 1968.

In each case, the third entry produced a minority winner in the popular vote. In each case, the victor got 43 percent, Richard Nixon in narrowly defeating Hubert Humphrey, Clinton in beating George Bush.

Given the signs of voter frustration, added starters could be major factors in the 1996 campaign. Republicans worry that Perot's third party maneuver will cut into their presidential vote and boost Clinton.

That yen for somebody else was part of the phenomenon that transformed Colin Powell from a retired general with memoirs to market into a potential political superstar—until he opted against running. Suddenly, a black man, without a party or a political record, had vaulted to the front rank of prospective national leaders.

The mix behind all that was part Powell, part polls and part press. It is a cycle that's occurred before, although seldom so dramatically. Speculation about a political course prompts stories that prompt polling that registers support for a new face, stirring more stories and rising ratings in the polls. It is a risk for both journalists and politicians, because the same thing can happen on the way down.

In their "Journalist's Guide to Public Opinion Polls," G. Evans Witt and Sheldon R. Gawaiser write that polling has become a major weapon in campaigns, to tell politicians "what will motivate the voters, what will anger them and what will soothe them." It is a guidebook worth reading.

The results of those polls shape the handling of issues, the candidate's use of time and his organization's use of money. Every campaign has its pollster now. Bush's last, losing campaign was managed by one.

News organizations sponsor their own surveys: tracking polls before an election, exit polls after. The surveys come in varying flavors, with varying reliability, and they too often are too easy to slap into a story that purports to say who is winning and who is losing.

That is an area to be covered with caution, against the risk of reporting data that is suspect or worse. An episode that points to the dangers came in the 1992 presidential primary in New Hampshire, when early samples of a network exit poll indicated that conservative Pat Buchanan was running strong and might actually defeat George Bush. The numbers were preliminary and faulty, but the White House got word of them and issued a conciliatory statement. The early, skewed figures also led political reporters to early judgments that Bush was taking a serious hit.

Bush won the primary by 16 percentage points, but the whole business helped Buchanan. Bush suffered more lasting political damage in winning that night than Clinton did in losing the Democratic primary. At the time, Clinton was trying to struggle past the Gennifer Flowers affair and his draft record, worsened by his own misstatements about it.

That kind of coverage has become more grist for controversy and criticism because sexual conduct and other personal matters have become part of the campaign fare covered not only by tabloids and salacious TV shows but also by the establishment press.

While Clinton withstood the personal issues during his primary campaign, largely because there was no strong rival to take advantage of them, those episodes left lingering credibility and trust problems, even after he got to the White House. Disclosures about an affair drove Gary Hart out of the 1988 campaign, and it was his own fault. He'd validated rumors with conduct reporters could and did check, although his celebrated dare to journalists to trail him if they wanted was printed after it had happened.

Two points:

News coverage has changed along with the society. Topics and language that used to be reserved for the men's club, if not the men's room, now are fare for TV entertainment. There's far more leeway to report what once was whispered. Knowing that, any politician who leaves himself open to damaging disclosures about personal conduct can, and should, expect to see them in print and on television.

The lack of reporting about John F. Kennedy's affairs testifies not only to the changing rules of what's fit for print over the last 30-plus years, but also to the fact that he succeeded in concealing his behavior. His conduct wasn't even rumored while he was president. Editor Ben Bradlee, his close friend, writes in his memoir that he didn't know of it until long afterward.

The personal lives of candidates are proper topics for coverage. They don't like it when the reporting turns up embarrassments or worse. But the voters are entitled to know about the lives and conduct of the politicians who want to lead them, especially from the White House. Lost in the critiques is the fact that candidates are delighted to present the positive side of their personal lives, as church-going family men. The flaws are equally valid topics for coverage. The problem comes when those aspects of a politician's life are disclosed by gossip, by suspect sources, in ways that do not meet the tests of responsible reporting.

When that happens, as in the Flowers case, the risk is that the standards of sound political coverage will yield to the lowest common denominator. Then accusations are reported because they exist, not because they have been, or can be, validated by the reporting.

That isn't good enough, or shouldn't be. Lowering the standards of sourcing and reporting simply because something is in print, on TV or being promoted by press agents is the sort of thing that stirs mistrust among readers. The dilemma is that when the scandal talk begins, conspiracy theorists will argue that journalists who don't report it are plotting to protect the candidate.

Bridging that defies a simple answer. But to report the most sensational assertions simply because they have been made publicly is to let standards for coverage be set by people and organizations who don't care about them. That's a troubling legacy of the 1992 campaign.

Another point: it was the one in which talk shows, entertainment television and, increasingly, radio call-in programs steadily gained influence and access to candidates who, understandably, are coming to prefer those forums to the questions and pressures of traditional political campaign coverage.

They're more controllable, less demanding, usually more sympathetic. The talk show host who carves up a candidate won't get the booking next time. It's better business to go easy. Political reporters are increasingly forced to cover what is said and done in those forums, and to shout questions from the sidelines to candidates who can and often do avoid them.

That's frustrating, but it also is reality. Candidates run to win; TV or a friendly radio talk show suit that purpose. This really isn't new business. Thomas E. Dewey announced his 1948 candidacy on a broadcast interview program. Richard Nixon built his 1968 campaign around purchased, controlled, TV question-and-answer sessions.

Candidates always have tried to find forums they can use to advantage. It is a fact of modern political reporting that television is the prime one, and the more free time they can get on the air, the better for their purposes.

That purpose, after all, is to get votes and to win. As the methods and forums of the campaigners have changed, so has the challenge to the traditional style of political reporting that tells a voter who these people are, what they're all about, and what they would do or try to do in the White House.

The straight line stories are still there, as they should be. But good political reporting offers far more, delivering explanation, analysis, background, profiles of candidates and their teams, investigative reports, coverage of voters, and more.

That's always been difficult. But nobody said it was going to be easy, or that it should be. And it's still the essential work of a journalist in a democracy, so that people can know what they're choosing.

And what they'll get when somebody wins that horserace. ■

STRANGER THINGS HAVE HAPPENED

Senator Bayard—"Hold on, and you may walk over the sluggish animal up there yet."
(In this Thomas Nast cartoon, the donkey and the elephant symbols first appeared together.)

If Campaign's a Horserace, What Happens to the Issues?

By John Herbers

Among my most vivid, and painful, memories of life at The New York Times were the long, unproductive meetings on how to cover the issues that preceded every political season. Year after year, decade after decade, both voters and politicians complained that the press spent too much time and space on personality and character of the candidates and too little on how they would deal with the forces that impact people's lives, once elected.

Political reporters with few exceptions do not like to write about issues. They fear being bogged down in dull copy. Even when they consider issues important to the election, they usually find some other aspect of the campaign more compelling and the issues fade into the background. The 1992 presidential election provides a good example. Bill Clinton actually won because voters perceived the economy to be lagging under President Bush's policies and actions.

But that subject was obscured in the avalanche of negative copy that questioned the record and fitness of the candidates. Clinton managed to break through with his message on the economy by going on talk shows and pounding the issue at every campaign stop. But the traditional press, by missing the importance of the issue, missed an opportunity to enlighten the public on the limited, though important, role the president has in regulating the economy.

Certainly many news organizations have tried to elevate the importance of issues in campaign coverage. Many have assigned reporters to spend their full time on one or more issues. Newspapers have devoted considerable space to discussions of the issues. And even the evening news broadcasts have allocated time to important issues. But it is the stuff of the tabloids and gossip columns–which in the end hold candidates to higher personal moral codes than is the norm in our society—which catch the headlines and dominate the coverage.

The 1996 elections may provide an excellent chance of breaking out of this mode. While sensationalism in the press was making a comeback in recent years, the American system of government remained relatively stable with an underlying understanding of what levels of regulation, redistribution of wealth and public assistance should be maintained. Disagreements among the parties and candidates concerned the margins, not the central substance in these matters.

Now all that has changed with the agenda of the Republican right spreading through the political system. The character and fitness of candidates, while still important, could, and perhaps should, take a back seat to defining what landmark changes may be ahead for the country. Those changes, only now beginning to take place in law and policy, will still be in the making all through 1996.

Will the press allow its coverage to be dominated again by the horserace and personality aspects of the campaigns? Or will it focus more on where the positions and promises of the candidates may be taking the country? This is a critical question because some of the emerging positions in politics promise a whole new order of American life. Will continued deregulation of business and lessening of governance bring the kind of prosperity and renewal of public morality that are promised? Or will they threaten advances made in the environment and public safety, fuel the growing division between incomes of the poor and the rich and endanger the social safety net which, in the opinion of many, has maintained at least a mea-

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sure of domestic peace?

In the past, reporting of political issues has been far too restrictive. Take, for example, the almost universal cry for tax cuts. Most stories about a candidate proposing a cut does nothing to put the proposal into perspective. It is doubtful that many Americans who demand tax cuts know that United States taxes are among the lowest in industrialized countries, because most news accounts of this issue are so narrowly focused. Of course, some tax cuts can be justified, but nevertheless not many news reports look down the road for the long-term effects–cutting funds for prenatal care, for example, when doing so may mean more birth defects that require a lifetime burden of public payments.

> Will the press allow its coverage to be dominated again by the horserace and personality aspects of the campaigns? Or will it focus more on where the positions and promises of the candidates may be taking the country? This is a critical question because some of the emerging positions in politics promise a whole new order of American life.

The new trends in politics call for new ways of reporting the issues. It is impossible, of course, to lay down a prescription for all to follow, so diverse are the news organizations involved. But some radical changes may be in order. A few years ago a junior editor suggested that perhaps the best way to cover a political campaign was to assign reporters to hang out in bars and other meeting places and report what they heard, a "bottoms up" approach that would be superior to the deluge of public opinion polls that make up too much of media reporting. As would be expected, the suggestion went nowhere, but it provides an example of the kind of creativity needed in the stale, immutable world of political journalism.

A good starting place in planning coverage is for editors and reporters to draw up a list of issues they believe are important to the coverage. In the past, news organizations have been too willing to let the candidates and parties define the issues. The trouble with that is that in recent years political leaders have derived their ideas, not from their own experience and insights, but from superficial polling. There are many ways the media can keep important issues alive without offense to fair, straight reporting. There is nothing wrong, for example, with writing that "Candidate X opened his campaign with a long speech that detailed a list of problems he sees facing the nation. But he did not mention racial divisions, which many authorities see as a growing threat to the country." Ordinarily, an editor would strike the last sentence as gratuitous, but not if the news organization had collectively decided the racial divide was a major issue that should be addressed in the campaigns.

Old habits may need changing. Editors, for example, should not be reluctant to assign reporters to cover issues they feel strongly about, as long as they are not activists for their cause. Seasoned reporters know the rules of fairness and will usually follow them. Having no opinion on an issue leads to dull, lifeless copy. I believe that one reason the debate on the Clinton health plan bogged down in tedious, shallow stories was that the vast majority of journalists writing about the issue had never had serious health problems or went without health insurance and as a result never had a real feel for the subject. If, for instance, a staunch right-to-lifer or a free choice enthusiast can be found in the newsroom, either might add a new but hopefully unbiased dimension to the shop-worn abortion controversy.

The range of new and old issues are now so great and compelling, that journalists should constantly be looking for new ways to bring them to life. ■

Lincoln and the Editor In the 1864 Campaign

Lincoln recognized the influence that newspapers had on public opinion, and he tried to enlist the support of prominent editors. He even went so far as to approach the notorious James Gordon Bennett, whose New York Herald had yet to take a public position on the election. Because the circulation and influence of The Herald were so great, Lincoln's New York friends suggested that it might be worthwhile to woo the editor with flattery. They knew that Bennett, whose reputation for immorality was as well deserved as his paper's reputation for scandal, longed for respectability. When they approached him, the canny editor asked bluntly, "Will I be a welcome visitor at the White House if I support Mr. Lincoln?" The President may have shared John Hay's conviction that Bennett was "too pitchy to touch," and he initially offered only a vague promise that "whoever aids the right, will be appreciated and remembered" after the election. Bennett responded that the offer "did not amount to much." When intermediaries began to explore the possibility that Lincoln might offer Bennett an appointment as American minister to France, the tone of The Herald toward the administration became notably kinder. Bennett did not endorse Lincoln, telling a go-between to say to the President "that puffs did no good, and he could accomplish most for you by not mentioning your name." But the bitterness of his attacks on Lincoln diminished. Though he continued to call Lincoln a failure, he termed McClellan "no less a failure…though a failure perhaps in a less repulsive way," and in the end the Herald endorsed neither candidate. After the election Lincoln paid the price for Bennett's neutrality by offering the editor the French ministry, which he knew he would decline.—*David Herbert Donald in "Lincoln." Simon & Schuster. 514 Pages. $35.*

And How About Character?

Moral and Ethical Qualities Can Be Examined Through Religious Commitments

By Missy Daniel
And Shaun Casey

The character factor in American politics did not just appear on the scene with questions about Chappaquidick in 1980 or adultery in 1988. Political Science Professor James David Barber had already defined the issue for contemporary politics in 1972 when he published the first of what would be four editions of "The Presidential Character: Predicting Performance in the White House."

The word "character," Barber explained, comes from the Greek word for "engraving;" it signifies what life has marked into one's very being. The President is "a man with a memory in a system with a history," and character is "the way the President orients himself toward life," not for the moment, but enduringly.

A candidate's character can best be ascertained from biography, according to Barber. For two decades he used biography to produce psychological interpretations of the political behavior of presidents since Theodore Roosevelt, confident that it was possible to foresee the approach a president would take to the challenges of the office by examining how experience had shaped his world view, political style and character.

By the time Barber wrote the preface to his second edition in 1977, he warned of "the ultimate shredding of the bonds that tie our metaphors to our experience." Analysis of presidential character, he hoped, could still counter some of the worrisome trends he had begun to identify: elections oriented toward "a political nothingness;" presidential campaigns that required a suspension of disbelief; politics that had wrongly become "an approximation to moral perfection," and growing skepticism that the presidency was relevant to our lives and fortunes, or that the president still acted significantly in politics.

For the most part, reporting on the character of political leaders has come to mean writing about their sexual behavior. The womanizing and philandering, the adulteries, infidelities and other assorted misdeeds, transgressions and failings (in Newsweek Meg Greenfield called them "personal squalors"), confessed and denied, of Gary Hart, Bob Packwood, the Kennedys, Bill Clinton, Newt Gingrich and Clarence Thomas come most immediately to mind. Add to them the stories about drinking, cheating, lying, stealing and equivocating, about plagiarism, drug use, draft evasion, Whitewater, savings and loans investments, and soft-core pornographic movies, and you have a more or less complete inventory of the usual range of stories about character and its absence in politics.

General Colin Powell, on the other hand, captured the media's and the country's imagination this fall because he was perceived to have character—"some mysterious quality that we can't get at, that we don't even have a name for...that makes a seemingly ordinary man a great man," as historian David Fromkin recently said of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Whatever Powell's message might be, it was not going to matter as much as the character of the messenger.

Yet for all the character examinations that the press (and others) have increasingly indulged in over the years, it remains curious that we persist in talking about character without referring to religion. To be sure, Barber identifies Woodrow Wilson as a Christian soldier and statesman; he reveals that a 1960 book on Reinhold Niebuhr's political philosophy became Jimmy Carter's political bible; he concludes that "religion does not appear to have bitten very deeply into [Richard Nixon's] world view." But who besides Garry Wills, in the book that developed from his reporting of the 1988 presidential campaign ("Under God: Religion and American Politics"), has taken up in a serious and sustained way an analysis of religion and politics, or made religion a meaningful part of the sort of presidential biographical study that Barber advocates?

Political reporters and editors would do well to realize that it is simply impossible to understand American presidential campaigns without reference to religion. Religious commitment has been a condition of politics and public life in America since the founding of the republic, yet it remains the most neglected variable when it comes to analysis of politics and the presidency.

In 1960, the candidacy of John F. Kennedy made real the prospect of a Roman Catholic president for the first

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time since Alfred E. Smith's unsuccessful run in 1928. Kennedy was forced to defend his Catholicism against attacks from many quarters. In February 1960, less than a month after Kennedy had announced his candidacy for the Democratic nomination, Theodore Sorensen gave a speech on the Catholic issue in American politics and tried to deflect the old Protestant anxieties that had surfaced. When we elect a president, he said, "we are not looking for a protector of the faith." John Kennedy's religion was "a part of his traditional public life, not a showcase for the nation or a sudden inspiration," and religion itself must remain "only one factor" in the process of choosing a president.

By August, religion had become such a powerful issue that Sorensen wrote in a campaign memo, "Senator Kennedy *will* win in November *unless* defeated by the religious issue. This makes *neutralization* of this issue the key to the election." The campaign hired James Wine, a Presbyterian who worked for the National Council of Churches, as a special assistant to Kennedy on religious issues for the last few months before the election. John Cogley, the Catholic journalist who wrote for Commonweal, also advised Kennedy and helped him prepare for his important speech on September 12, 1960, to the Association of Ministers of Greater Houston.

In the speech, Kennedy made the forceful declaration that he would decide every issue that might come before him as President "in accordance with what my conscience tells me to be in the national interest, and without regard to outside religious pressures or dictates....But if the time should ever come—and I do not concede any conflict to be even remotely possible—when my office would require me to either violate my conscience or violate the national interest, then I would resign the office; and I hope any other conscientious public servant would do the same."

Cogley later offered two interesting observations about religion in the 1960 campaign—that the statement about conscience in the Houston speech had been lifted from one of his own Commonweal columns, and that the whole controversy over a Catholic president had been "a campaign problem" and "a rhetorical problem." "There was no religious question," Cogley maintained. It was all "a dance we had to go through."

In some ways, looking at the 1960 campaign confirms what has been the long-standing formula when it comes to religion: it is a private affair and should have no bearing on a candidate's political views. Yet the specter of that campaign, in particular John Kennedy's Houston speech, reemerged last year when Senator Edward M. Kennedy's bid for reelection was challenged by Mitt Romney, a Republican. Romney's Mormonism became an issue.

The controversy over religion in that instance is a telling example of how

"CityFathers—Hoboken, New Jersey, 1955"

inept the press and the candidates themselves can be when it comes to understanding the relationship between religion and politics. It was remarkable to see Romney, a member of a conservative religious group that has involved itself in politics, invoking the old credo that religion is private and should be ignored in politics. He even went so far as to take on the role of heir to and interpreter of President Kennedy's political legacy on religion by contending that this was what the President himself had said in his Houston speech.

Mormons were no doubt surprised to learn that their faith has no consequences for their public lives, and neither the Kennedy campaign nor anyone in the press seemed concerned to ask if Romney had gotten President Kennedy's 1960 speech right. Romney appeared to want it both ways: his Mormon faith was helpful in raising money in Utah, but it was not fit for public consumption in Massachusetts. He never said whether he could make the same affirmation President Kennedy had, in fact, made in 1960. Yet he had served in an official capacity in the Mormon Church, and that experience should arguably have become part of the public discussion.

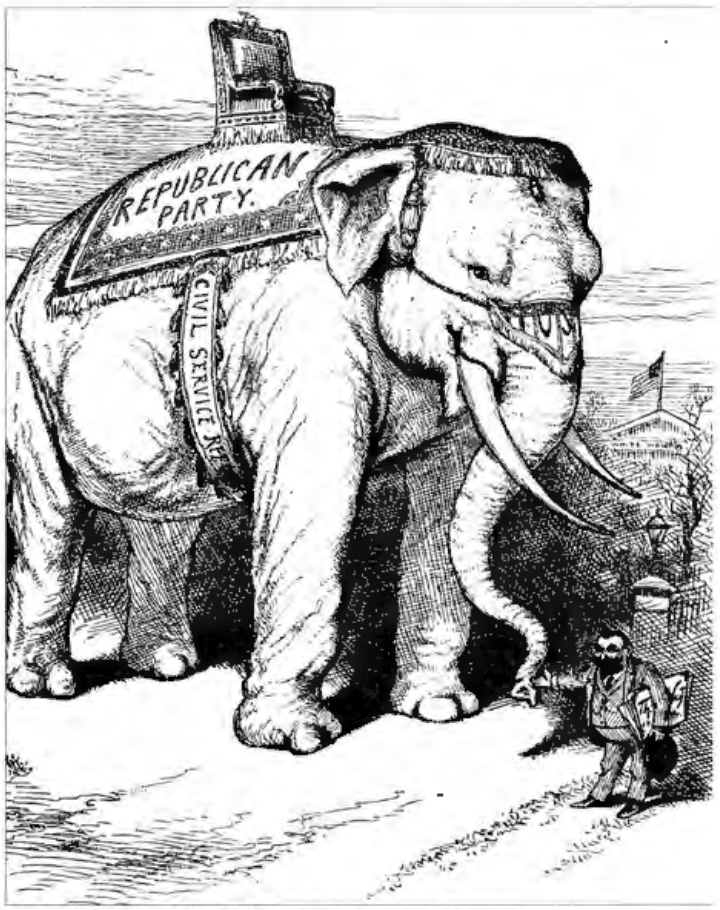
The press seemed to want it both ways, too. First it criticized Romney as a conservative Mormon, then it objected to the Kennedy campaign's contention that a purely secular political race was in the best interest of the state. And the Kennedy campaign blundered badly, as well, insisting at the start of the controversy that Romney's appeal to the legacy of President Kennedy was reprehensible, then asserting that racial prejudice, not religion, was the real issue, and finally backing away from the subject altogether, obviously at a loss to know how to deal with religion.

No one in the media examined the impact that either candidate's faith commitments might have had on his politics and public policy decisions, or revealed that perhaps neither candidate even made those connections or could give a thoughtful and truthful account of such a relationship. And no one in the media ever followed up on longtime Kennedy advisor Bob Shrum's invitation, made at a brown-bag lunch at Harvard's Shorenstein Center just before election day, to "ask me after the election" about what really went on behind the scenes in the Kennedy campaign over the issue of religion. At the time all Shrum would say was that the Kennedy camp's response had been "an accident."

If the media are to go beyond sex and sin in discussing character in 1996, they should provide coherent, insightful analyses of the role religion plays both in the lives and in the politics and public policies of the candidates—their own religious histories and development; their understanding of the influence of religion in politics and the power of religious language in public life; their relationship to faith communities and religious groups; the influence of particular religious thinkers on them; their views on religion and specific policy issues.

We may never again experience such an ecumenical assembly of presidential hopefuls: Catholics (Patrick Buchanan, Robert Dornan and Alan Keyes); Baptists (Bill Clinton and perhaps Newt Gingrich); Methodists (Bob Dole and Richard Lugar); Presbyterians (Lamar Alexander); Episcopalians (Phil Gramm and Colin Powell); and the first Jewish candidate (Arlen Specter). It is the complex mixture of faith and politics in their lives that stands in most need of exploration and clarification.

Even James David Barber suggested that one of the important tests of a candidate's presidential timber is to ask the question, "Where does he repose his faith?" When it comes to demonstrating the media's disregard for such an inquiry, perhaps there is no more telling example than President Clinton himself. He has spoken at greater length than any recent president (with the possible exception of Jimmy Carter) about his thoughts on religion, yet they remain largely untouched in the press. The rich resource of his speeches on religion, his experi-



THE SACRED ELEPHANT

This animal is sure to win, if it is only kept pure and clean, and has not too heavy a load to carry.

ence since childhood of the Baptist faith, and his lasting attraction to Catholic social teaching since he was an undergraduate at Georgetown all influence his political values. Religion is certainly not the sole determinant of his positions, or of any politician's stance, yet it is far too provocative to ignore so stubbornly. A few suggestions for examining religion and politics among some of the 1996 candidates might be in order:

Bob Dole: Dole's courting of the religious right, his criticism of Hollywood, his resignation from a Methodist church in Washington (the same church the Clintons attend), reportedly because of its liberal theology and too-liberal pastor, all afford some glimpses into the complexity of his moral compass. His recent attempts to display the "new" Bob Dole have included some biographical snippets, but he has yet to reveal fully his own religious motivations and influences, or to explain how he views religious values in the political arena, and someone needs to take the measure of his understanding of the force of religion in public life.

Phil Gramm: Despite being an Episcopalian, Gramm plays openly to the religious right—by speaking at Jerry Falwell's Liberty College, for example, and by courting conservative groups like the Family Research Council. Yet there is also tension with groups like the Christian Coalition over Gramm's refusal to rule out a pro-choice running mate. Gramm has yet to clarify his own religious beliefs and how they animate his politics. Is he a Southern Baptist Democrat from Georgia turned Episcopalian Republican from Texas? He has said that he is uncomfortable wearing religion on his sleeve, and that he is "not running for preacher." Yet when his rhetoric invokes the words of the New Testament to declare that by "rendering unto Caesar" the American people are not "rendering unto God," how does he interpret that sort of biblical allusion? How does it inform his understanding of the relationship between church and state? What is the story behind Gramm's current wooing of the religious right, and what sort of traditional ethical and religious discourse, if any, underlies his political identity and morality?

The Christian Coalition: The most visible and perhaps the most powerful religious force in the 1996 presidential race is the Christian Coalition. While the political positions of the group are clear, the specific underlying religious commitments are not. Nor are the various meanings and different definitions of character that might be acceptable to distinct categories of Christians within the Coalition—evangelical, fundamentalist, Pentacostal, charismatic, or born-again. What is the extent of Pat Robertson's personal religious and political ambition behind the Coalition's agenda? Does Coalition Executive Director Ralph Reed, who calls the group "a Chamber of Commerce for people of faith" and routinely plays down or even denies its Christian roots and public theological agenda, minimize potentially divisive religious tenets in the name of political expediency? (Harvard theologian Harvey Cox's recent article in The Atlantic Monthly on "The Warring Visions of the Religious Right" offers a valuable corrective to the usual tendency in the media to view the religious right in America as monolithic, both politically and theologically, and suggests that the alliances and individuals of the so-called religious right coalesce around some issues, but oppose and antagonize one another around others.) David Frost's public television interview with Ralph Reed posed some preliminary questions about Reed's religious past and highlighted his contradictory claim that religious faith is a private matter, yet it also speaks with a legitimate public voice, but there is much more to be learned about his relationship to Robertson, his own religious beliefs and experiences, and his crusade to dominate American politics. And the ever-growing membership numbers claimed by the Coalition and reported in the media (they range anywhere from 1.4 to 1.7 million—numbers that seem

Derailing a Candidate—Fictional Version

In Jim Lehrer's new novel, "The Last Debate," Tom Chapman, a reporter for The New American Tatler magazine, seeks the real story behind a Presidential debate in which the press panel, led by Michael J. Howley, chief political reporter for The Washington Morning News, surprises the front-runner by making unsubstantiated (but true) charges that lead to his defeat. Chapman, who uses deceit and other questionable tactics in pursuit of the story, interviews Howley:

"Do you have any idea now of the magnitude of what it is you did?"

"Yes."

"The outcome of a presidential election was changed because of what you did."

"Right."

"Are you proud of what you did?"

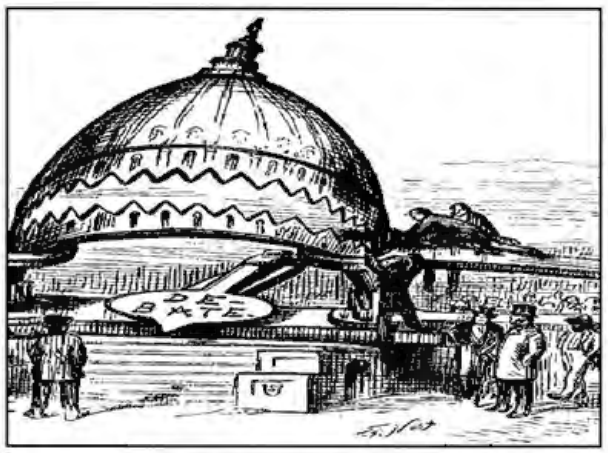
"Yes."

"Journalism. What about what you did to your profession of journalism? Are you proud of what you did to it, too?"

"It was already headed over the cliff, thanks in part to people like you. All I did was give it a last-minute good purpose before it sailed off a cliff and died."

"Died?"

"Died. Gone. Deceased. Passed away. Expired. Journalism, as something good little boys and girls should devote their dreams and lives to, died. What we are part of is the slimy rigor mortis that is setting in. You more than me, but I am part of it, too, with my lecture fees and TV appearances. We're no better than the big-buck anchors who are treated as movie stars, not as journalists. They read 'lines,' not the facts. They are not expected to inform, only to be entertaining or sexy—"■—"The Last Debate" Random House. 318 Pages. $23.



The Opening of Congress

to reflect Pat Robertson's "10 in every precinct in America") deserve much more scrutiny than they have gotten up to now. What does it really mean to be a member of the Coalition, and what does it take to be counted in? Once you find yourself on the rolls, can you ever get off?

Arlen Specter: As the first contemporary Jewish candidate for president, Specter's faith represents a fascinating wild card in the race. Like Bob Dole, he grew up in Russell, Kansas, where there were so few Jews that his parents' home served as a synagogue for Jewish soldiers based nearby. His early campaign speeches have explicitly targeted the drift of the Republican Party toward the Christian Coalition. How does Specter understand the idea of the country's Judeo-Christian roots? What does he make of the lingering notion in some quarters of America as a Christian nation? What are his thoughts on the exclusion of Jews for so long in American culture and electoral politics, as well as the undeniable influence and importance of Jewish voters as a political constituency?

Pat Buchanan: Buchanan's angry God-and-country politics are closely linked to his conservative Catholic world view. What is the connection between his enraged religiosity and irate politics? Is he the closest thing to a genuine populist in the 1996 race, as some have suggested? What do his religious commitments, his working-class Catholic roots, and his believers-against-nonbelievers view of the world have to do with his political rhetoric, social policies, and declarations of a cultural and religious war for the soul of the nation?

Newt Gingrich: There is a deep conflict between Gingrich's "second wave" Southern Baptist faith, which leads him to endorse the Christian Coalition's Contract with the American Family, and his "third-wave" Toffler-driven commitment to a new future for America. Lengthy profiles in Vanity Fair and The New Yorker notwithstanding, no one has concentrated yet on this inherent contradiction. How does Gingrich, a Baptist deacon and former history professor, understand American religious and political history? What role do spiritual convictions and commitments play in his politics and policies?

Colin Powell: Powell, often cited as one in the group who is believed to possess "character in spades," lists his religious affiliation as Episcopal, but he remains largely a political and religious blank slate. The extent of the influence of his religious beliefs on his politics is simply unknown. Beyond his passing thought about becoming an Episcopal priest, divulged by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. in his New Yorker profile of Powell, how did Powell's early experiences at St. Ann's Episcopal Church in Mott Haven in the South Bronx really shape him? What influence does the traditional black church have on him? Powell's shifting view of the religious right already began to reveal itself during his book tour; if he involves himself in politics, that relationship will need to be scrutinized even more forcefully.

Ross Perot: Perot may not be an independent party candidate himself in 1996, but he will remain a force to reckon with. One insider has asserted that the church is the only institution that can keep Ross Perot humble. While he refused to embrace the religious right in 1992, the parameters of his own religious commitments remain vague. He belongs to one of the biggest and wealthiest Presbyterian churches in Dallas, but where does religion figure in his "America First" and "United We Stand" movements? How does he view the growing influence of the religious right? Do religious values and commitments underlie any of his economic theories and business philosophies?

Lamar Alexander: Alexander grew up in a Presbyterian family in Tennessee; he has remained a Presbyterian all his life, and his sister is married to a southern Presbyterian minister in Texas. The sense of vocation inherent in Presbyterianism undoubtedly informs his endeavors in politics, business, and education. But what of reformed theology's traditional commitment to be "reformed and always reforming" in church as well as society? His early television ads in Iowa and New Hampshire led off with his declaration that the answers to our problems aren't in Washington; they are in our churches. How do the religious beliefs of a consummate patrician from a declining mainline Protestant church influence his candidacy as a grass-roots populist who says he is seeking to empower churches, families and local communities?

The media's misgivings about taking religion into account when considering character issues in politics are often defended by invoking "the separation of church and state" in a pluralistic society. But that separation is based upon the conviction that faithfulness to religious particularity enhances rather than interferes with our common public and political life. Some intelligent and responsible reporting on religion and presidential politics in 1996 would be a welcome change, and one that is long overdue.■

It's the Stupid Economic Questions

The last time public television business correspondent Paul Solman (Nieman Fellow 1977) put anything into print about covering economics was the last time the country held a presidential election. The venue was The Columbia Journalism Review; the proximate cause, a piece he'd written for Nieman Reports about economic and business coverage in general. When we asked him to advise our readers on reporting the economics of this year's campaign, he allowed as how he had pretty much shot his wad the last time around. We invited him to repeat himself as needed, but to revise in light of changed conditions and the added wisdom that four more years presumably bring.

By Paul Solman

Consider this a quadrennial plea for journalistic fundamentalism and for its credo: "Ask stupid questions." Thus, when people seek advice on how to cover the economics of a campaign (or the stock market or, for that matter, the "Rembrandt/Not Rembrandt" exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum), my answers are prosaically predictable: 1) don't assume the audience knows much of anything; 2) worry about confusing the folks you're communicating to, not about impressing them; 3) worry about getting simple answers from the folks you're interviewing, no matter how stupid you think you sound.

The first corollary of these axioms is that, when it comes to economics journalism on the campaign trail, reporters with economics training may be at something of a disadvantage. Not that I have anything against expertise; some of my best friends actually have some. The problem is that the more "expert" you are, the more stupid your stupid questions will sound to you. As a result, the less inclined you may be to ask them.

Jim Lehrer and his business correspondent have had more or less the following tete-a-tete, more often than either would have scheduled it.

Eponymous Anchor of the NewsHour: Why didn't you begin by asking by asking him what he actually got the Nobel Prize in Economics for?

Business Correspondent: Well, I wanted to put the discussion in the context of economic thought as a whole.

EAN: But after ten minutes of your interview, I still don't know what he got the Nobel Prize for.

BC: Oh. I thought that was pretty clear.

Before we go any further, let's acknowledge the obvious: questions on TV have to be even stupider than those in print. Video goes by fast, and only once. (Even the sophisticated NewsHour audience is not yet in the habit of taping the show so that it can run its own instant replays.) TV is not the medium of sublime argument or closely reasoned ratiocination.

Admittedly, unless we're talking about devotees of The New York Review of Books or, say, the Journal of Cliometrics, the consumers of print journalism also need all the help they can get (or, more to the point, that journalists can give them). But in any medium, we're there to help, and help, when it comes to understanding a discipline like economics, is often most helpful when it comes as a return to the basics.

An example: As this magazine goes to press, the key economic issue of the day appears as urgent as it is mystifying (to most) and also, doubtless, as evanescent. The President and the Congress are playing a game of chicken with the nation's debt ceiling. The bulk of the coverage concerns the skirmish itself, the questions loud and incessant: "Will the debt ceiling be raised before the country runs out of money?" "Who'll blink first, Congress or the President?" "Is Clinton going to show backbone at last?" "Are the Republicans fanatics?" "Will the U.S. government really default?" "If it does, will markets collapse?" It makes good copy. It makes good television.

As the nation's cumulative debt approached its then-current legal limit in mid-November, thus nudging us all toward economic High Noon, the NewsHour asked its business correspondent to moderate a showdown between two prominent bond traders on the debt ceiling drama. The debate was fairly dramatic. It also ran a generous 11 minutes—fully half the time of an entire commercial network newscast. Moreover, unlike previous occasions, such as the Nobel interview, the moderator began by asking a simple question:

"What exactly are we talking about?"

The problem was the answers. They picked up the debate as it was already being played out in the media: Republicans vs. Clinton, the unlikelihood of default. What neither respondent explained were the fundamentals. Without them the square-off, albeit full of sound bites and fury, signified nothing (economically speaking).

The moderator tried to steer the interviewees back to the essentials. But here's the point: he (I) only felt comfortable asking moderately stupid questions, and not too many of them. After all, a "business correspondent" has a reputation to uphold. The audience, if it's been paying any attention at all, has heard such a person report on bonds and markets for years. Presumably, that audience would find truly stupid questions a tad disingenuous.

On the other hand, the correspondent is still just a journalist/moderator. And until the NewsHour turns into the

McLaughlin Group, that's what he or she will remain. In which case, it's not his (or her) business to explain what the guests cannot.

That's why a non-expert can be operating at an advantage when it comes to economics: the stupid questions can be asked a lot more easily. So what were the stupid questions in this instance?

For starters, there was (or ought to have been): "What is the debt ceiling?" To which the answer is: The debt ceiling is a legal limit on the total amount of borrowing by the US government, which Congress must raise when our cumulative debt runs up against it. (A less-stupid footnote: the Secretary of the Treasury is personally liable if s/he borrows money above the limit before it's been raised.)

Stupid Question 2: "Why the debt ceiling?" Answer: Because Congressfolk are able to attach various provisions to the ceiling-raising bill. Since the bill must be passed, this has proved an easy way to get favorite provisions enacted.

Stupid Question 3: "Why does the government have to borrow in the first place?" This sounds really stupid, especially to a specialist reporter, but, to paraphrase Mencken, no one ever went broke underestimating the economic knowledge of the American public. In fact, some of us have bet our careers accordingly. Moreover, the answer isn't all that simple. At one level, the reason Uncle Sam borrows is that he spends more than he takes in. That's pretty straightforward. But there's also the matter of previous government borrowing, in the form of IOU's which regularly come due. Sam must also borrow to redeem the IOU's.

Stupid Question number 4: "How does the government do all this borrowing?" Answer 4: By auctioning off its IOU's (called "bonds," "bills" or "notes," depending on how long it takes them to mature). If you hit the ceiling, you have to call off the next auction.

What's so terrible about that?

Well, without some fancy financial finagling, the Treasury won't have enough money to pay off its IOU's and will have to "default" on its payments. If it defaults, lenders will worry about when they'll get their money and will demand a higher rate of interest when Uncle Sam next wants to borrow—to pay them for the added risk they would be taking. That would add to the U.S. taxpayer's interest tab on our national debt, which is already a stunning 15 percent or so of every tax dollar.

The stupid questions could, quite frankly, go on and on. But if we were simply to stop here, we'd have gone a long way toward providing some context for the debt-ceiling gunfight. In only 1 minute, 12.69 seconds, according to the stopwatch.

As with the debt ceiling, so with every other economic issue. For example, a key bone of campaign contention will be the budget balancing act. A thousand stupid questions spring to mind. Why balance? Is debt really bad? What's the distinction between the "debt" and the "deficit"?

You can get very smart answers to questions like these. To the "is debt bad" question, for instance, economists like Robert Heilbroner ("The Worldly Philosophers") and Robert Eisner (former President of the American Economic Association) will say: it all depends on what you do with the money. If a reporter lets these guys go on (and it will be hard not to), they'll explain that debt is generally a good thing so long as the borrowed money is invested for the future. (This is why it's okay to borrow to finance a factory, say, or a house.) Debt is not so good, they'll agree, if it's used to finance consumption: e.g., a spending bender at Nieman Marcus (no relation to Agnes) or a hoity-toity meal at a ritzy restaurant.

In fairness, the economics tyros among you won't know the names or whereabouts of Heilbroner or Eisner. No matter. In America, knowledgeable economists are rarely more than a county—and never more than a phone call or E-mail address—away. They tend to be accessible, friendly, often flattered to be called. They also tend to be fed up with economic reporting and fairly champing at the bit to set things right. It's true that many of them speak a rare and unfathomable dialect of Economese. But many more are fluent in simple English.

Fortunately, simple English is very good for posing stupid questions, and getting them answered. More fortunate still, people who don't understand a subject (like economics) appreciate the simple approach. Most fortunate of all (for journalists, at least), there are more than enough of such people in America.

A final piece of insight. No one ever went broke underestimating the temptation to sound smart. We all want our interviewees to take us seriously. We feel at least as strongly about our audience. But after years of considering the matter, I think you ultimately sound smarter if you have the courage to sound stupid. Because the real victory is getting the audience to understand.

Four years ago, I ended a similar disquisition with the following thought, which I stand by as doggedly as ever: that the journalist's job is not so much to get the right answers as to ask the basic questions; first, "What do I need to understand in order to follow the debate?"; second, "How do I get the fundamentals across to my audience,"

The argument can be made that democracy's biggest burden is what's called, in economics, the "free-rider" problem. People wish to enjoy the advantages of a participative system of government without actually having to participate. They want the luxury of blaming someone else—anyone but themselves. They eschew responsibility for what doesn't work, blaming politicians whom they chose by voting into office or, increasingly, didn't choose, by having refused to vote at all. Why?

One reason, I'm sure, is pure laziness. We journalists probably can't do much about that. But among the other reasons that voters become free riders is the obfuscation which passes for public debate, the helplessness people feel when bombarded by that which they don't understand. In a democracy then, a key job of the journalist, as I see it, is to get the public back into the game: to explain what others would obscure; to empower the audience so that it feels capable of following the debate, or participating in it. The key job of the economics journalist is to do this about issues economic. And, if you are willing to ask the stupid questions, you too can have a promising career in economic journalism.■

Using Foreign Policy Issues

By Eugene Robinson

Back in the mists of time, when the Democratic Party had just added the White House to its long hegemony on Capitol Hill, Bill Clinton was going to be a domestic president with an exclusively domestic agenda. It was the economy, stupid. Back then, in the early months of 1993, the Democratic juggernaut had work to do—wrongs had to be righted, new programs designed, the very idea of government reinvented and revitalized. There was precious little time for distractions beyond our shores. The world would have to take care of itself for a while.

That was before things turned ugly in Somalia and a U.S. soldier's body was dragged ignominiously through the streets of Mogadishu. Before another wave of boat people surged from Cuba and threatened to turn into another politically disastrous Mariel-style flood. Before domestic pressure and sheer moral outrage led the U.S. to pour thousands of troops into Haiti, dislodge a brutal military regime, and reinstall a popular but unpredictable elected president. Before political assassinations, an armed insurgency and a financial meltdown threatened to loosen Mexico's tenuous purchase on first-world status. Before China turned surly; before Russia seemed to lose its way; and before Bosnia, once a distant and incomprehensible mess, became instead the imminent destination for tens of thousands of U.S. soldiers, who are intended to enforce an eventual peace agreement between people who have spent the last three years raping each other's daughters and slitting each other's throats.

That brief heyday of the domestic Clinton presidency also came before the Republicans took his Congress away and seized the initiative, forcing the President back on his heels and limiting his range to areas in which he can operate more or less unilaterally. Like foreign affairs.

Now, as the presidential campaign begins in earnest, foreign policy is going to be an issue whether those who worry only about domestic affairs like it or not. Anyone who thinks this race will turn exclusively on domestic issues isn't reading the headlines.

Actually, the Clinton administration, far from trying to ignore foreign affairs, is eager to trumpet what it sees as its triumphs on the international scene. Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was reinstalled with no American loss of life and things have gone relatively well—at least until now. Israel and the Palestinians have signed an epochal peace deal and are struggling mightily, if not entirely successfully, to implement it. Mexico hasn't imploded—so far, at least—and neither has Russia. Clinton and his aides feel they have the right to argue they have been relatively effective stewards of the world's security.

Bob Dole, Phil Gramm and the other Republican challengers will take potshots at that record, of course. And it's increasingly likely that come next summer and the heat of the campaign, they'll have plenty of ammunition.

Whatever the final assessment of Clinton's foreign policy record, almost all observers would agree he had one of the shakiest starts imaginable.

Clinton inherited a bad situation in Somalia and promptly made it worse. It was George Bush, remember, who decided to intervene—and set the parameters of that intervention, fuzzy though those parameters might have been. The idea was supposed to be to use U.S. soldiers to feed starving Somalis, but it quickly became impossible to feed some Somalis without getting shot at by other Somalis and having to shoot back. As muddled as the situation was, however, the new Clinton team made it even messier by failing to understand the nature of the Somali political situation and failing to make a crisp decision either to make more effective war or make a quicker exit. To many old Washington hands, it looked like amateur hour.

Clinton and his foreign policy aides also were apparently mystified by the war in Bosnia. The new president settled on a policy of helping the beleaguered Bosnian Muslims by lifting the arms

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embargo against the Muslim-dominated Bosnian government and carrying out air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs. The European allies, who had botched their handling of Bosnia, were divided on what to do but unanimous in agreeing that Clinton's lift-and-strike policy was wrong. So, in mid-1993, Clinton sent Secretary of State Warren Christopher to Europe for a round of consultation.

What the Europeans expected, officials of several allied nations later said privately, was that Christopher would politely tell them what to do—that he would insist on lift-and-strike, perhaps modifying the policy a bit to make it more palatable, and expect everyone to get in line. This was what American presidents simply did, and the Europeans knew full well that when the Americans wanted to have the final say, they had it. But instead, Christopher arrived in the European capitals, sat down with his counterparts, took out his briefcase and...consulted. He gave his ideas, listened to theirs and then went home. Officials in London, Paris and Bonn were shaken and confused.

No U.S. president can long avoid taking the lead on international matters, however, and Clinton soon began spending more time on foreign policy. Christopher's persistence in the Middle East led to an Israeli-Palestinian deal that for the first time since 1948 offers at least the chance for peace. The Haiti intervention was generally seen as a success, at least thus far. The Cuba crisis was managed without having Florida flooded with thousands of new refugees. An open checkbook was used to keep the Mexican crisis in check.

But Clinton avoided U.S. involvement in Bosnia—until this year. Now, as a direct result of U.S. action, Bosnia is closer than ever to a peace agreement. And ironically, that potential peace agreement—which would be a great diplomatic success—poses by far the greatest foreign policy threat to Clinton's re-election.

Months ago, Clinton agreed that if and when a peace deal is reached in Bosnia, the United States will send thousands of troops—20,000, 25,000, even more if needed—to enforce it. This seemed a distant prospect. But now, thanks to the new aggressiveness of NATO in its U.S.-led air strikes against the Serbs, the new aggressiveness of the Croatian army in support of its Bosnian Muslim allies, and the new aggressiveness of Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke as a shuttle negotiator, it looks as if a peace agreement may be in the offing.

If the warring parties actually make a deal, Clinton faces the unappealing prospect of having to send U.S. troops into a dangerous situation in a faraway land just months from a presidential election.

To his Republican challengers, this is a lobbed softball—Dole et al. have already gone on record expressing their reservations, if not their outright opposition to such a deployment. Congressional Democrats, those who remain, are understandably nervous about running for reelection with U.S. forces on the ground in Bosnia. All over town, politicians are scrambling to their atlases to look up Balkan mouthfuls like

"Luncheonette, Butte, Montana, 1956"

Srebrenica and Brcko. Yes, Washington, there is an Eastern Slavonia.

Nightmare scenarios abound. The list of parties who might want to shoot at American soldiers in Bosnia is as long as the list of suspects in an Agatha Christie whodunit: aggrieved Serbs who see America as the enemy who thwarted their dream of a Greater Serbia. Aggrieved Muslims who believe the Americans sat by too long and watched Muslims die. Renegade warlords who see peace as an impediment to their aims. Gun-running profiteers. Radical Islamists who still see America as the great Satan. Accused Serb war criminals who think they have nothing further to lose.

Given the circumstances, the ideal scenario for the Clinton administration would be to secure a peace deal fast and send in the troops before winter descends. As usual, the onset of winter would bring a de facto cease-fire—you can't do much fighting in Bosnia in the snow—and a chance to consolidate the peace. Then there would be a few perilous months next spring and summer, but the idea would be to have the troops already well on their way home by November 1996 and the election.

The worst scenario, from Clinton's point of view, would be failure to win a deal before the winter. The warring parties would hunker down and likely busy themselves with plans for their annual spring offensives. Then some messy peace deal would be reached late next spring and U.S. troops would be wading into the Balkan mess next summer, at the height of the campaign.

That sound you hear is Republicans licking their chops.

Bosnia poses the most dangerous foreign policy threat to Clinton's reelection hopes, but not the only threat. The truism is true: It's a dangerous world out there.

- Haiti is now seen as pretty much an unalloyed success for the Clinton team. Things have gone well. But this tragic country always has the potential for more tragedy. How long will the fragile peace between Aristide and the traditional élite last? How long are the poor multitudes prepared to wait for some improvement in their lives? If Aristide continues to resist privatization of state enterprises, and if this causes lenders like the International Monetary Fund to withhold funds, thus making desperately poor Haiti even poorer, can the center hold? Could things disintegrate before the U.S. election?
- Relations with China seem to have been patched up for now. But they're still much worse than a few years ago, and there's almost nothing Clinton can do about it. China is waiting for Deng Xiaoping to die. Until he does and a secure, confident leadership emerges, China likely will be prickly, territorial, almost paranoid in its dealings with its enemies, both internal and external, both imagined and real. As China grows as a political, military and economic power, the potential for confrontation only increases.
- Russia can go in almost any direction. Boris Yeltsin has been hospitalized with another bout of heart trouble. How is his health, really? Will he emerge with enough vigor to continue his role of holding the post-communist country together? Will the nationalists emerge stronger in December's parliamentary elections? If so, will Yeltsin have to adopt an even pricklier attitude in his dealings with the west?
- Cuba is always more of an issue in an election year because of Florida's anti-Castro Cuban exile community—and Florida's electoral votes. The Republicans' anti-Castro rhetoric will become more and more strident, which means Clinton will have to become more and more strident. What if Castro takes offense and decides to tweak his longtime nemesis, say, by loosening the tap and letting a few boatloads of refugees take off for Miami? Politically, would Clinton be able to adhere to his new policy of sending boat people home to a still-repressive communist regime? Would he be able to let them in, given the anti-immigrant sentiment that's taken hold? Either way, he'd have a big problem.
- Mexico, in many ways, may be the most dangerous situation of all, because of how much is at stake. Events of the last year have shown just how delicately balanced our southern neighbor is. Another armed uprising, another financial meltdown, another political killing, another massive earthquake—any of these things, in any combination, might be enough to send things spinning out of control once more. And if things do spin out of control, the United States is compelled to get involved for at least a couple of reasons. First, the NAFTA treaty—still controversial on both sides of the aisle—obliges us to sink or swim jointly. Second, any severe crisis in Mexico would doubtless send multitudes of illegal immigrants across the border, a development that could sink the president's electoral hopes in Texas and California.

To add to Clinton's potential troubles, his potential opponents include at least one man who has more credibility in foreign affairs than he does: Senator Dole. Dole is a certified war hero, and possesses a certain credibility and gravitas as a statesman that many people believe Clinton lacks—although, ironically, he has never had to shoulder the responsibilities of the presidency the way Clinton has.

What political benefit does Clinton reap if he negotiates all these hazards without stumbling? Probably little or none. But if he does stumble, the damage can be enormous. Foreign policy probably can't help him much in his reelection campaign, but it can wound him mortally.■

Iowa, Where Cliché Coverage Rules

By John Carlson

The farmer was on his tractor when he spotted the reporter, a grinning young man, loping toward him across the dusty Iowa soybean field. "I'm wondering if I can talk to you for a minute about the presidential caucuses," the reporter said, watching the farmer climb down off the tractor, mopping the sweat from his forehead with a greasy bandanna. "I just have a couple questions."

"Hold on there, partner" the farmer said. "Are we on background or deep background?"

We in Iowa like to think this story is true. People here have become a pretty sophisticated bunch when it comes to presidential politics and the news media.

It started in 1972 when a few Iowa Democrats wanted to get their party out of debt and invented the caucus system. George McGovern came down from South Dakota, figured out it wouldn't take much for him to win and he went on to take the Democratic Party's nomination. A few reporters and politicians declared Iowa had something to do with the grand McGovern success, so in 1976 the state's Republicans and the Democrats decided they could get a good thing going by holding their caucuses on the same night—well in advance of the New Hampshire primary.

Jimmy Carter snuck in before anybody else and won the hearts of a bunch of Democrats who were delighted to have somebody who might be president talk to them right in their own living rooms. Then Mo Udall and Birch Baye and Henry Jackson and Sargent Shriver and a few others showed up.

Common folks were asked their opinions on the candidates and the serious issues of the day by Germond and Broder and Apple.

Shirley White, a housewife from Ankeny, went on NBC to explain to the nation why she thought Mo Udall was a great guy. White was hugged by newly admiring neighbors who for the first time understood her opinions were nationally significant.

"This is going to become New Hampshire," declared Jack Germond.

Battle-hardened Iowans soon became harder for the politicians to please—and for the reporters to impress.

Paul Simon probably will never forget the day in 1984 he was to be the featured speaker at what his crack campaign staff billed as an "old-fashioned rally." It was to be held in the upstairs of a dumpy little restaurant in the eastern Iowa town of Anamosa. The only people to show up were two old men. One of the gents told Simon of his military service and then blurted he thought the death penalty was a pretty good deal and that was just about the most important issue he could think of, by golly.

Simon said, well, he happened to be opposed to the death penalty because it wasn't a deterrent and so forth and so on. The old man squinted and looked out the window. Simon cleared his throat and glared at the knucklehead on his staff who arranged the fiasco. Mercifully, the "rally" ended after about 15 minutes.

Simon walked downstairs and found the cafe filling with people coming in for lunch. He lunged at the crowd, shook hands, introduced himself and handed out little bow-tie lapel pins to people who bothered to pay the least bit of attention to him. He greeted a young woman waiting in line at the

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Governor Michael Dukakis, the Democratic Presidential candidate, on Iowa farm, 1988. (Des Moines Register photo)

cash register, then bent down to shake the hand of her small child. The kid, probably four years old, made a grimy little fist and slugged Simon in the stomach. The ashen senator looked as if he'd stared Lee Harvey Oswald in the face. The kid's mother was horrified and nearly jerked the little bugger's arm out of its socket.

The only reporter in the room collapsed in laughter, then regained his composure and rushed to file. Naturally, an editor killed the part about the kid sucker punching Simon, choosing instead to include something about the event's great death penalty discussion and Simon's refusal to discuss Gary Hart's "problem."

This historical perspective is important.

A lot of people in Iowa—including farmers and factory workers and little kids—are bored with the caucuses and the candidates and the reporters.

Senator Arlen Specter spent an afternoon walking around in jungle-like heat at the Iowa State Fair a few months ago, shaking hands, telling people who he is and what he was doing there. Fully 20 reporters and photographers surrounded Specter—a man who polls show is supported by exactly 1 percent of Iowa Republicans. One man actually burst out laughing in Specter's face when the senator introduced himself as a candidate for president.

A print reporter and photographer, recognizing the absurdity of it all, moved away from the snarl and walked into the fair's giant cattle barn. Once there—and this is a classic example of something every reporter and photographer coming to Iowa feels the need to do—they found a fat guy in bib overalls, sat him down on a bale of hay and interviewed him about the candidates.

No, he patiently told them, he really didn't have a favorite. It was only August, after all, and the caucuses aren't until next year. Yes, he voted for Bush last time so he supposed that made him a Republican, he told the reporter. And yes, he kind of liked Dole but Dole might be too old and no, he didn't know much about Gramm. Mostly he shrugged. The kind, patient, fellow just didn't happen to have any strong opinions that day.

The reporter—decked out in a bush jacket and safari hat—was relentless and determined to get something out of him because the photographer was frantically shooting pictures and how often do you get an Iowa guy in bib overalls sitting on a bale of hay? Quite a lot, it turns out.

Everybody comes to Iowa with their cameras and notebooks looking for a farmer sitting in a barn on a bale of hay, ready to toss out his chicken-fried philosophy. It's even better if he has a straw sticking out of his mouth. And it's really great if you get a half dozen of them together at the feed store.

Just as good is a bunch of people drinking coffee in a cafe in What Cheer or Morning Sun or some other little town with a nifty dateline. They get the barber and hardware store owner and a retired lawyer and ask them what they think about Pat Buchanan's position on Bosnia or Perot or NAFTA. With any luck, an actual conversation might break

out. Sadly, this is never a guarantee.

If it's television, one usually can count on the inscrutable town grocer to dominate. "Tell me what you think of Bob Dole, Mr. Smith."

"Good man," says Smith, slamming a cleaver into a huge hunk of beef, his eyes avoiding the camera.

"So you like Dole. Are you going to support him in tomorrow night's caucus?"

"Possibly," Smith says, flashing the biggest grin he can manage without actually showing his teeth.

No question this is great stuff.

But people are no longer satisfied with that kind of reporting in advance of your first-in-the-nation presidential caucuses.

This is 1995. This is Iowa.

This is where the state Republican Party held a fundraising event August 19 and people from Kansas and Idaho and Illinois became Iowans for a night and paid $25 a ballot to vote in what was laughingly called a straw poll. It's where sophisticated political reporters scoffed at the transparency of the little sham and where—a month later—these same political reporters were looking solemnly into television cameras and droning on about "Dole's problems following his disappointing showing in the Iowa Straw Poll."

So much for straw polls.

Iowa is a fun place to be—except maybe when the snow turns to a fine gritty gray and the hapless reporter's rental car is broken down in a charming little town with no gas station, no mechanic and a cafe that happens to be closed today.

The place for a serious political reporter to be in Iowa this year is not at these cheap shindigs. The place to be is Winterset—Madison County—the covered bridges, for heaven's sake. This is where Clint Eastwood and Meryl Streep turned a sappy novel—"The Bridges of Madison County"—the best selling work of fiction ever—into an above average movie.

A political reporter can drive the 30 miles from Des Moines to Winterset and ambush tourists as they climb down out of their buses expecting to find fictional lovers Francesca and Robert Kincaid. Just pick them off one at a time and ask them what they think about Dole and Phil Gramm and the Colin Powell factor and Perot.

Or the reporter could go to the Roseman covered bridge a few miles outside of Winterset and interview the guy who is lucky enough to live adjacent to the bridge and sells T-shirts and little jars of dirt for a few bucks each to "Bridges" fanatics. No doubt he will have some grand thoughts on the issues.

If the reporter decides to get extremely serious, think about running up to Grand Junction 60 miles north of Des Moines and interview the little town's most famous resident, Randy Weaver. Never hurts to talk with a white separatist who nearly brought down the top guys at the FBI, right?

And there's lots more. Dyersville has the baseball diamond where "The Field of Dreams" was filmed. Laurens has the golf course with the fairway that doubles as the town's airport landing strip. Or go to one of the gambling boats over on the Mississippi River and watch farmers and widows and small-town business owners pour everything they own into the slots.

Iowa is a fun place to be—except maybe when the snow turns to a fine gritty gray and the hapless reporter's rental car is broken down in a charming little town with no gas station, no mechanic and a cafe that happens to be closed today.

Better idea: just come to Des Moines.

Take a cab to the Taste of Thailand, a little restaurant near downtown. The owner conducts all kinds of straw polls there and posts the results just inside the front door. They have heaping plates of great food for under $10. And they have beer. Lots of beer. A couple hundred labels from all over the world. It's the best possible place to cover the complicated Iowa presidential caucuses.■

Voting and Volunteering

Any understanding of the role of participation in democracy must begin with an understanding that public officials act for many reasons, only one of which is their assessment of the state of what the public wants and needs. And, although the information communicated to them through the medium of participatory input is biased in systematic ways, policymakers have other ways of learning about what citizens want and need from government. They can, for example, pay attention to the media or they can monitor public opinion polls. Polls have the advantage that, if carefully constructed, they convey a representative slice of opinion. However, the survey respondent is confronted with a pre-selected menu of issues framed in pre-digested terms. In contrast, participatory input—at least the forms that permit the communication of relatively precise messages—allows citizens to indicate their priorities and to state their view in their own terms.—*Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman and Henry E. Brady in "Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics," Harvard University Press, 640 Pages. $17.95 pb.*

New Hampshire, Where Misconceptions Prevail

By Mike Pride

In February 1980, Ronald Reagan spoke the unspeakable in New Hampshire, and no one noticed—or almost no one.

What is remembered is the defining moment of candidate Reagan, his seizing a microphone from John Breen, Editor of The Nashua Telegraph, and his commanding "I paid for this microphone, Mr. Green!"

The story is legend. Three days later, New Hampshire Republicans transported Reagan, who had until then been cast as a dangerous man who was not too bright and too far right, into the national mainstream. You don't get more than half of this state's Republican vote without convincing all those Nixon voters of yore (or Bush voters of '88) that you are a serious centrist candidate.

While no national reporter missed the significance of the Nashua debate, none of them picked up on another rich Reagan moment. And it wasn't surprising. To get it, you had to know New Hampshire. These days, most of the veteran reporters do know the state well. That's why in 1988 the press picked up on the failure of Bob Dole to sign the no-tax pledge Pete du Pont pushed toward him during a final televised debate. And it's why, as the 1996 New Hampshire primary approached, the national media had one eye on Gov. Steve Merrill, knowing his endorsement, if he made one, would be important.

But the story the media missed in 1980 is an object lesson about our quirky state. It points up how what reporters don't know—and what they think they do know—can cause them to distort or ignore reality.

Two weeks before Nashua, Reagan visited a Pittsfield factory. A pool reporter from The Los Angeles Times taped Reagan's conversations with the workers and played the tape for the press gaggle afterward. A worker from Chichester had complained to Reagan that her property taxes were higher than her mortgage payment. Reagan responded: "What the people ought to be willing to do is look for a broader based tax that is based on your ability to pay." This was an eminently sensible suggestion in a state that has no state income or general sales tax and relies almost entirely on local property taxes to pay for schools.

It was also a colossal political blunder. The best measure of just how colossal was the page one editorial in The Union Leader of Manchester 11 days before the primary. David Olinger, a reporter for my newspaper, The Concord Monitor, had heard Reagan's comment and its context on the tape. He had grasped its significance, and so had his editors. The Monitor played the story above the fold on page A-1.

The Union Leader was the dominant medium in New Hampshire in 1980, perhaps for the last time in a presidential campaign. Its publisher, William Loeb, a caustic throwback to the 19th Century, bellowed and blustered on its front page almost daily, often ignoring or inventing the facts as he went along. Loeb's front-page editorial on February 15 was headlined "Dirty, Dirty, Dirty!" It called our report that Reagan had suggested a broad-based tax for New Hampshire a "wild blast" from "the left-wing media" and "an absolute, unadulterated, 14-karat pure lie." Loeb even traced the "below-the-belt, filthy political tactic . . . from the holier-than-thou, sainted news media" to the campaign of George Bush, Reagan's chief rival, and Hugh Gregg, the former Republican governor who ran Bush's state campaign. "Of course, Bush and Gregg should apologize for this vicious, dirty smear," he wrote, "but you can be darn sure that, in their sanctimonious little lives, that type of honest apology never occurs to them."

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State of Contradictions

There was a lot going on here, but it went right past the national media. That wouldn't happen in this post-read-my-lips era. Yet there are plenty of misconceptions and false perceptions that can trip up even the best of the national reporters. That's because, like any other place, New Hampshire is a state of contradictions and subtleties. To cite a few, New Hampshire is:

- A state that has lost most of its rural ways but retains a closeness to the land.
- A bedrock conservative state whose Republican voters are more liberal than many Republican presidential candidates think.
- A state whose political leaders began bashing the federal government long before it was fashionable to do so but took hundreds of millions of dollars through a Medicaid loophole to balance the state budget during the last recession.
- A state that expects the personal attention of presidential candidates and yet for nearly 20 years has been just as susceptible as any other slice of the electorate to television campaigning.

Of these characteristics, it is the rural aspect that is least understood by the national media. Even in the pale light of mid-winter, television sees New Hampshire's landscape as the perfect set, but most of the big campaign events occur in the more populous southern tier of the state. In covering them, journalists don't have to venture far culturally from seaboard suburbia. The southern border towns are home to thousands of recent immigrants, many of them from Massachusetts. Only a fourth of the inhabitants of Derry and Londonderry are native-born; for Salem, the figure is 8.3 percent. If you head north along our interstates, you will see that we have lately grown into an attractive enough market to join the national boom in discount and outlet stores.

Yet it is a mistake to view the landscape merely as a convenient set piece or a vestige of what once was but is no more. The pastoral tradition survives in New Hampshire. It is one of the main attractions for those new inhabitants, who also adapt quickly to the state's political ways. I live in Concord, a city with sophisticated government, legal and medical communities. My house is a 10-minute walk from the State House. It is also a 15-minute walk from a path through the woods where, though with more ingenuity, time and energy than I possess, a person might be able to walk the 100 or so miles to Canada without seeing a house or a car. In one way or another nature is at the center of most lives here.

Environmental Concerns

Thus there is high regard for the environment. What does this mean politically? The most obvious answer is an environmentally conscious populace. Ever pragmatic, New Hampshire people do not oppose the commercial uses of nature—tourism or the wood products industry, to name the two most obvious—but on the environment a common sense of purpose cuts across the political spectrum.

I was reminded of this in October when, on successive Sunday walks in the woods around Concord, I bumped into Gordon Humphrey, a conservative former U.S. senator whose stunning upset election in 1978 was a prelude to the Reagan Revolution, and Ned Helms, a Gary Hart confidant in 1984 and a Democratic gubernatorial candidate in 1992. It is no accident that one of the lasting political initiatives of the decade in which John Sununu and Judd Gregg occupied the governor's office was a major land preservation program.

> Of course, it is a myth that New Hampshire voters bump into presidential candidates around every corner. What is true is that any New Hampshire voter who wants access to the process of electing the president can get it. The candidates do have to meet voters face to face, explain their positions, answer questions.

The remnants of rural life translate into more than hikes or hunts in the woods. They also contribute to an ethic of communal preservation. Work in New Hampshire is no different from work anywhere in 1995, but the organizing principle of life off the job is neither metropolitan nor suburban. It is municipal. Towns have identities, neighbors know neighbors, community matters. My newspaper covers three cities and about 35 towns, all of them distinct and distinctive.

This emphasis on community has several implications for presidential candidates and the journalists who track them. People take their politics personally. Yes, they get most of their information through television and the newspapers, but it is no myth that voters want to size up their presidents just as they size up their selectmen. Phil Gramm, for one, understood this. He wooed voters with great energy from the outset; his low standing in the early polls derived less from a failed message than from a failed courtship.

Communal life also carries over into presidential politics strong feelings about taxes. The issue of federal mandates without the money to pay for them resonates in New Hampshire. For more than a decade a state constitutional amendment has prohibited the Legislature from requiring anything of communities without dispensing the money to pay for it. This has negative repercussions—New Hampshire remains the only state in the union without universal kindergarten—but it also gives teeth to the concept of local control. Thus the message of a candidate like Lamar Alexander, who argues for pushing government down from the federal level, is right for New Hampshire. His low standing in early polls was a sign that the messenger might be the problem.

The Character Issue

Of course, it is a myth that New Hampshire voters bump into presidential candidates around every corner. What is true is that any New Hampshire voter who wants access to the process of electing the president can get it. The candidates do have to meet voters face to face, explain their positions, answer questions. And because this is a small state, voters do get to consider closely the candidates' character.

Voters have already identified character as the most crucial issue of 1996. The trouble is finding the proper measure for it. There is no better example of this difficulty than 1992, when the character issue exploded in the final two weeks of the New Hampshire campaign. First Gennifer Flowers and then the draft issue threatened to consign Bill Clinton's superb campaign to single-digit oblivion on primary day. Using media savvy to fight back, Clinton finished a strong second to Paul Tsongas. He later became the first candidate in the history of the modern New Hampshire primary to win the presidency without first winning the primary.

But he kept alive another tradition: like Eugene McCarthy in '68, George McGovern in '72 and Pat Buchanan in '92, he won the primary without actually winning it. As important and interesting as sex and the draft were in 1992, voters were left in the end with only enough information about them to judge Clinton through their own personal prisms. The spectrum ranged from principled patriot to double-dealing draft dodger and from a man who had saved a rocky marriage to "serial adulterer" (Representative Robert K. Dornan's phrase). The only definitive result of this controversy helped Clinton. It showed he was a superb campaigner who could weather a severe political crisis.

Lost in the whirlwind were two of Clinton's most important character traits, both of which had been apparent from the start of the New Hampshire campaign. One was a propensity to talk too much; the other was indecisiveness. We asked Clinton at one of our editorial boards where he stood on health care. Clinton spoke for at least 20 minutes, describing in numbing detail the Hawaiian plan, the Oregon plan and the German plan, but he never told us where he stood.

In covering the character issue this time, reporters should do what any personnel manager does: match the characteristics of the candidates with the requirements of the job. New Hampshire is a place where taking such measurements is possible. Will Dole finally figure out why he wants to be president and articulate it for voters to consider? Is Gramm's bluntness an effective leadership tool? Where is the evidence in their pasts that Gramm or Buchanan or Alexander can lead the country?

Perhaps the most prevalent misconception about New Hampshire is that it is a wildly conservative state. Plenty of evidence has fed this notion over the years. In addition to Loeb's diatribes, there were the antics of Meldrim Thomson Jr., a three-term governor in the 1970's who supported apartheid and once lowered state flags to half-staff on Good Friday. More recently there was the petulance of Sununu on the national scene, Buchanan's showing in the 1992 primary, anti-gay political initiatives on the state and local levels and the state's failure to recognize Martin Luther King Jr. with a holiday.

Nevertheless, voters in both parties have avoided the extremes in presidential primary voting. Democrats rejected old guard liberal politics in 1980 (Jimmy Carter over Teddy Kennedy) and 1984 (Gary Hart over Walter Mondale). In 1992, they chose a Democratic neighbor, Tsongas, who based his campaign

Political Sources as Friends

When Benjamin Bradlee was asked at a Harvard seminar October 2, 1995, how he reconciled a statement in his new book, "A Good Life," that newspaper people and news makers should keep "a civil distance from each other," the former Washington Post Executive Editor, said:

If your friend and neighbor—I mean he lived three or four houses down from me—becomes a Senator, that isn't such a big deal. Honest to God it isn't such a big deal to have a Senator as a friend. If your wives are friends and you have babies the same age and are being pushed on the same route, you're going to be friends and especially if your husbands share an interest in politics. And if there is this super accident that the Senator becomes President, as Kennedy said, you take your friends into the White House with you. You don't make new friends in there because people who want to be your friends in there have got something else up their sleeve. So the choice really is to just say so long to the person that you are friends with or to continue the relationship. There are two ways of doing that. A journalist that we all knew called Charlie Bartlett didn't write about him and became more of an advisor than a friend. I chose to try to be a friend and a reporter—and a reporter first. It took me a while to work that out. And I never worked that out successfully with Mrs. Kennedy. But Kennedy was very comfortable with it. He thought it was a mutually beneficial association and it was. It sure was beneficial to me and to Newsweek and I think to the readers of Newsweek.

There are all sorts of built-in safeguards on that. The first thing are your colleagues. They are reading your copy with a comb and saying, how did that son of a bitch get that and [they would] go over to whoever the hell gave it to him in the White House and say, jeeze you're always giving Bradlee something. You have your own bill and safeguards. You don't want to be known as the water carrier for somebody. And then your editors, who love the information you give them but they swagger around New York (in my case) and say, By God, we're not going to help Kennedy be President. So there are some safeguards.

There are some dangers. Jackie Kennedy never was happy with it. The night she came into Bethesda Naval Hospital with the President's blood still on her dress and started to tell my wife and me about the day's events, she had to interrupt herself and say you can't use this, this is not for Newsweek. That just broke my heart. ■

on curbing federal deficits. The 37 percent that Buchanan received in 1992 was roughly the same percentage shared by the more conservative candidates on the GOP ballot in 1988. Pat Robertson had beaten Bush in Iowa that year, Pete du Pont had the support of The Union Leader and Jack Kemp carried the tax-cutting supply-side banner with a zeal that surpassed even Reagan's. The voters stiffed all three of them to vote for Bush and Dole.

It is the '88 race in New Hampshire that may portend the 1996 outcome. After Bush's third-place finish in Iowa, Lee Atwater took the candidate aside and told him his slippage was not terminal. The hard thing in presidential politics, Atwater said, is to gain and keep new adherents. By contrast, it is easy to win back supporters who have recently deserted you.

The polls into last fall showed Dole losing support, but most of the gain was in the undecided column—that is, voters were looking for someone better. This fueled the Colin Powell boomlet and inspired Newt Gingrich to consider seizing the moment. Either of those candidates would breathe life into the campaign, but if they stay out, Dole's chances of regaining his wayward legion are good.

That analysis, you will recognize, has the ring of conventional wisdom. The chief lesson for New Hampshire primary watchers is: beware conventional wisdom, even—and perhaps mainly—from the locals. We do enjoy our quadrennial opportunities to sound wise and knowing. We have learned that people value our opinions just because we are here. Whether these judgments prove right or wrong has no bearing on their value in the campaign. All that matters is that they sound sincere.

In 1988, on the Sunday before the primary, I was a guest on "Meet the Press." Chris Wallace, David Broder and R.W. Apple Jr. were discussing whether Robertson's stunning showing in Iowa would have an echo in New Hampshire. Wallace turned to me and asked for "a reality check" on the speculations of Broder and Apple.

I had seen Robertson receive a lukewarm reception when he spoke to the Legislature a few days before. I knew New Hampshire voters had a long-standing respect for the separation of church and state. And I knew the Christian right had scant following in New Hampshire and no chance to organize blocs of voters as it had done for Robertson in Iowa. Yet I told Wallace and his audience there were signs Robertson seemed poised to pull off another surprise in New Hampshire.

The only signs I could think of on reflection were the Robertson placards stuck in snowbanks along the road I had driven that morning from my house to the television studio. Two days after my brilliant analysis, Robertson finished in single digits. That was the end of him—but not of local journalists providing "reality checks" to well-known visitors.

Thus my last suggestion for covering the primary: let us help you understand New Hampshire's singular views about taxes and government, its love of the land, its Yankee pragmatism, the nonsectarian nature of its political conservatism—even the way the primary can test the candidates' character. But remember that our predictions will always have far less worth for their content than for the authority with which we utter them. ■

A Political Deal for Pentagon Papers

At a meeting in Boston in 1971, Daniel Ellsberg told Ben Bagdikian, then Assistant Managing Editor for National News, his conditions for giving The Washington Post copies of the Pentagon Papers. In his new book, "Double Vision," Bagdikian writes:

He wanted me to promise that any handwritten notes on the margins of the papers would be cut out. That was no problem.

He also wanted a promise that if the paper printed any literal text of any cable, it would not print the time codes and messages numbers because theoretically it could compromise the secret code.

Dan said, "This could be the difference between a ten-year sentence and a life sentence." I had no trouble with cutting out the code groups because they had no pertinent value to the public.

Dan demanded that I not reveal his identity. I had taken that for granted. Afterward, I refused to confirm or deny Dan as my source even after news stories and books insisted that he was. That night Dan revealed, with unexpected bitterness, that he was the source of The Times's documents but that once they had the documents they had refused to talk to him, answer his phone calls, or in any other way let him know what the paper planned to do. The Times's publication a few days earlier had surprised him as much as it did us at The Post.

My real trouble was with his last demand. I was to deliver "the second box" [of documents] secretly to a member of Congress [Senator Mike Gravel of Alaska]. That, I did not like. I had always felt that a journalist and an official working too closely in concert tempted both to change their behavior for the benefit of the other. For the journalist that means only one thing, to alter news to favor or avoid criticizing the politician. I knew that some other journalists, prominent ones, made such deals and I knew their stories had the predictable flavor of promotional bias. I had always avoided it.

Merely accepting the pages for publication already was taking risks for me and my paper, but this was asking me to be a party to some unknown enterprise by some unknown government official.

I had argued, but in the end, agreed. It in no way tied my journalistic hands. Nevertheless, it still disturbs me, and until now I have never told anyone except my wife about the private transaction. It would have been an even tougher dilemma if I had known in the motel room what I would discover many days later: my delivery of "the second box" would become the basis for one of the most bizarre scenes in the history of the United States Senate. [Gravel's weeping uncontrollably as he read the secret papers into the record of the subcommittee he headed.]—*"Double Vision: Reflections on My Heritage, Life and Profession." The Beacon Press. 241 Pages. $24.*

Getting Out of the Rut

Strong, Consistent Leadership by Editors Can Break Away From Traditional Coverage

By Geneva Overholser

Let's agree that a good presidential election is one in which the country takes a look at itself and where it would like to go, and chooses a leader accordingly. How can the press help that happen? And what is the role of the newspaper editor?

First off, American elections are many things other than a good self-examination. They are huge media extravaganzas. They are orgies of insult-hurling. They cost a mint and cause people to feel worse when they're over than they did when they began. Not surprisingly, a lot of people decide they want nothing to do with them.

Over the past few years, the media have been hashing over the question of how much we have contributed to this mess. The role can be overstated. There are villains aplenty, from campaign financing to changes in party structure, from the overwhelming impact of television advertising to the decline of oratory.

But we're in there sharing the blame, and powerfully. We all know why. We thrive on conflict. We have a hard time seeing a good story in success or achievement. We hear a pledge; in our mind's eye we see a broken promise. A candidate professes empathy; we smell pandering. Schooled in skepticism, we forget where it ends and cynicism begins.

Moreover, the practice of political reporting moves in deep ruts. We follow the candidates around. We posture at debates. We nose around for controversy. We declare early frontrunners.

What to do about all this? For several years now, that has been the question. Unfailingly, after an election, we congregate and ask ourselves how we might have done better. We agree on various measures. We must flesh out the horserace. We must be more temperate in our use of polls, more skittish about bedroom revelations. We must make sure that actual people are heard.

There are, alas, no cure-alls. It's not easy, partly because we are not alone in this process. The press cannot make an election soar when so much else is pulling it down. Still, there it is: elections are essential. We play a critical role in them. The country badly needs to move forward. How can we help? So editors ask themselves. Here are some attempts at an answer.

The first one is simple: planning. Elections tend to run along helter-skelter. Thoughtful, intelligent, comprehensive political coverage does not. If we are to help the public understand issues, know candidates, it takes a lot of planning.

An editor needs to convene key members of the staff well ahead of the election. And those key members should come from all departments that will eventually be involved. If art and photo are brought too late into the process, coverage will suffer dramatically. If the copy desk leadership is not fully on board, coverage will be undermined.

This is especially true if newspapers are to make any changes in this part of our culture most hoary with tradition. To many on the staff, political coverage feels like a sacred trust. We know just how it should be done, and any step away from that is unquestionably a watering down of the paper's commitment to excellence. (This kind of rigidity is one reason many young reporters want nothing to do with political reporting.)

To get out of this rut requires strong, consistent and unmistakable signals from the top—and it requires that everyone hear the same signals at the same time. Too many hopes for change have foundered on squabbling. What editor has not had a star political reporter storm into the office deriding the old news editor whose hopeless failure to appreciate political coverage is robbing every story of the play it deserves?

So you have to plan, you have to include everyone and you have to be clear about the desire to change. You also have to be flexible. News does happen, especially in election campaigns. Agreeing on certain principles can ensure that breaking news stories serve the same larger goals as do enterprise pieces. In other words, if you want to make sure that regular folks are heard, make sure everyone on the beat

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knows it so that they can include that element in their stories. If you want to be sure certain issues stay at the forefront, be sure everyone knows that, as well.

As the election moves along, reconvene your planning group from time to time. How is everyone feeling about the coverage? What's missing, what's being overdone? What are readers telling the folks who are out in the field? What changes in the program are in order?

Getting lots of different voices into the process can ensure that coverage is livelier and more responsive. There are bound to be interesting questions to ponder along the way. How much do you make of a scandal? Is demagoguery overpowering all your wonderful planning? Are you treating the minority or women candidates differently?

One of the most critical things we can do is to think about the tone of our coverage. We're worried about being saps, dupes or Pollyannas, and we should be. But why aren't we worried about being scolds, grumps and cynics? The public wants this thing to work—the ones who are still paying attention. We need to think about how to make it as productive and constructive as it can be. That does include things like following up to make sure promises are consistent, asking tough questions, pointing out failures, checking out histories. But it also includes moments of humor and empathy. A virtuoso performance, a moment of evident compassion, a clear conviction: too often we fail to get these into our coverage. The public doesn't believe that candidates are nothing but a composition of clever manipulation and shifty-eyed deceitfulness, and it dislikes us for making it seem that way.

Typically, finding blanket answers to the oft-posed questions is the wrong way to go. How to handle polls is a good example. We'd be fools to swear off polls. They're valuable tools. And they're interesting. But they do pose problems. Used too often, they dominate coverage and begin to seem meaningless. As part of a larger plan, carefully used and in moderation, they're a critical contributor to the picture.

Now for a couple of specific things I personally wish we did more of. One is to provide more words direct from the candidates. People want to get things straight from the horse's mouth. They get sick of us media folks always injecting ourselves into the middle of things. We should run the standard stump speech on the op ed page, and run transcripts of our interviews with candidates there, too. Again and again in the news pages we should run excerpts from major speeches alongside the stories we run about them.

Moreover, we can't do too many profiles. We can't put too many of our best writers on the candidates at too many points. Good writing that brings these people alive is what newspapers have a monopoly on. We should do a lot more of it. Too often we send rookies out on the campaign trail, and big guns to a press conference. We should do it the other way around. A well-told tale of a candidate responding to people in an ice-cream social will give the public a lot more to chew on than the most exhaustive coverage of a rote performance.

Now for another note about timing. Just when you come to the crest of your great coverage plans, you've got to turn around and do the most important stuff again. This is when more people are paying attention.

Finally, we should let readers know why we're making the decisions we are making. One thing the public is concerned about these days is the enormous power the media have to shape things. That's why they get so angry about your playing a picture of this candidate on that page, and a picture of that candidate on this one, or using this adjective for him and that adjective for the other fellow. The more we let the reader in on the deliberative process the better. Publish your overall plans. Keep them posted on what candidates are visiting the paper when. Take them behind the scenes to describe the sessions. Write columns explaining the more controversial choices.

Being an editor during an election is a funny mix of receiving signals and sending them. You're eager to make changes that will bring about better coverage than ever before. Yet you're mindful that the best traditions of political coverage mean a great deal not only to your political reporting staff, but to your longtime readers.

You wish you could provide readers with more meat to give them the best possible look at the issues and the candidates. But you know that there is more going on in the world than the election, and that endless amounts of coverage dull the appetites of even the most eager reader.

You get candidates complaining about the way your reporters treat them, reporters complaining about the candidates and readers complaining about everything. The only solution to all this is to have an eye on your goals, an ear open in every direction and in the end a commitment to satisfying your own tastes.

If you think, reading your newspaper, that you are moving through the campaign with a good sense of the problems confronting the electorate, a good sense of the possible solutions, and a good idea of just what each candidate would do about all that, then you should relax and feel confident—until after the election.

Then it's time to sit down again to figure out how to do it better—next time. ■

George Wallace And the Editor

In "The Politics of Rage" author Dana T. Carter describes the relationship between Governor George C. Wallace of Alabama and the press during his 1968 campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination:

"Some of the press had covered him for years. They may have despised his demagoguery, but it was hard for many of them to dislike a politician who once opened a telephone conversation with a newspaper editor by merrily explaining: "I just called up to kiss your ass some more."

Politics, Journalism and the Net

By John Fox Sullivan

I sat in a classroom with 75 reporters, editors and technologists in the Spring of 1994 and I didn't know what the hell they were talking about. The Nieman Foundation had gathered together print journalists from across the country to discuss cyberspace, commercial on-line services and the Internet and their implications for the news media, politics and journalism. The discussion was lively, mind-opening and downright confusing for this publisher of National Journal, a Washington-based magazine for the political and policy community.

Only 18 months later in November 1995, National Journal and our partner American Political Network (publishers of the Hotline) established "Politics USA" as a major site on the World Wide Web. The goal, simply stated, though ambitious in nature, is for "Politics USA" to be the first stop on the Internet for the politically interested—whether professional, activist, student or just plain anyone trying to understand what's going on in politics and government. News, analysis, data bases, games, chats, reference material, marketplaces, bulletin boards and hypertext links galore are all integral to this meeting place for political players and watchers alike. In short, it could be one small step toward an interactive democracy.

During this 18-month transition from near total ignorance about the net to knowing just enough to be dangerous, we launched our ambitious 20-person-plus joint-venture. We are only beginning to grasp what the Internet means for journalism, the coverage of politics and political involvement of citizens.

Some facts. As of November 1995, there are more than 1,500 Federal, State and local government web sites on the Internet. Each of the presidential candidates has not only his own home page, but also a parody site established by others. Every Senator has a home page as do many House members. The White House and Cabinet agencies were also quick to develop and link home pages. Public and private interest groups have joined the rush to cyberspace, each hoping that the politically interested will find their site.

Already the consumer is beginning to face too many choices, too many sites and too little information as to not only what's on the web, but also what's good, what's bad, what can be trusted, what can't. It's as if one is let into the Library of Congress, told that every book one could ever want was available for free, just go find it...and by the way, there's no librarian and very limited card cataloguing.

The 1996 election season offers both the net information providers and consumers a unique opportunity to take advantage of, and experiment with, this new world which combines cyberspace, politics and journalism. It will also be the first campaign in which the candidates themselves use the Internet to communicate with—and mobilize—the computer-savvy segment of the electorate.

Some observations based on limited experience to date:

- Let the medium shape the message. Newspapers and magazines are not going to disappear; they serve a real need in a compact, portable, attractive and economic format. Take the judgment, news and data-gathering ability of print journalism and develop an editorial product appropriate for the medium and the technology. Merely "reproducing" an existing magazine or newspaper on-line is a recipe for failure. Ask what sets of information can be assembled together that are of value to your audience delivered through this medium. For example, without

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traditional limits of time or newsholes, the full text of campaign speeches, position papers, or other documents and reports can readily be disseminated. Instead of publishing only top-line polling results, publish all the data. Let the audience dig as deep into the data as it wishes.

- The role of good editors, who understand the strengths and weaknesses of the medium, is critical. Use the technology but don't get overwhelmed by the technologists. Always ask how to take advantage of the medium. Magazines, for example, provide unmatched reproduction, but the web offers "unlimited" space and nearly instantaneous delivery.

- The role of good reporters, who understand politics and political history, is critical. The web is filled with rhetoric, bombast and noise-words without context and often unconstrained by fact. As the sources of news and political commentary proliferate on the web, the need for accuracy, perspective and common sense becomes of even greater value.

- Conversely, the web can offer citizens the opportunity to chat with each other about issues of shared interest and communicate directly with their elected officials. In effect, voters will be able to petition, advise and criticize as often as motivated. Even the smallest of interest groups will be able to use the web to disseminate their views and mobilize their members.

- Look for political campaigns and interest groups to utilize the web to seek out constituents with like interests. Politicos will target selective audiences based on issue compatibility and use the web not only to communicate messages, but also as one more vehicle for raising "mother's milk"—money. People are just beginning to work on the mechanics of this new fundraising device.

For those who feel disengaged from Washington and government, the web just might pull people and their politicians closer together. More information, greater communication, a greater sense of participation might actually lead to a democratic system that works just a little bit better than today. In any case, journalists, editors and publishers will still be in the center of the action. ■

The Crowning Insult to Him Who Occupies the Presidential Chair

The Right Job for Colin Powell

By Paul Delaney

The General was right. Neither Colin Powell nor his family needed the baggage of presidential politics. Digging into Alma Powell's background was only the beginning. Republican opponents, the media and, if nominated, the Democrats, were only warming up. And, as New York Times columnist Bob Herbert said, he was hanging out with the wrong crowd, anyway. To heck with George Will's 22 questions and Paul Tsongas and others declaring Powell history.

So leave diplomacy and defense to others inside the Beltway; leave politics to its narrow and dirty arena. There is a higher calling for Colin Powell, one that would serve all the interests he articulated during his brief encounter with the presidential race.

There is almost universal agreement that Powell has the ability to lead. If not, what was all the commotion about the last few months? He has the qualities we yearn for in a national leader: character, strength, solid family values, sense of purpose, the ability to get diverse groups to work together; in a word, all the things many Americans find lacking in the other guys.

Therefore, instead of trying to be President or Vice President of the United States, why shouldn't Powell take on one of the most important jobs in the country—Executive Director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People?

That could happen with no one missing a beat. Powell would maintain the high esteem he now enjoys from the public. He would attract more press attention since Roy Wilkins headed the NAACP. While many reporters would insist on calling him a "black leader"—to his consternation—he has shown he is way beyond the restrictions of that label.

His main task would be the same as expected of him as President, to bring us all together, to mobilize us in trying to solve the nation's most intractable social problem, race, a solution that will elude us well into the 21st Century because, "we do not wish to find it," according to John Hope Franklin, the historian. Seeking a solution fits neatly into Powell's personal aspirations as well as the NAACP's historical mission.

In that position, Powell could resuscitate the moribund civil rights movement and change the course of history, the direction the nation is headed in race relations, ushering in a new period, the Powell Era. The NAACP and the rest of the rights community have been floundering for decades in the face of expanding right-wing influence, deepening racism and growing racial animosity. The NAACP needs a man of Powell's stature to deal with increasing internal friction over the future of school desegregation, as if money were not enough of a problem. Some local chapter heads are challenging the national charter on busing and the idea of integration itself, one of the foundations of the organization.

Most white Americans are not and do not want to be party to rampant racism; they are open to multi-racial ideals and would gladly follow the right leaders. This was what they expected from General Powell's flirtation with presidential politics, the kind of leadership on race most people have been yearning for years.

As NAACP head, Colin Powell would be able to calm the strident rhetoric, cool the passions of all races—maybe even soothe the Angry White Male—and bring back the type coalitions of groups needed to deal effectively with racial issues. Jesse Jackson could retain his Rainbow Coalition, even run for president again, if he chose to do so.

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But Jackson would be forced to deal with Powell as head of the nation's biggest and oldest rights organization. Louis Farrakhan would still be out there, but would be less of a factor than he is now. All would have to fall in line or lose the support of many of their constituents.

And we in the media would love it. Lots to cover and write about. In its glory days, the NAACP was great to cover. That was how many of us got onto big city dailies and mainstream media in the first place. Media careers were made by the movement. Who wouldn't want an assignment covering Colin Powell?

This is not to say that Powell as NAACP head would be a shoo-in. Allegiance to him by blacks is not so firm yet. He would earn it almost immediately upon being named, however. As a presidential contender and declared Republican, he was suspect, especially since the overwhelming majority of his support came from the white community.

Powell is suspect by blacks because of his almost totally white professional background. Other than family, no blacks have been close to him. Richard L. Armitage, white, ex-Defense Department official, is described as his best friend. Ken Duberstein, white, former Reagan White House Chief of Staff, was his closest political adviser. Powell was associated with Ronald Reagan and George Bush, whom many blacks blame for the policies that have left their communities devastated. Even the co-author of Powell's best-selling autobiography was white, an assignment that would have benefited any black writer.

Finally, Powell put some distance between himself and blacks. But most are somewhat forgiving of brothers who "get over with the white man." Historically, black men felt forced to shuffle and grin to earn money in menial jobs, such as shining shoes, and more substantive work, such as waiters and Pullman porters, to put food on the table and support the family. It was okay to play such games and to wink understandingly at each other about them, a damaging part of our past that explains a lot of the hostility and frustration of today. But, it is also another story.

(This is not to say that Powell engaged in such games or was not deserving of every job and relationship. But black perception of him needs to be put into perspective.)

Given the circumstances, Powell could defy a recent aversion many blacks harbor to a single leader, a sentiment that developed in reaction to the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X and others, including John and Robert Kennedy. Such an aversion was sealed in 1971, at the first annual bash of the Congressional Black Caucus, when the keynote speaker, Ossie Davis, the actor, advised the 2,000 dinner guests at Washington's Shoreham Hotel:

"It's not the man, it's the plan. It's not the rap, it's the map."

Personally, I disagreed strongly with that belief and am convinced the civil rights community, therefore blacks, suffered greatly as a result. The lack of a forceful national spokesman, backed solidly by good numbers of people, left major issues to local officials with faint voices and little power. The elected and appointed leaders were without the clout to have significant influence on policy and programs or the national debate affecting their constituents.

That could and should change with Powell as leader of the NAACP. The New York Times touched on an important point when it noted that Powell had forced the two parties to take a black candidate seriously, something that Jesse Jackson could not do in past campaigns and will not be able to do if he runs again. He will only succeed in further confirming the snickers and sneers of him as the "black Harold Stassen."

For the NAACP, Powell would be the best candidate for leader in years. He has the administrative experience, background, clout, contacts, tremendous public support across the racial spectrum and is the sharpest prospect since Roy Wilkins, the last insider with the wherewithal to take charge and run the organization asit hasn't been run in years. In addition, Powell would be the most financially independent candidate around, something not to be taken lightly by a cash-poor organization like the NAACP.

Finally, a stint as head of the NAACP could put some fire in his belly, the all-important but missing element that prevented a run for the presidency. If Powell can stand up to the most intractable issue facing the country, if he can turn around an organization like the NAACP, put some fire back into the civil rights movement, who knows, he may find the passion for the presidential campaign of 2000. ■

Powell and the Media

Howard Kurtz, media critic of The Washington Post, discussed the presidential boom for Colin Powell on the Alex Jones show "On the Media" September 17, 1995, weeks before the general announced he would not run. Here are excerpts from his comments:

What fascinates me most about this, Alex, is that with some exceptions—Michael Gordon's recent piece in The New York Times magazine being one of them—is the incredible amount of boosterism and glorification of Colin Powell by many of the leading journalists in this country. He has clearly become the media's candidate for president and the usual skepticism that we in the press apply to public figures appears to be all but vanished in this case.

...You know, he always got good press back in the days when he was at the Pentagon, back when he was chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but I personally have never seen anything like this buildup in the last month in which it has gone beyond simply saying that he is an admirable figure who's a role model and might well make a good national candidate too. Many big-name columnists are almost trying to draft him, saying please, please get in this race, we need you in this campaign. And that strikes me as journalists' shedding their traditional role and almost becoming cheerleaders.■

That's Entertainment

By James C. Lessersohn

Disney announces plans for a "friendly" takeover of Capital Cities/ABC and nervous journalists quip: will Michael Eisner make Peter Jennings wear Mickey Mouse ears as he reports the news each evening?

Of course, a real question lurks behind this jest. Just how important will ABC News, not to mention Capital Cities' newspapers, be to an entertainment powerhouse like Disney?

News will be emphasized in the rhetoric surrounding the merger. Disney's response to skeptical government regulators will undoubtedly contain sincere pledges to maintain the integrity and quality of ABC News. But once the merger is completed, the profitability of news will inevitably affect decisions concerning the financial resources available to meet the public's need to know.

This clash of journalistic and entertainment values is hardly new. In the 1890's, William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer proved that sensationalism sells newspapers. Almost a century later, Rupert Murdoch used the profits of his world-wide network of yellow journals to borrow the billions of dollars necessary to acquire Metromedia's big city television stations and the 20th Century Fox film studio. By subsequently launching the Fox network, Murdoch signaled clearly that, for him, the future of media meant entertainment, not news.

Time Warner has undergone a similar transformation. Since the 1970's, the venerable publisher of Time and Fortune has remade itself into an entertainment colossus by acquiring the nation's second largest collection of cable systems, HBO, Warner Brothers films and records, and now, barring legal obstacles, Ted Turner. Of course, Cable News Network is a major piece of Turner's value, but the remaining Turner properties, from the Atlanta Braves and superchannel WTBS to TNT and the Cartoon Channel, all fall clearly on the entertainment side of the media fence.

Other "news media" companies have also put substantial investment dollars into entertainment-driven media. Cox and Newhouse rank among the ten largest owners of cable systems. Hearst owns big chunks of several highly successful cable networks: ESPN, Arts and Entertainment, and Lifetime. Scripps and Multimedia (soon to become part of Gannett) are both involved in expensive cable channel launches. Tribune Company's big city television stations form the backbone of Warner Brothers's fledgling WB network, while the company's highest paid employees all play for the Chicago Cubs.

The motivations for this tilt to entertainment are fairly obvious. Entertainment is fun. Entertainment is glamorous. And despite the high risks involved, entertainment is hot on Wall Street for at least three indisputable reasons.

First, consumers are willing to pay far more to entertain themselves than to inform themselves. In New York City, a movie ticket costs $8, a copy of the daily New York Times 60 cents. Cable subscribers pay an average of about $30 a month for a package of services weighted decidedly toward entertainment offerings; yet the average newspaper subscription still costs only $10-12 a month, and television and radio news are essentially free.

Second, entertainment travels better than news. American films and television shows attract eager audiences around the world. In contrast, news has limited appeal outside the community where it is generated—whether that community is a city or a nation. To satisfy viewer and reader expectations, even international events are normally interpreted from a local point of view. Language barriers create additional obstacles. News in translation is far more perishable than dubbed or sub-titled entertainment.

Third, advertisers increasingly buy audiences without regard to how they are gathered. In the past, newspapers, news magazines, and network news divisions argued successfully that the seriousness of their news reports added to the credibility of the advertising running in these "environments." Today, media buyers stick mostly to the numbers, focusing their energies on maximizing coverage of the "target demographic" and negotiating price deals rather than finding the most hospitable atmosphere for their selling messages.

Severely limited in their ability to charge consumers directly for general news and information, many news media decision-makers feel compelled to seek bigger audiences for advertisers by making the news itself more entertaining. This desire to attract and keep the largest possible audience has led to such innovations as the zippy presentation of USA Today, happy talk local news shows ("Wasn't that a great tornado, Gloria?"), tabloid TV news magazines, the dramatic "re-creation" of sensational news events on *serious* network news programs, and the explosion of "talk radio."

But constructive dialogue can occur only when business and news professionals both understand the need to balance demands to increase profits with the desire to pursue editorial excellence. Serious journalism can only prosper in a society that values serious news. When the public and advertisers fail to support the news media, pressures to cut costs and spice things up inevitably result. Pondering the battle between entertainment values and journalistic standards, Russell Baker argued recently that the information superhighway should be renamed the infotainment superhighway.

Maybe Baker is on to something. In a world of interactive infotainment, viewers armed with remote control units could choose for themselves to watch Peter Jennings read the news with or without computer-generated Mickey Mouse ears. Imagine the ratings improvement that power could bring.■

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The Asian Media

This is the second part of an examination of the media in developing countries around the world. The series was conceived by Peter Eng, Nieman Fellow 1995, the News Editor of the Bangkok Bureau of The Associated Press. The fall edition analyzed the press in Latin America. This report on the Asian press, which Eng developed, will be followed in the spring with a study of the African media.

China's More Aggressive Press

But Beijing's Ideological Imprint Colors Newspapers and Broadcasting

By Marcus W. Brauchli

Good journalism in China today has some unlikely benefactors. Wang Yuqing is one of them. Wang, a capable but deeply frustrated bureaucrat, is deputy administrator of China's National Environmental Protection Bureau. Every week, every month, his office receives dozens of reports of factories spewing ash into the sky or sludge into rivers and lakes. Often, the consequences are dire: environmental pollution is a major contributor to health problems in China.

But when Wang tries to persuade factories to change their ways or shut down, he often discovers the factories belong to ministries, with powerful benefactors in Beijing. So he does the same thing any Washington bureaucrat would do: he calls the press. Sometimes leading "60 Minutes"-style confrontations himself, Wang assembles a gaggle of state-controlled media, including the People's Daily and Chinese Central Television, to document offenses and face down angry factory managers. Many times, he says, the factories change their ways.

Journalism in China officially remains a tool of the state, a propaganda weapon to be wielded by the Communist Party, exclusively to serve its aims. But the state and the party have changed dramatically in 16 years since Deng Xiaoping introduced sweeping economic and social reforms in 1978. According to the official China Daily, China now has more than 2,200 newspapers—compared with 186 then. It also has 1,210 radio stations—many featuring call-in talk shows—and 976 television stations.

The state's relationship to the media has changed, too. A preoccupation with ideology has given way to a preoccupation with economic gain and national stature.

The result has been a more open and aggressive style of journalism. Some of it flows directly from the reforms: Xinhua, the official New China News Agency, now has financial markets reporters in Hong Kong, New York and London, and makes an earnest effort to cover serious news in most countries. When a Chinese-made rocket carrying a U.S. satellite exploded just after launch earlier this year, Xinhua sent a no-nonsense bulletin within moments—then followed it up several hours later with a second story bearing Beijing's ideological imprint in the form of hints that the satellite, not the rocket, caused the explosion.

The new, more honest journalism results in unwanted side effects: Chinese magazines increasingly focus on salacious topics like the personal lives of celebrities or violent crime. Stock-market newspapers often drive share prices up or down, sometimes apparently with backing from speculators. And most Chinese companies, and even some foreign companies, routinely pay to have their press conferences covered, for instance.

That's not to say the government has given up its control over the media. Ever since Taiwan's President Lee Teng-hui went on a private visit to Cornell University, his alma mater, in June, Beijing has been throwing verbal brickbats at Taipei on the front pages of its newspapers and through its television outlets. It has labeled him a "splittist" and a "traitor" for trying to establish more of an international identity for his island state, which Beijing considers a renegade province. It has also blasted the U.S.

Nor, as a few unfortunate journalists have discovered, is Beijing willing to tolerate anything that might undermine the state's authority. Xi Yang, a mainland-born journalist who worked for a Hong Kong newspaper, is serving a 12-year sentence for reporting what Beijing insists were state secrets—including plans for the government to sell some of its gold holdings. (Other newspapers had reported identical material, and some China watchers have speculated that Xi Yang was arrested and jailed for ulterior reasons.)

A welter of Chinese publications also has been banned this year. The latest to go was "Society's New Garden," a monthly that—despite its title—featured crime stories and gory illustrations (before the banning, its editor told a Hong Kong newspaper that "we tell things [that] happen in China"). Seven newspapers in northern Heilongjiang province face banning for similar reasons.

China recently ordered the three independent, English-language tourist newspapers that had cropped up in Beijing in recent years to stop publica-

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tion before the U.N.'s Fourth World Conference on Women in August and September, apparently fearful that they would report in detail on the potentially controversial happenings there, and then fall into the hands of ordinary Chinese who otherwise would see only government-processed news of the event. The conference's semiofficial daily, Earth News, faced circulation restrictions, apparently for the same reason.

Not unintentionally, such episodes cast a chill over independent-minded journalism. In the British colony of Hong Kong, which is scheduled to revert to Chinese sovereignty on July 1, 1997, local reporters say they must clear stories critical of China with their top editors, and one U.S.-owned, regional TV network based in the colony is said by its employees to have edited out pictures of the Taiwan flag and material considered offensive to Beijing; some of those stories originated with the parent network in the U.S.

David Chu, a local legislator who is close to Beijing, blames the press for its problems. "Yes, China's system is different than Hong Kong's," he says. "But don't blame China. This is self-censorship."

Indeed, just as Hong Kong is getting skittish about Beijing's totalitarian legacy, the world's more open ways are having a decidedly liberating effect on China's media. Most television companies in China now pick up most of their international news directly from Cable News Network, World Television News or Reuters Television, or U.S. networks, and some even pay to import programs in their entirety from abroad. Newspapers also use more agency material, and many publications have links with foreign magazines and newspapers.

Even Rupert Murdoch, patron of The New York Post, Britain's Sun, and Australia's tabloid press, has formed a joint venture with The People's Daily, mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party. He has been trying to gain a foothold for his empire in China since he bought Star-TV, the Hong Kong-based satellite-broadcasting network. Shortly after he acquired it, he delivered a speech boasting that satellite television would bring down totalitarianism. Not long after that, China started putting the squeeze on the then 30-million-plus households who received Star; Murdoch beat a hasty retreat from his earlier stance, canceling Star's broadcasts of BBC television news into China. Two years later he signed a deal with The People's Daily.

Most of the most enterprising journalism in China comes from unofficial quarters—and often people who have their eyes on the purse they can gain if they get away with it. "Society's New Garden," the crime publication shut down recently, was published officially by the Qinghai Academy of Social Sciences. That may seem odd, but in China only accredited news organizations and academic houses have publishing licenses. So upstart magazines emanate from universities or think tanks. Some take advantage of another perk of academia: access to the Internet. They pull down images, sometimes pornographic, then print them in magazines which sell well. Even within the government-run media, editors are more and more conscious of running stories that draw attention, rather than the somnambulant ideological treatises of yore. When the Hilton Hotel in Shanghai served a Chinese cadre spoiled food, he returned with a television crew and forced the hotel to apologize on the air. People in the city still remember that episode, and other journalists try to match it with scandals of their own.

That marks a huge change from the past. Just ask Shi, a heavyset man with a smooth skin, glistening hair and a 24-karat gold ring with a deep green jade stone. Today, he's a real-estate agent. But until two years ago he was a journalist in the remote western province of Xinjiang for 20 years.

In those days, he says, it wasn't like the West. You didn't decide what you were going to write and then write. There were "centers of interest," usually in tandem with political campaigns. If promoting light industry was the campaign, your articles found ways of promoting light industry.

And no article went directly to an editor. "If you write an article today, sometimes the Chinese government will say it is unfair or inaccurate," he says. "We didn't have that problem. Our articles all would be cleared first by the government."

Every article had a purpose. "We wrote about theoretical things, not about numbers and facts," he says. And those theoretical things were vital. People often had to attend ideological study sessions, at which they had to be able to quote from the newspapers, the organs of the Party. So newspapers had a natural circulation base.

That marked a change from the way Communist Chinese first treated the press. Dai Qing, a Nieman Fellow '92 who now does most of her writing in book form, has written a study about the origins of press controls in Communist China. They began, she says, during World War II, when Mao Tse-tung and his Communist army were ensconced in the loess caves of Yanan in north-central China, fighting the Japanese and honing their revolution. When the Communists first arrived after the Long March in 1937, ideological debate was openly printed in the rough newspapers being published there. But in the early 1940's, Mao came under attack. He responded by destroying the journalist who attacked him.

Mao's followers took the signal. Independent journalism and reporting of ideological debates ended. News organizations became, in Mao's own words, "organs" of the party.

Today, with the party's ideology essentially defunct in China, controls over the news media are relaxing. The party still may dictate what appears on the front page, above the fold of the main newspapers, or in editorial columns, but it worries about little else that isn't blatantly offensive to its goals.

But some journalists can't forget the old days. Chen Jizeng, a former Xinhua reporter who says he despised China's censors, now runs a magazine for immigrants around Washington called Asian Fortune. Asked by Hong Kong's South China Morning Post if he would ever return to journalism in China, he says: "I grew up in a society which is very precarious. I cannot predict what will happen there."■

Hong Kong's Diverse Media Watchful, Fearful

By Philip Bowring

It is easy to be pessimistic about the future of press freedom in Hong Kong after 1997. No one doubts that pressures have been mounting and will continue to mount for media at all levels to engage in self-censorship, primarily at the behest of owners. The businessmen who control the media are increasingly concerned at the commercial damage that can be inflicted, openly or surreptitiously, on those who are deemed to be "unpatriotic." That adjective is a code word tar-brushing those who criticize Beijing too vehemently or are too outspoken in their demands that Hong Kong actually enjoys the "high degree of autonomy" promised to it under the Sino-British Joint Declaration and the Basic Law (mini-constitution) devised by China for the future Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

Adding to concerns about the increasing tendency to kowtow to Beijing is the change of ownership of various publications. In several important instances, the newcomers have been businessmen known to have significant interests in China but with little prior interest in media ownership. Meanwhile, some established media are looking to expand into the "billion Chinese" mainland market and need to prove their patriotic credentials. In practice, China is now proving wary of any deals with outside media interests, whether foreign or compatriot Chinese. But the hopes are still there.

However, working to counteract some of these 1997-linked tendencies have been three important factors: first, the sheer commercialism and competitiveness of the Hong Kong media; second, technological change which in Hong Kong, as everywhere, is adding to the quantity of electronic media. Last and least noticed is the increased politicalization of Hong Kong society, which is dividing into interest groups that cannot be simply labeled "pro" or "anti" Beijing. Thus, though debate involving China is likely to become more muted and respectful, discussion of domestic issues may even become more lively.

For the last several years two interrelated issues have dominated affairs: Sino-British wrangling over constitutional issues, and the impact of Tiananmen on local sentiment and Beijing's perceptions of the dangers of liberalism. But that is now changing. The British are becoming increasingly irrelevant—and know it. Hong Kong democrats are increasingly having to face up to the reality of dealing with an illiberal Beijing. Beijing itself is no longer pre-occupied with Deng-inspired post-Tiananmen issues of com-

Photo by Reuter Ltd.

Hong Kong news photographers covering the September 1995 election, the last legislative election under British rule. The island reverts back to China in 1997.

Philip Bowring has reported on Asia for more than two decades. Born in England, he received a B.A. and an M.A. from Cambridge University, then became a financial reporter in London. In the early 1970's he began freelancing in Africa and the Mideast. Moving to Australia, he wrote for Finance Week, Business Week, The Guardian and The Far Eastern Economic Review. From Hong Kong he wrote for The Asian Wall Street Journal and The Financial Times, as well as the Review. In 1981 he became Deputy Editor and in 1989 Editor of the Review. Since 1992 he has been a freelance columnist for The International Herald Tribune and other journals as well as a consultant on Asian political and financial affairs.

bining economic liberalization with political rigidity—policies that helped the Hong Kong economy but seriously damaged its political development. Instead, Beijing is now concentrating its attention on the post-Deng era, but finds it hard to identify what the defining issues will be and who will represent them.

Not surprisingly then, given the fading away of the British and the lack of well defined policy on Hong Kong, pro-Beijing groups in Hong Kong are increasingly at odds among themselves over economic and social issues, and with Beijing bureaucrats over issues of local autonomy.

The situation is therefore more fluid than often imagined, and the outcome hard to predict. The dangers of increasing self-censorship are very real. However, so far at least, the Hong Kong media are much less subject to self-censorship than Western media operating in certain Asian countries. Thus Hong Kong media at times find it galling to be lectured by members of Western organizations about self-censorship when even the more cautious local newspapers are far more openly critical of China, far more willing to expose evils in China, than, for example, Western media with commercial interests in Singapore are to offend that sensitive regime.

If a large measure of press freedom is to survive 1997, it will be thanks almost entirely to local efforts rather than the big battalions from outside. They may not speak as bluntly as Rupert Murdoch but they appear to share his preference for the interests of shareholders over press freedom. It was Murdoch who in 1993 sold The South China Morning Post, Hong Kong's premier English language paper, for fear that its liberal editorial stance would stifle his ambitions of making money in China. Likewise, he took the BBC off the East Asian satellite footprint of Star TV to appease Beijing.

Murdoch sold the SCMP to Robert Kuok Hock-nien, a Malaysian who is one of the richest overseas Chinese businessmen, with big interests in China and regarded as "patriotic" by Beijing. This was Kuok's first venture into newspapers and many feared that he would shift to a pro-Beijing stance. In fact, so far very little has changed at the SCMP, which has taken a cautious but generally liberal stance on political issues. As the establishment newspaper, it has been suspected of self-censorship in some of its local coverage, particularly of business leaders. But there is nothing new in that. The Post has usually seen itself as a pillar of the established order.

Hong Kong media at times find it galling to be lectured by members of Western organizations about self-censorship when even the more cautious local newspapers are far more openly critical of China, far more willing to expose evils in China, than, for example, Western media with commercial interests in Singapore are to offend that sensitive regime.

However, many also believe that Kuok, a cautious and low-key figure, is biding his time and that the SCMP will shift its allegiance to the post-1997 establishment as that group's identity emerges from the large but nebulous cloud of pro-Beijing individuals and groups. The paper will adjust to the "new realities" rather more subtly than some Chinese language newspapers which have made more sudden, and perhaps premature, changes of editorial allegiance.

The SCMP takeover did, however, help spur the creation of a new English language rival, The Eastern Express, by The Oriental Daily News group headed by C.K. Ma. The ODN aimed to use some of the large profits from its top-selling, sensational and apolitical Oriental Daily, to challenge the SCMP with a heavyweight broadsheet with a strongly liberal flavor. The new paper did not come up to revenue hopes and Ma's management style proved incompatible with the expectations of several editors and many journalists. As a result, there was large staff turnover and various actions are now before the courts.

The ODN group's ability to fund The Eastern Express for as long as it took to get into the black, meanwhile, came under attack from another media magnate, the colorful Jimmy Lai. Lai made his first fortune from his Giordano chain of low budget fashion shops. His second came from a glossy magazine, Next, a combination of investigative journalism, gossip and glitz with enormous appeal to Hong Kong's newly affluent middle class. It was so successful that it prompted Ma to set up a rival, which also proved profitable, called Eastweek.

This year Lai has launched a direct assault on the ODN with the launch of Apple, a colorful daily mixing good news coverage with lurid photos and a dedication to the sensational which would make British tabloids blush. Apple's success on the newsstands is hurting several papers, but probably the ODN the most.

Both Jimmy Lai and C.K. Ma, bitter rivals and contrasts in personality, are figures who define the problems that China faces if it wants to transform the Hong Kong press into the kind of monolith seen in the fellow city-state of Singapore. The ODN was the creation of Ma's father and uncle. The elder Mas were involved in the heroin trade in the 1960's, receiving mention in the definitive book on that topic, "The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia." They left Hong Kong for Taiwan in the 1970's, one jumping bail while on narcotics charges.

The Ma family retains grassroots business connections in Hong Kong, as well as interests overseas (but not much in China). The Mas, despite past right-wing connections, are now viewed as apolitical but have never seen a need, so far at least, to prove their "patriotism." Their publications are driven by the need for cnmmercial success

through sales. Cartoons critical of Beijing and its local acolytes help sell Eastweek. Unvarnished news from China helps ODN.

The flamboyant Lai, meanwhile, delights in rude remarks about the Chinese leadership, one of which caused him to be removed from the board of Giordano. A brilliant salesman and self-publicist, he has made a virtue out of the amount of money he is prepared to lose both to make Apple a success and to promote press freedom in Hong Kong, whatever the future may hold.

The fact of the matter is that slavish pro-Beijing stances are bad for circulation. While Beijing may find it easy enough to deal with media owners who have no particular commitment to press freedom, or have big interests in China, or are large corporations run by managers, it will find it difficult to tackle the likes of Jimmy Lai head-on. There may be some toning down of coverage of Chinese and local politics. But suppression of the sheer vigor and diversity of the press would be very hard.

An interesting little example of commercial disadvantages of publications being perceived to lose their independence was provided last year by the once-respected magazine Pai Shing, bought from its ever-independent founder, Hu Chu-jen, by T. T. Tsui, a businessman best known for his links to the PLA. It quickly became so anodyne that readership slumped and the magazine was closed.

The same distrust of Beijing-driven doctrines applies to many journalists. While some newspapers have changed their editorial stances, reporters have generally not been so eager to please and continue to report truthfully, or write irreverently about local pro-Beijing figures.

Not that there are not genuine worries. The HK Journalists Association, which has been fortunate to have a succession of feisty and articulate leaders, expresses fears that self-censorship by reporters is increasing, and that some columnists classed as "anti-China" have ceased to appear. Ownership changes continue to cause worries. For instance, the respected up-market daily Ming Pao, founded by well-known writer Louis Cha, was seen by many to modify its liberal stance when businessmen Yu Pun-hoi bought out Cha. Now Yu himself has sold out because of his financial problems, giving control to Tiong Hiew King, a Malaysian Chinese timber tycoon with a growing media empire. A Singaporean Chinese with close China business connections, Oei Hong Leong, also now has a large stake.

Ming Pao has also been at the center of a case that goes to the heart of fears about reporting—particularly of Chinese affairs—after 1997. In October 1993, a Ming Pao reporter in China, Xi Yang, was arrested and the following year, despite much obeisance to Beijing by Ming Pao executives, sentenced to 12 years imprisonment for publishing "state secrets." The "secrets" were some arcane matters involving interest rates. His alleged accomplice at the Peoples Bank of China got 15 years. There have been several cases of Chinese being given very heavy sentences for passing alleged secrets to foreign correspondents. But this was the first time that a reporter from Hong Kong had been jailed.

The Xi Yang case continues to cast a shadow over Hong Kong media coverage of China. It also gives cause for concern about what will be regarded as state secrets in Hong Kong after 1997. Hong Kong has its own, British-derived, but seldom used, Official Secrets Laws. Local journalists worry not only that these will be more vigorously used in the future to prevent publication of facts unfavorable to the government; there is even more worrying that Hong Kong's future legal autonomy as laid down in the Basic Law does not extend into "acts of state"—the state, of course, being China. This phrase is evidently capable of very wide interpretation.

There are other potentially oppressive laws on the colonial statute book which have not been used for years but could readily be revived and used extensively to muzzle the press or detain government critics, as has happened in former British colonial territories in Southeast Asia.

While laws, as well as other forms of suasion, may be needed to muzzle a diverse and lively press, the same may not be necessary for the electronic media. The two terrestrial TV stations are vulnerable to pressure. So far this has not affected their local coverage significantly and they continue to run foreign news and feature footage critical of China. However, they have declined to show programs that Beijing found particularly offensive. For instance, although TVB, the dominant company, had the rights to the much-praised documentary on Chairman Mao, it declined to air it.

In theory the diversity of television has been strengthened by the introduction of Wharf Cable, a multi-channel cable system. However, this has so far added more to the quantity of programming than to diversity of views or depth of reporting. Satellite TV is another option and the future introduction of Cantonese programming on Star TV will add to the options. But given Murdoch's removal of the BBC from Star's East Asia footprint, it is highly unlikely that its Chinese programming, whether in Mandarin or Cantonese, will cause political controversy. The dominance of commercial interests over those of a varied and free media is apparent everywhere.

Perhaps the freest of Hong Kong's electronic media at present is, ironically, the government-run Radio Television Hong Kong, which operates several radio channels and produces some television programs which are aired on the commercial terrestrial channels. However, plans announced several years ago to make RTHK into a BBC-style independent corporation were endlessly delayed and have not been scrapped in the face of Chinese opposition. RTHK is thus seen by many as vulnerable to more overt political control, particularly when its current director, Cheung Man-yee, retires next year.

On balance, then, Hong Kong will continue to enjoy diversity of media. However, the freedoms that it shares with neighbors such as Thailand and Taiwan are likely to erode. Whatever Hong Kong people may want, the bottom line is that the values and system of government of the incoming sovereign power are very different from those of the outgoing.■

Singapore, a Model of Intimidation

By Stephen D. Wrage

In 1956, three years before the British granted Singapore its independence, future Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew sardonically protested colonial controls on the press and people:

"All you have to do is dissolve organizations and societies and banish or detain the key political workers in these societies. Then miraculously everything is tranquil and quiet on the surface. Then an intimidated press—and some sections of the press don't need intimidation because they have friendly owners—the press and the government-controlled radio together can regularly sing your praises and slowly and steadily the people are made to forget the evil things that have already been done! Or if these things are referred to again, they are conveniently distorted, and distorted with impunity, because there will be no opposition to contradict."

Since taking power in 1959, Lee has proven himself right. He has applied exactly those kinds of controls—actually he has greatly extended and refined them—and today Singapore is tranquil and prosperous.

The press was certainly not free in 1956, but it is much less free today. In 36 years, Lee Kuan Yew has engineered a seamless fabric of control over all forms of public expression: speech, the arts, the press, radio, TV and, to a significant extent, the Internet. In recent years he has attempted to extend his influence over foreign publications as well.

Lee's attitude toward the press was clear even before he took power in 1959. Leslie Hoffman, the Singapore-born Eurasian Editor-in-Chief of The Straits Times, expressed doubts about Lee's plans to join Singapore with the Federation of Malay States. Lee threatened that "any editor, leader-writer, sub-editor or reporter that strains relations between the Federation and Singapore will be taken in under the Preservation of Public Security Ordinance. We shall put him in and keep him in." When Lee took power, Hoffman fled Singapore and finished his career as Editor of The Straits Times Group in Malaysia.

The Preservation of Public Security Ordinance was an ugly colonial remnant; new laws to make it still easier to intercept dissent were soon passed by a parliament in which Lee controlled every seat. The Internal Security Act of 1963 empowered the government to prohibit the printing, publishing, circulation and possession of any material deemed counter to the "national interest, public order or society of Singapore." It is hard to imagine how one could defend oneself against so vague a charge as having circulated or possessed something "counter to the society," but the law in any case also permitted imprisonment without charges.

The Sedition Act of 1964 banned publications "with seditious tendencies." The Undesirable Publications Act of 1967 granted the government power to ban publications it considered "contrary to the public interest." The silencing of the press was the more significant since there was no opposition in parliament and no other voice to raise questions, criticisms or grievances.

The Newspaper and Printing Presses Act of 1974 required newspaper editors and printers to obtain licenses annually. At the same time all newspaper, magazine and book publishing operations (with the exception of a few small Tamil-language papers) were put under the control of Singapore Press Holdings, Ltd, The Straits Times Press or Times Publishing Company. Stock in these corporations was issued and the

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It is amusing and instructive to examine the business card of a Singapore journalist. The card of an employee of Singapore Press Holdings, lists on the back over 20 publications ranging from The Straits Times through The Sunday Times, The Business Times, The New Paper, a number of Chinese and Malay papers, several Singaporean knock-offs of foreign magazines with titles like Her World and Home & Decor—in short, every newspaper and magazine printed in Singapore. All are produced by his employer, Singapore Press Holdings, which is controlled by Lee's People's Action Party.

government promoted the fiction that these measures spread the ownership of the press widely among the people of Singapore. In fact ordinary citizens were allowed to buy only ordinary shares. Persons approved by the government were sold management shares, each with 200 times the voting power of ordinary ones.

The first head of Singapore Press Holdings was S. R. Nathan, who moved over from the post of Chief of the Internal Security Department. Lee apparently considered running the political police excellent training for an editor in chief. (Nathan has since moved on to be Singapore's current ambassador to the U.S.).

As he aged, Lee only grew more intent on control and intimidation. In July of last year The Straits Times printed an article by the leading creative writer of Singapore, a woman named Catherine Lim, who made a cautious and gentle plea to the People's Action Party to soften its style or risk creating an "affective divide" between themselves and the people. It struck many Singaporeans as excellent advice tactfully expressed.

Lee seized the occasion to introduce a new limit on political expression. "You have no right to set the out-of-bounds markers if you are not elected by the people. You want to move the O.B. markers, then you come out into politics and persuade the electorate." "Out-of-bounds markers" is his metaphor from golf for the lines within which discourse must proceed. Henceforth only those who ran for office were to be permitted to speak out on politics.

He went on to describe how he would confront those who questioned him. "I would isolate the leaders, the trouble-makers, get them exposed, cut them down to size, ridicule them, so that everybody understands that it's not such a clever thing to do. Governing does not mean just being pleasant. If you want a pleasant result, just as with children, you cannot just be pleasant and nice."

Lee went further: "Have a one-on-one. I'll meet you. You will not write an article—and that's it. One-to-one on TV. You make your point and I'll refute you....Or if you like, take a sharp knife, metaphorically, and I'll take a sharp knife of similar size; let's meet. Once this is understood, it's amazing how reasonable the argument can become...." Such language, and the fact that it was received without a murmur of dissent, indicate the depth of intimidation Lee has achieved on his small island and the degree to which Singaporeans' character as free people has deteriorated.

Press controls are kept arbitrary and ambiguous so as to encourage self-censorship. When one oversteps, or when the government chooses to declare one has overstepped, the punishment is severe. For Ms. Lim there was a severe and sustained public humiliation. For a non-Singaporean, the punishment goes further.

In October of last year Christopher Lingle, an American academic at the National University of Singapore, answered an aggressive op-ed piece written for The International Herald Tribune by Singapore's Permanent Secretary of Foreign Affairs and chief propagandist titled "You May Not Like It Europe, But This Asian Medicine Could Help." Lingle published an op-ed piece of his own in the same newspaper mocking some assertions in the first piece and declaring that some regimes in the region rely on "a compliant judiciary to bankrupt opposition politicians."

Lee chose to mobilize his judiciary against Lingle, and in so doing he confirmed the article's claim. Lee had the author charged with contempt of court—with bringing the judiciary of Singapore into disrepute. Since the article had not mentioned Singapore, it was necessary to prove that it could not have been referring to any other "regime in the region." To do so, Lee adduced 12 cases in which he had in fact successfully used the judiciary to bankrupt political adversaries. His quarrel was with the single word "compliant"—the courts had never been compliant; Lee had always been right.

The courts found for Lee and against Lingle, who fled the country and was stripped of about $20,000 in savings. Lee has declared his intention to pursue a personal libel suit in this case, though neither he nor Singapore was mentioned in the article. Last year another piece in The International Herald Tribune, which used the phrase "dynastic politics," provided the occasion for another suit, which resulted in $687,000 in damages to Lee, his son and a political associate.

These cases were part of a larger effort to extend government control over the foreign publications that appear in Singapore. Amendments to the Newspaper and Printing Presses Act dating from 1986 make it easier to punish what the regime calls "errant" publications, making it legal for officials to "declare any newspaper published outside Singapore to be a news-

paper engaging in the domestic politics of Singapore." Newspapers so designated may not be sold or possessed for sale without prior approval of the government. The government's representative may also restrict the number of copies to be circulated in Singapore and require that each copy be marked with a serially numbered tag—a practice called "gazetting" which is ideally suited to hinder, delay and complicate distribution of time-sensitive materials.

Even as it imposes such controls, the government portrays itself as the victim of bullying foreign writers. The Michael Fay incident, in which an American boy vandalized cars and was flogged for it, was described in The Straits Times as a case of plucky little Singapore resisting pollution by outsiders and standing up to the attacks of William Safire, The New York Times columnist, and the most powerful opinion makers of the world. A Straits Times columnist declared that the most significant story of the year "was how Singapore and Singaporeans withstood the cultural onslaught. Never had the system here been subjected to such a ferocious attack, from the most gifted columnists whose learned words strike terror there, to the most powerful man in the world, the President of the United States no less." The title of the most popular of several books written by Singaporeans about Michael Fay was "The Flogging of Singapore."

The Fay episode was one of many events the government seized on to justify its control and to explain why its repression is both necessary and healthy for Singapore. On March 18, 1995, the day after George Stephanopoulos complained that coverage of the White House was too aggressive, the following headlines appeared in a single issue of The Straits Times: "Revulsion Against Media Excesses Even in US;" "Singapore Newspapers Praised;" "MP Makes Call to Tighten Censorship;" "Adversarial Press Has Gone Too Far;" "S'pore Must Open Windows But Swat the Flies."

Modern technology offers both challenges and opportunities to the censors and watchers. Television, a government monopoly in Singapore, provides access to foreign programs only by cable. Satellite dishes are banned in Singapore and neighborhood watchers are called on to report those who would dare erect a receiver. Internet links provide another line of contact, but this is one technology that the government can monitor with great precision. The author was assured by officials at the university that electronic mail is carefully monitored and on one occasion the hard drives of personal computers at the university were searched and contents were impounded.

Most recently, the government has become distressed over critical postings on a newsgroup that is called Soc.Culture.Singapore. It called on the youth wing of the PAP to attempt to flood the Internet with postings and newsgroups more favorable to Singapore. A recent check of the Internet using Netscape's Netsearch feature and the keyword "Singapore" brought up hundreds of hits. Among the first 100 hits, over eighty-five were in some sense officially sponsored, most of them home pages offering propaganda or bowdlerized and censored postings reprinted and labeled "a selection of the best from Soc.Culture.Singapore newsgroup."

Singapore's universities and libraries are as tightly controlled as the press. No student may enter a university unless certified as politically reliable by the administrators of the high school or junior college he or she attended. Department heads warn professors to watch what they say about Singapore. Students are recruited and required by the Internal Security Department to observe and report on their teachers. Singaporean officials are not discreet or apologetic about their determination to control. The chairman of the department where the author taught kept a small sign propped up on an easel on his desk and aimed to meet the eye of those he called in for a conference. It read, "An ounce of loyalty is worth more than a pound of cleverness."

In the computerized catalog of the university library, books and periodicals were tagged with location codes. Many of these were familiar, like BP for Bound Periodicals and MS for Main Stacks, but it was startling to come across BC which meant Banned Collection. Seriously offensive works were listed as "in processing." Some had been in processing for a decade. At times the censorship is comically patronizing. The film "Schindler's List" was shown in Singapore, but the government insisted on cutting out scenes. Steven Spielberg argued that if they wanted to show his film, they would show it as he made it. The Singapore/Solomonic solution was to show the film only in a theater specially equipped with a red light and a bell. When an offensive scene was about to begin, the light would flash, and all good Singaporeans were expected to close their eyes. When the bell sounded, they would know it was safe to open their eyes again.

Does Singapore matter? Not in itself, perhaps. It is a very small country, smaller than any of a dozen cities in China. It matters, however, to the extent to which it is a model in the rest of Asia. It is a pioneer in the technology of social control, and its methods are being attentively studied by visiting teams from Beijing, Jakarta, Hanoi, Bangkok and elsewhere. Most such visits are announced and trumpeted by the government as confirmation of Singapore's success, then discussed in worried tones because Singaporeans obsessively fear that the others will catch up and take away Singapore's competitive edge, which may well be happening.

In the long run, Singapore may not matter because it has crippled itself. Such an intimidated society will not prosper in a competitive, information-intensive world. A society so comprehensively deprived of freedom of thought and expression will not soon recover its character, its creativity, its resourcefulness or its depth.■

Indochina Learning Western Ways

By Sara Colm

At a recent training of women journalists in Laos conducted by the Indochina Media Memorial Foundation (IMMF) participants were asked: what is the role of a journalist? "To be the organ of the party and the sharp weapon of the state," said a newly hired employee at the State Radio Station. Another participant, who has worked for the state news agency for nine years, confessed she had never conducted an interview.

By week's end the participants had learned to write hard news and feature leads and structure stories in the "inverted pyramid" style. They were introduced to the concept of not simply publishing verbatim speeches by national leaders, but to instead look for a fresh angle or "news peg." And rather than tediously building to a conclusion—and losing readers in the process—reporters were shown how to hook readers with concisely written lead paragraphs that include the W's and H—plus, most importantly, to answer every reader's question: "So what?"

By the end of the two-week session, 11 of the 18 participants had published stories in The Vientiane Times, a state-published English-language newspaper. "I learned a lot about writing," said Phimmasone Vilaylack, 44. "In my first story, my lead was buried at the very bottom—it was like a soup without water!"

"Western standards of journalism may not be applicable here," said another participant. "But whether applicable or not, we should still be exposed to it—and Western journalists can learn about our opinions as well."

The IMMF was founded in 1992 by Vietnam War photojournalist Tim Page, a British freelance who worked for Time magazine and wire services, in memory of colleagues killed or missing during the war. In addition to raising funds to construct a memorial to slain journalists on all sides of the war, the foundation's mandate is to train reporters from Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia. With funding from the Asia Foundation and the Freedom Forum, a first training program was held in Bangkok in May 1994 for 15 journalists.

The training program consisted of classroom lectures on the nuts and bolts of journalism—everything from conducting interviews to fact-checking and writing leads—followed by guest speakers that included Newsweek reporter Ron Moreau, Bob Karniol of Jane's Defense Weekly, and Bangkok Post Editor Sanitsuda Ekachai.

The students also visited Bangkok-based media agencies such as Cable News Network, Voice of America, The Associated Press and several English and Thai-language dailies. During short internships at various news agencies, the students—mostly from the state-run press in their own countries—had an opportunity to interview a Thai member of parliament embarking on a hunger strike in a pro-democracy bid as well as observe a lively session of parliament, in which members openly debated charges of drug trafficking among their colleagues.

"In Vietnam it's unheard of for reporters to have such easy access to government meetings," commented one participant. "That's what press freedom is all about."

In October 1995 the IMMF conducted a month-long training course in environmental reporting for 14 journalists from Indochina and two from Thailand. All four countries share similar environmental problems, with the advanced devastation in Thailand—as well as the advanced level of environmental reporting by the Thai press—providing important lessons for the Indochinese reporters.

After a week of classes in Bangkok, participants headed up-country to Chiang Mai, where they stayed overnight in a hill-tribe longhouse to discuss slash-and-burn agriculture with Akha villagers, hiked though a rain forest with a Thai biologist and interviewed low-income Thai workers who have complained of environmental and health effects of lignite mining and electronics factories.

"Some of these issues know no boundaries," commented participant Ek Madra, a reporter for The Cambodia Daily. "For example, if you put dams on the Mekong in one country it will affect the people and the environment downstream in other countries."

Lucy Wooten

Sara Colm is former Managing Editor of The Phnom Penh Post. Prior to that she served as Editor-in-Chief of The Tenderloin Times, a community newspaper published in English, Cambodian, Vietnamese and Laotian in San Francisco's inner city "Tenderloin" district. She has worked as a training consultant for the Indochina Media Memorial Foundation since 1993.

Laos—State-Controlled

In all three countries of Indochina the government exerts a degree of control over the press while at the same time showing a growing—if fluctuating—openness toward Western influences and training programs.

In the last year, the Lao government has authorized several in-country training programs to be conducted by Western media organizations. In May, the U.S.-based Freedom Forum conducted a course session on investigative reporting. The IMMF's training program for women reporters in August was held at the request of Somsanouk Mixay, director of the Department of Mass Media and Editor of The Vientiane Times, the only English-language newspaper in Laos. The paper, which began publishing in April 1994 with a circulation of 1,000, had no reporters until recently; instead it relied on copy from the state news agency, its two Lao editors, or foreign volunteers from Burma and Australia assigned to work at the paper. After the IMMF training course the paper hired one of the participants and brought several others on as freelances. According to Mixay, there are about 65 reporters in Laos. There are two daily Lao-language newspapers: Pasason (The People), published by the Communist Party with a circulation of 10,000, and Vientiane Mai (New Vientiane), published by the Ministry of Culture and Information, with a circulation of 4,000. While Vientiane Mai is the more respected publication of the two, it shies away from political coverage and can hardly be considered an enterprising newspaper, according to IMMF trainer Jacques Leslie, who conducted an assessment of the media in Laos in 1994.

"Neither paper runs any articles critical of the government, although Vientiane Mai used to carry letters with complaints about officials," says Leslie. "But this feature disappeared when the Ministry of Information and Culture took over the paper in March 1994. A writer who subsequently criticized the ministry for its lethargic bureaucracy was forced to resign."

Leslie says that both dailies have carried stories about corruption, although almost always in the form of reports of trials in which officials were found guilty. The primary source of information in the country, and thus the most influential, is the state news agency Khao Sane Pathet Lao (KPL). At best, most of KPL's 70 journalists and photographers in Vientiane and the provinces have received three months of journalism training, and the agency is woefully in need of resources such as computers and communications facilities to put out the daily 8-page mimeographed publication.

Indochinese journalists participating in a training program interview a Thai forestry expert.

In terms of news content and editorial policy, government guidelines are issued to KPL every week. "They give us directives about which events we have to focus on this month or this week," a KPL official said. "All the publications have to base themselves on the guidelines."

Bouabane Varakhoun, vice minister of Information and Culture and president of the Lao Journalists' Association, acknowledges that the quality of the Lao press is "very low." The main reason, he said, is the dearth of training programs. Should a reporter be fortunate enough to attend a course abroad, he added, "they come back and want to innovate, but they find obstacles, because their editors haven't been exposed to these things."

Cambodia—Media Crackdown

Before the launching of the United Nations peacekeeping operation in March 1992, Cambodia's print media was very similar to that of Laos today: four state-controlled newspapers and a national news agency. But under U.N. auspices a flurry of bold new publications hit the newsstands during the 1993 election campaign. Today more than 35 privately owned newspapers publish in the capital. They range from a flashy Thai-financed daily to shoestring operations started by university students or human rights activists.

While the country's experiment with freedom of the press has been brief, Cambodia's two-year-old coalition government has begun to crack down on voices of dissension.

In August, the government passed a press law—vehemently opposed by human rights and media activists—that calls for criminal penalties for publishing material that "may affect national security or political stability." In more than a dozen instances over the last year the government has suspended, shut or confiscated newspapers or filed criminal charges against reporters. Five papers are currently under legal action—including the English-language bi-weekly, The Phnom Penh Post—and

one Cambodia editor has been jailed twice for filing controversial reports. Three journalists known for criticizing the government have died under suspicious circumstances over the last year.

The attitude of the Cambodian government is reflected in the comments of Sum Mean, director of the state news service, Agence Khmer de Presse. "Private journalists need to respect national concerns," says Sum. "They want more and more freedom, but don't respect national security. Especially during a time of war, national concerns must come first, professional concerns second. At other times it can be different."

Decades of warfare and the economic and political isolation of Cambodia have hampered the skills of journalists in Cambodia, many of whom lack training or resources such as typewriters or tape recorders. Many reporters lack basic background in history, arithmetic or geography—not to mention proficiency in writing in Khmer or in typing, foreign languages or using computers.

Pin Samkhon, president of the Khmer Journalists Association, says there should be stricter standards. "Some editors just sit in their office, watch the news on TV, and write articles," he says. "They don't interview anyone or go out."

Continuing the civil war on the editorial pages and acting more like political partisans than professional journalists, many editors engage in vicious mudslinging with their rivals or pursue personal vendettas. Often little distinction is made between editorial writing and news reporting. These publications fill their pages with rumors and sensational accounts of crime, sex, and violence, accompanied by lorid pictures of naked women or dead bodies.

Scathing editorials contain language such as "If You're Not Shit, Don't Shit" and cartoons show officials or other newspaper editors in a racist or derogatory light and depict them as pigs or dogs—extremely offensive characterizations in Cambodian culture.

"Many Cambodian newspapers only reflect the past—the anger, the revenge, the killings," says Samkhon of the journalists' association. "That's what sells newspapers." While critical of certain publications for sloppy and reckless reporting, the association believes that no newspaper should be closed down.

Nuon Nonn is Editor of Domnang Pale Prek (Morning News), one of the publications currently targeted for prosecution by the government. He first achieved notoriety in July 1994 when he was imprisoned and subsequently tried for implicating top government officials and generals in an abortive coup attempt. His case drew international attention, with Amnesty International calling for his release.

Nuon is no stranger to the perils of practicing journalism in Cambodia. As a newspaper editor during the Lon Nol regime during the 1970's, Nuon was beaten by unknown assailants for publishing his controversial views. Lon Nol, under attack by North Vietnamese and Khmer Rouge, tolerated little opposition, as the scars on Nuon's forehead still attest.

Nuon says he has no reporters on staff. "We don't have reporters because the reporters are all corrupt, paying ministers for information or extorting money from them in order to get good coverage." He said he obtains the news from government sources dropping by or calling him.

In contrast to the more flamboyant and unruly members of Cambodia's press corps, a handful of independent journalists are quietly risking their lives and their pocketbooks to put out hard-hitting newspapers. One such publication is Neak Chea, one of the only papers to focus on human rights issues. Published by a Cambodian human rights organization, Neak Chea obtains tips on abuses and political intimidation from members of the rights group's provincial chapters and when possible sends a "fact-finding mission" out to check on details before publishing a story.

A more polished publication with a crisp color layout was the fortnightly Kamlang Sethakech Tmei (The Cambodian Business Weekly), which folded earlier this year because of financial problems. Editor Men Narong, an overseas Khmer from France, required his reporters to interview a minimum of five sources for any one story, and did not shy away from controversial topics such as illegal logging, bureaucratic inefficiency and the impact of high-rise commercial development.

Vietnam—Training Needed

In Vietnam, there are 7,200 journalists, 375 newspapers and magazines and approximately 100 radio and television stations, according to Nguyen Xuan Luong, president of the Vietnamese Journalists Association. The country's rich literary tradition and high literacy rate is reflected in the quality of writing and poetry published in newspapers, although the content is limited by the fact that by law, all Vietnamese newspapers are published by the government or Communist Party organizations.

"Vietnamese journalists I have come into contact with to date are very sophisticated and knowledgeable, far advanced over those I have met in Cambodia and Laos," says Paul Ryan, a Knight International Press Program Fellow, who has trained reporters in all three countries. "Still there is little in the way of original reporting and in the English-language press, a great if sad reliance on the translation of articles from official government Vietnamese-language newspapers."

Nguyen The Thanh, Editor-in-Chief of the popular newspaper Phu Nu (Women), says her publication's weak point is the low English level of her reporters. "Very few are fluent in reading or writing in English," she says. "We are trying to get all reporters fluent in English so they can take advantage of training programs abroad."

Huynh Son Phuoc, deputy editor of Tuoitre (Youth) says that Vietnamese reporters need training in computer layout and photojournalism, as well as tips on how to write more simply and clearly. "They also need help in developing independent thinking to find out what is the problem rather than writing for the authorities," says Huynh. "Before reporters didn't have the right to speak as independent journalists. But with the government declaring the new policy of doi moi (renovation), it's a good chance to re-train the reporters."■

Thailand: Media's Growing Influence

By Thepchai Yong

An army general who commanded the troops that killed and injured dozens of pro-democracy demonstrators in May 1992 was denied a promotion in this year's recent military reshuffle. Two veteran politicians accused by the United States of being involved in drug trafficking were blocked from joining the government emerging from Thailand's most recent general election, in July. And two of the country's most respected senior Buddhist priests fell from grace in unrelated sex scandals.

These people have one thing in common to blame for their misfortunes: the media. It was the media that objected to the general's promotion and the two politicians' rise to power. And it was the media that brought down the priests whose influence had made them untouchable. These incidents—and there are plenty of other examples—are a good reminder for anyone who may have doubts about the growing influence of the Thai media today.

The Thai media are wielding a kind of power not seen before. It is generally agreed that the role of the media will have a great bearing on how Thai politics will evolve. Their influence has grown to the point that many critics believe that they help shape much of today's political agenda. Government leaders and bureaucrats, mindful of the media influence on public opinion, take heed of media criticisms on major issues. Members of the public attach great expectations to the media's role in meeting the challenge posed by Thailand's continuing experiment with democracy.

The turning point came during the 1992 pro-democracy uprising. While all the state-owned broadcast media toed the government line, a few privately owned newspapers defiantly gave factual accounts of what was happening. They became the only reliable source of information during those few most tumultuous days. The Nation ignored a government censorship order and went ahead with vivid reports and pictures of the bloody crackdown of pro-democracy demonstrators by army troops. One front page photo, showing a group of policemen beating a young protester already on his knees, came to symbolize state brutality, sparking even greater outrage.

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Despite various forms of intimidation, including a threat of closure and blocking of newspaper delivery routes, The Nation continued to publish graphic accounts of the uprising. Eventually, the military-backed government headed by Gen. Suchinda Kraprayoon fell.

"As a responsible newspaper, we have the obligation to tell the truth to the people. Crises are always a good test of a newspaper's worth," said Suthichai Yoon, Editor-in-Chief of The Nation.

While the print media had traditionally been at the forefront in championing press freedom in Thailand, it is the broadcast media that have seen the most remarkable development since the political crisis.

Popular public sentiments have forced authorities to loosen their control on the broadcast media. Until recently, all the five television and the almost 400 national and local radio stations, which are owned by the government and the armed forces, served primarily as sources of entertainment and more often than not as state propaganda machinery. Their whitewashed account of the 1992 uprising, in which

Thepchai Yong is one of Thailand's most prominent journalists. Since September 1, he has been News Editor at Thailand's first privately owned television station, Independent Television. Before that, he was News Editor of The Nation, a leading independent English-language daily. For its bold coverage of the May 1992 pro-democracy uprising, The Nation won several awards including the 1992 Press Freedom Award from the U.S.-based Committee to Protect Journalists. Yong is the brother of 1980 Nieman Fellow Suthichai Yoon.

dozens of pro-democracy demonstrators were massacred, led to popular demands for independent broadcast media.

The consequence has been the emergence of a new brand of radio journalism. For the first time, authorities have consented to allowing private news organizations to operate news programs on state radio. Making full use of their new-found freedom, radio journalists for the last three years have performed with an admirable degree of professionalism. Though television is still under a much tighter state control, some of the existing five TV stations have become much bolder in presenting views critical of those in power. The various radio and TV talk show and call-in programs have become a new public forum for members of the public to air their opinions. Sensitive political and social issues, debates on which were limited only to news pages in the past, are for the first time discussed openly on air.

Again as a direct legacy of the 1992 uprising, Thailand will soon have its first independent television station, a move that will significantly further advance the process of democratization. Key staffers of the new station have come from one of Thailand's leading English-language dailies, The Nation, which is noted for its consistent stand against military dictatorship and political corruption. Media analysts believe that the advent of independent television will inevitably lead to a further liberalization of the broadcast media.

The print media, however, have themselves occasionally come under fire for their sensational approaches. Their adversarial attitude toward politicians sometimes borders on bias. Misguided crusading journalism as practiced by some dailies sometimes distorts their positive contributions. Readers, while sharing the media's sentiments on many issues, complain about the lack of substance on news pages. This failure has resulted in wider debate about the direction of the Thai press. For the first time, the media themselves have come under close public scrutiny. And for many, the higher profile of broadcast media comes as a much welcome balance to the dominant role of the print media.

Thai photographers, left, and policemen, right, crowd around a press conference on a recent case involving stolen jewelry.

While the broadcast media are still far from dominating all media, they have become an important theater of politics as the most recent general election has demonstrated. Leading politicians scrambled to join political talk shows to get their campaign messages across. But those with skeletons in their closets also had to pay their price for the bright lights: being excoriated on the spot by aggressive interviewers. Broadcast media were generally commended for their efforts to get politicians to talk seriously about issues and answer relevant questions. They succeeded to a large degree in raising political awareness among the otherwise politically passive Thais.

The more liberal media atmosphere is made possible largely by the fast-growing and increasingly vocal city middle class which played an instrumental role in the toppling of the military-supported government in 1992. More than a decade of unprecedented economic growth has produced a new generation of entrepreneurs and intellectuals who are demanding greater political say and more freedom of expression. The media's negative political coverage since the July election clearly reflects the middle class's disgust with the political patronage system prevalent among the ruling parties.

The Thai media, especially the print press, have traditionally been looked upon by many Thais as a bulwark against military dictatorships. But in today's new political environment, where the possibility of a military intervention is more remote than ever, the middle class see the media as one of the few institutions with enough credibility to wage a crusade against the country's political ills. The unprecedented press freedom, which many believe to be irreversible, has enabled both the print and broadcast media to maintain pressure on the scandal-plagued ruling coalition. And if there are to be any serious moves toward political reforms in Thailand, there is no question that the push will come from the media.■

Vietnam Press Still Hampered by Ideology

By Robert Templer

When Secretary of State Warren Christopher came to Hanoi to establish diplomatic relations with Vietnam, he took the opportunity to hand down some advice on the merits of democracy. "A powerful revolution of ideas has swept the world," he told students at the Institute of International Relations. Free markets and open societies were in the ascendancy; isolation and repression brought only poverty and despair. "Governments cannot control the movement of ideas in the Information Age even if they want to," he warned.

Well, some of them still can and still do. Christopher is not known for rousing the masses to the barricades but Vietnam would not allow its 72 million people to hear his cautious and tactful speech. Satellites may have sent his words around the world and computers sped them through the Internet but not one Vietnamese newspaper printed them.

Market reforms have brought dramatic changes to Vietnam since the Communist Party began to move away from a planned economy in 1986. An entrepreneurial spirit has been freed, economic growth has averaged more than 8 percent annually for the last five years and a new vigor has returned to a country broken by war and a bleak, harsh Marxism. The media has reflected many of these changes—supermodels have edged aside Stakhanov, color has infused pages that were once filled with leaden propaganda and newspapers now print stories of real interest to real people. This year 350 publications will fight for circulation and advertising, their ranks swelled by 90 newcomers since 1990. Editors outline plans for sports weeklies, economic dailies, special supplements and co-operation projects with foreign publishing giants. Suddenly the language is more multimedia than Marx. But underlying all the change is a government policy that can be summed up in one word—"control."

The Vietnamese media, which is entirely owned by government or Communist Party institutions, no longer serves up the monolithic view of society it did until 1986. But neither will it push debate beyond the boundaries set by a party that feels itself beset by opposition from overseas and unsure of its ideology at home.

In the late 1980's, the government briefly unleashed a powerful force—its own people. Party General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh encouraged writers "not to bend the nibs of their pens" with propaganda but to write the truth about a country weighed down with economic and political problems. Like long-caged birds, writers emerged cautiously as many had been purged in the 1950's after being similarly encouraged to criticize the Party. But as their confidence grew, sharper articles appeared in the press, journalists began to tackle the policies that plunged Vietnam into poverty after 1975 and editorialists railed at a government veined through with corruption. Novels and short stories that shed the heroic tone of Socialist Realism were published and officially applauded, even such untouchable icons as Ho Chi Minh were subject to veiled examination. A group of ex-Vietcong and North Vietnamese soldiers grouped together in the Club of Former Resistance Fighters and published a journal that was intensely critical of the government. "Doi Moi"—the Vietnamese words for "renovation" that are used as shorthand for the reforms—had reached the media.

It didn't last long. Communism collapsed in Eastern Europe and Vietnamese leaders shuddered at the killing of the Ceaucescus and the indignities heaped on their close friend Erich Honecker. Writers were jailed, those who called for political reforms, even former soldiers, were branded "reactionaries" and several prominent figures in the media left the country or retired. A pendulum weighted with fear had once again swung back on its path between liberalism and repression, between a fear of being left behind by the world and the knowledge that openness could widen the cracks.

Since then the Communist Party has seen an increasing decentralization of power and an inevitable ideological

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deflation that has made it even more reluctant to cede any more control over the media. Indeed it has been tightening restrictions in recent years, replacing independent-minded editors and urging greater attention to the party's authority. At the Sixth Congress of the Association of Vietnamese Journalists in March, Communist Party General Secretary Do Muoi reminded the audience that they were there "to serve the government and the people."

In Vietnam, a glossier, more entertaining and essentially trivial press.

"In Vietnam, press freedom is meant to serve the interests of the entire people, the whole country and the new political system," Muoi said, serving up the argument of collective rights taking priority over the individual that is often used by authoritarian Asian governments to justify their tight hand on the press. "We will not allow the abuse of press freedom by people who seek to destabilize the socio-political situation in our country and impede us in our development and our integration into the world community."

Reforms have brought many improvements but the press is still one of the most tightly restricted in the world, operating in an environment where publications can be closed overnight by government fiat. Nguoi Hanoi (The Hanoian), a weekly owned by the capital's Arts and Literature Association, was shut down earlier this year after it said people were "worried and sad" about a government ban on firecrackers that are much enjoyed during the Tet lunar new year holidays. The magazine's editor and others responsible for the article were ordered to write "self- criticisms" after being accused of violating "press laws." Other newspapers had also written about the ban in critical terms but their coverage swiftly and unsurprisingly turned to the government's success in ridding Vietnam of such a wasteful and dangerous tradition.

The control of the media by the Brezhnevian ideological bureaucracy is most evident in the two main national dailies—Nhan Dan (The People) and Quan Doi Nhan Dan (The People's Army), where the chill winds of the 1950's still blow. Marxist-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh thought provide the vocabulary although the ideas are grounded more in the rich vein of nationalism that the party has always mined. Much is made of Vietnam's many enemies, although exactly who these might be nowadays is never spelled out. Foreigners are always up to no good, always undermining national security or subverting the traditional culture of Vietnam. Pornography and state secrets seem to be particular obsessions of the editorial writers, a self-appointed vanguard of those fighting the spread of these by pernicious foreign forces. In these gray pages, Vietnamese are still lantern-jawed heroes, peasants, workers and members of the intellectual class toiling together under the guidance of an omniscient leadership. It is here the party and the army remind themselves of their glory days, their victories at war and their once formidable capacity to unite the country.

The inside workings of these newspapers are mostly hidden from view although many interesting insights into the Vietnamese press were given by Bui Tin, an eminent journalist and former deputy editor of Nhan Dan who now lives in Paris. After years working as a war correspondent for Quan Doi Nhan Dan, Bui Tin ran the party daily in the late 1980's. Journalists at Nhan Dan had begun a debate on whether the paper genuinely served "the people," or was merely an official gazette for government announcements and speeches by members of the Politburo. For a while the newspaper began to adopt a more critical tone but this did not last long. When in August 1989 the Solidarity trade union won elections in Poland, the party daily ran a furious editorial written by the head of the party's ideological committee, urging Poles to close ranks and fight this counter-revolutionary coup by reactionary forces. This earned a rebuke from the Polish Embassy and, according to Bui Tin, made the newspaper "a laughing stock" among Hanoians.

As Communist parties crumbled across Europe, Nhan Dan increasingly reverted to its earlier tone and a more compliant editor was chosen. Bui Tin's articles on the arrogance of the Communist leadership after their victory over South Vietnam in 1975 and the corruption that had become central to

the political system were censored or not published and he grew increasingly disillusioned that the changes that had swept the world would not reach Vietnam. He left in 1990 to attend a conference organized by the French Communist Party newspaper L'Humanité in Paris and remains there, stripped of his party membership and often viciously denounced by the newspapers that once employed him.

In his book "Following Ho Chi Minh," Bui Tin described the Vietnamese press as "antediluvian" and journalists as "suppressed and annihilated" by the system of party and government control. "There is a whole range of bureaucratic journalists who specialize in hectoring and intimidating their readers. In the spirit of class warfare, they learned mechanistically about the power of the press to make propaganda, although it is really distorting the truth and is altogether wrong," he wrote. In the book, he describes a system where bureaucracy has paralyzed imagination, where the demands of a tiny élite outweigh everything else and life is dominated by the purges, the factionalism and the corruption that are essential themes of Vietnamese politics. In one incident that sounds as though it comes from a play by Vaclav Havel, editors at a newspaper were rebuked for innocently placing a picture of an anti-aircraft brigade so that the gun pointed across the page at a photograph of Ho Chi Minh. After 1990, the list of taboo subjects—political pluralism, the notion of open political debate, even the crimes of Stalin—grew and a number of hard- liners were appointed to key posts. The party appointed eight hard-line journalists to the Central Committee, the largest number ever, indicating the importance that has been attached to the media and propaganda as the leadership increasingly feels itself under siege from what it calls the "forces of peaceful evolution."

> "Do not look unless it is in accordance with the rites; do not listen unless it is in accordance with the rites; do not speak unless it is in accordance with the rites; do not move unless it is in accordance with the rites." Confucius. The Analects. XII.1

For most of those who work in the media, the machinery of control is almost frictionless, requiring little input of energy from the party or the security system. People do not become journalists unless they know the rules and are aware that self-censorship is a key to survival. "It isn't much different from life before 1975," said a prominent journalist in Ho Chi Minh City who easily made the change from editing newspapers in Saigon to running one in Hanoi. "You weren't allowed to question the leadership back then and you aren't allowed to question the leadership now." Few journalists seem to chafe at the restrictions they work under, although many privately express boredom at the more ideological aspects of their work. Questioning the system is obviously discouraged. A young journalist who asked a top official at a press conference if journalists would still have to refer all stories on the United States to the Foreign Ministry for censorship after President Bill Clinton announced diplomatic ties, met with a savage look and an evasive answer. He was later rebuked for publicly remarking on the system and breaching the pretense of press freedoms.

There is little questioning of the press by readers either; to many people its repetition and stock phrases seem familiar, rather than relentlessly dull. They are part of the political culture and owe as much to Confucianism as they do to the country's professed adherence to Marxism. The Vietnamese generally dislike the Chinese—they have been rivals for about two millenniums and while the Chinese may have named the country "An Nam" or "Pacified South" that was more a reflection of wishful thinking than reality. With this history of enmity, most Vietnamese refuse to acknowledge the Confucianist tradition in their political thinking but it remains strong and explains how political leaders and journalists are able to repeat formulations that seem so distant from reality. Confucianism lays great stress on "correct thinking" which comes from strict adherence to proper behavior, i.e. carrying out the correct political rites. Western political thinking tends to see "correct thinking" as producing, rather than being produced by, proper behavior. In the political ritual of Con-

A Vietnam cyclist at a newsstand.

fucianist societies repeating certain phrases, even those that bear little relationship with the real situation, is seen as socially responsible.

Outside the realm of politics, journalists have been able to express their views more openly and without such heavy constraints of tradition, releasing significant amounts of pressure on the government. Issues such as corruption, poverty, prostitution, the labor movement and abuses in the workplace have come under scrutiny by newspapers that increasingly see themselves as responsible to a readership. Lao Dong (Labor), the trade union newspaper, has been foremost among a new breed of campaigning publications that have taken on key social issues without pushing beyond the boundaries. "Vietnamese workers are interested in the fight against problems that afflict the country," said Editor-in-Chief Pham Huy Hoan. "Our writers are very active investigating cases of corruption as these are of great interest to our readership. Another important issue for us is the conflict between employers and workers."

While this newspaper and others such as Nguoi Lao Dong (The Worker), Thanh Nien and Tuoi Tre (both mean Youth) have had some success in keeping corruption and labor issues on the agenda, a little freedom has occasionally been a dangerous thing. These newspapers have waged remorseless campaigns against foreigners that owe much more to sheer xenophobia than concern about workers' rights. In a few cases, they have become arenas for vendettas and an apparent need to vent steam building up in society over growing inequalities. A senior union official acknowledged that newspapers singled out foreigners in cases of labor abuses because the unions felt they had no other way of dealing with the problem. Vietnamese management could be subjected to self-criticism or the sanction of the law, but the easiest way to deal with managers from overseas was by vilification in the press. In almost all cases involving foreigners, the reporters neglect to speak to the person being accused of wrongdoing in their newspaper. There are no libel laws, no right to reply and no avenues for redress if one is wronged by the media. Journalists earn little money with salaries as low as $30 a month. This leaves them open to the temptations of bribes and payments for attending news conferences or giving interviews, temptations that are commonplace.

Editors often brush off such complaints by pointing to their young, inexperienced staff and say while they want to improve ethics and writing, their priority has had to be bringing in younger people. "To improve the newspaper we had to replace older journalists," said Lao Dong's Hoan. "That generation were too used to the old system and they bored the readership. They didn't speak foreign languages so they couldn't use foreign news sources. We had to give people more room for creativity, to do things by themselves." Editors have used better design and photography to spruce up pages—USA Today has been a big, and openly acknowledged influence—and have improved their coverage of foreign news. An end to government subsidies has meant a fight for advertising revenues and recognition of the importance of winning over a readership. The Thanh, editor of Phu Nu (Woman) magazine in Ho Chi Minh City, led her publication in the shift from ideological correctness to entertainment. "When we started to write about clothes and make-up, we were condemned for being 'bourgeois.' Now even newspapers that belong to party organizations have fashion sections. They see it as a natural need for people." Some publications have survived by renting property to foreign businesses or by hooking up with publishing companies such as the Swiss firm Ringier AG. These changes have produced a glossier, more entertaining and essentially trivial press where the bottom rung of the market is prospering because its readership is interested only in politically safe, uncontroversial coverage of movie stars and soccer.

The experience of foreign media companies entering the Vietnamese market illustrates the fears that still abound. A Singaporean company launched a Vietnamese-language women's monthly called Femme that never made it on to the newsstands after the editor of a rival magazine denounced it as anti-Vietnamese. "Vietnamese would be unable to recognize the depiction of their society in this magazine," Nguyen Thi Van Anh, Editor of the version of Phu published in Hanoi, wrote in an opinion piece published on the front page of Nhan Dan. "Beauty has been presented as something reserved for foreigners and women and children have been presented in an ugly, distorted way." What had allegedly disturbed Anh was a fashion photospread of an elegantly dressed Eurasian model posing in a rundown but picturesque village outside Hanoi. Anh denied that her attacks were aimed at squelching the competition but they certainly had this effect. Nearly 30,000 copies of the first edition of Femme were held at the docks and none were ever sold.

Ringier and an Australian company called VIR Ltd, which is owned in part by media magnate Kerry Packer have broken into the market with business and fashion publications but have spent their time creeping through a minefield of political and cultural sensitivities.

The party, aware of the role of lipstick and jeans in the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe, sees the need for entertainment as well as the release of public tensions on issues such as corruption. But a combative press that in any way stands in opposition to the government, that questions its policies or personalities, is a long way off. The press may be able to attack corruption, but it cannot examine the causes of graft or the moral bankruptcy of the Marxist bureaucratic system. The press can entertain but cannot inform too deeply. Debate will remain constrained as revolutionary changes in the political system in Vietnam are unlikely and an evolution towards a more open and just society will be marked by many false turns, blind alleys and periods of regression. The Vietnamese press will follow those changes, not lead them, for survival is the priority of most newspapers and those that survive will be those that do not stand out.■

Japan's Press Clubs Reluctantly Changing

By Kazue Suzuki

A crowd of reporters mobs the Prime Minister, showering him with questions as he comes out of his office after a meeting with an important guest. Surrounded by television cameras and reporters, the Prime Minister answers the questions one by one extemporaneously—or so it looks to viewers of the television screen.

The TV footage of the give-and-take is misleading. The Prime Minister has had time to prepare his answers because the questions have been pooled by members of a press club and handed to him in advance through his secretary. No questions except those written in advance are permitted. Only members of the prime minister's press club are allowed to be there. Later, the reporter in charge of questioning shares what he gets with the rest of the press club reporters on the same beat, so that no one will miss the story. Thus the reporters who cover the same news source cooperate in the day-to-day work of news gathering.

This closed-shop system of journalism, which has been under attack for decades, now seems to be on the verge of change to a more open system, which could lead to better coverage and more accurate information for the public. Nudged by non-members and concerned media watchers, the reluctant revolution of the press clubs is gathering momentum.

While reporters in the United States tend to operate competitively, most of the political and economic reporters of the Japanese news media form themselves into an institution called a "kisha club." Press clubs are formed around important news sources, such as the prime minister, a government agency, or a business organization. Members of a press club share a press room and operate under certain rules. The total number of press clubs is not known, but according to Takesuke Nishiyama, a former Kyodo News Agency official, there were 612 press clubs nationwide in 1986 to which Kyodo reporters belonged. And it is safe to assume there are more than 1,000.

Although some Japan specialists like Ezra Vogel, author of "Japan As Number One," have praised the press club system as an efficient way to convey government information to the public, an increasing number of people criticize the press club system for its exclusive membership rule, close relationship with the news source and uniformity in coverage that results. Among the foremost of the critics are foreign correspondents and free-lance reporters, who more often than not, are still barred from becoming the members of the press clubs.

"The system is one-sided; it benefits the sender of information well, but does it satisfy millions of readers who are receivers of information?" asks Kenzaburo Shiomi, a socio-political analyst.

The prototype of today's press clubs was forseshadowed in the 1930's, when the government forced newspaper editors to cooperate in Japan's war effort and ordered them to restrict information channels. Only one newspaper was allowed per prefecture and each company was permitted only one member per ministry. Before the1930's press clubs were based on individual membership and had a social function. The first press club was formed in 1890 as a pressure group to gain access to the First Imperial Diet during a time of strict controls on the news. The reform of 1940 and 1941 changed the press club membership from an individual to a company basis.

During the occupation after World War II, press clubs were theoretically democratized, providing access to all reporters covering the same government agency. The first guideline issued by the Nihon Shimbun Kyokai (Japan Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association) in 1949 stated that a press club is a friendship organization, not a news gathering organization. But in actuality, the members—employees of the 166 companies belonging to Nihon Shimbun Kyokai—monopolize press rooms and news gathering.

Proponents of press clubs say a press club has served as a labor union and a study group. Press clubs sponsor press conferences. Some clubs, for example the press club attached to the Environment Agency, have traditionally welcomed citizens' groups to their press conferences.

Still, demerits seem to overshadow merits.

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At times press club reporters will agree not to report or to delay reporting a story. Journalists who breach such agreements or damage the relationship with the source are often ostracized.

One such incident happened in 1990 to a photographer assigned to the Imperial Household Agency. At the wedding of Prince Akishino and Princess Kiko, Toshiaki Nakayama, a photographer with the Kyodo News Service, took a picture of the princess touching the prince's forehead to arrange his hair. Nakayama was one of two photographers commissioned to take shots commemorating the Imperial wedding. Under a 1959 agreement between the Imperial Household Agency and the Tokyo Press Photographers Association, two association members (one photographer and one assistant) are commissioned to photograph the Imperial family as "temporary" employees of the agency. The release of photos for distribution is subject to the Agency's approval. The locations and occasions for photo sessions are strictly prescribed in the agreement. Nakayama had been unhappy with the agreement because it was "intolerably humiliating," he once wrote in the Shimbun Kyokaiho weekly.

Despite the great chagrin of the agency, which insisted the photographer broke the rules in taking a candid shot, it was distributed with other photos and published in many papers. The Imperial Household Agency press club did not support Nakayama, accusing him, instead, of not respecting relations with the source. Disappointed with Japanese journalism, Nakayama resigned from the Kyodo News Service nine months later.

Seishiro Fukuda, Editor-in-Chief of the Shakai Shimpo, the Social Democratic Party of Japan news organ, says he is dismayed with Japan's privileged press. "The press club reporters do not realize they are powerful," said Fukuda, whose paper is not allowed to join the press club or attend the conference of the Socialist Prime Minister. The press club membership rule says the party organ cannot join the club and the club reporters say Shakai Shimpo should directly talk to the source. On the other hand, the government spokesman does not want to repeat what he has already said to the press club, said Fukuda, who asserts that press clubs are Japan's last remaining non-tarrif barrier.

Toshio Hara, a journalism scholar and former president of the Kyodo News, estimates 80 to 90 percent of the news from public sources originate in the press clubs. A budding journalist starting out as a local police reporter or a city hall reporter may feel uncomfortable about drinking with or receiving gifts from a person he is supposed to be covering, or being bombarded with handouts. Soon, however, reporters become accustomed to the cozy system where they won't miss the stories.

It is of little wonder that a Kyoto citizen who questioned the privilege of the press club in a law suit was unwelcome. His five-year struggle was rarely reported, said Takao Fujita, an organic farmer and civic activist. He sued the Kyoto Governor in 1990 for allowing a closed group of reporters to use public funds for the press room and its facilities. Kyoto District Court ruled against the plaintiff in 1992, judging that the press club is an important public relations outlet for the Kyoto government and that the press room can be used by other people for that purpose.

Fujita became interested in the press club system when he read a comment by the Kyoto Governor on the Emperor's upcoming visit to Okinawa in 1987. The Governor remarked that with a recent typhoon having blown down sugar canes the police would have an easier time guarding the Emperor. Kyodo News was the only one of the 13 news media represented at the press conference that reported the controversial comment. Having learned of the remark from an Okinawan newspaper that subscribed to the Kyodo News Service, Fujita suspected mutual consent among the other reporters not to report the remark, and his press club watch began.

He filed another suit in 1992 against Kyoto's Mayor and city hall press club for using public funds amounting to 2.2 million yen to treat the press corps. He obtained the expenditure document through a freedom of information ordinance. Kyoto District Court ruled in April, 1995, that the expense was legal and the city's entertainment of the press did not threaten the people's right to know, as Fujita had contended. Fujita has appealed the case to a higher court.

"Everytime I knocked on the door of the press club, I was not allowed inside," Fujita recalled in a telephone interview. "Citizens' groups do not want to support me in my fight, for they are afraid of making an enemy of the press. It took a long time until I met a present lawyer who agreed to be my lawyer."

PHOTO BY S. MIAMI

Sleepless photographers in a miserable mood watching the building where it was believed that a cult leader held responsible for subway gas attacks was hiding. The building was in a village at the foot of Mt. Fuji. The cult leader was finally arrested May 16, eight days later.

Changes have been observed through the efforts of the people outside the press club system. Foreign correspondents' long fight to overcome barriers for press conferences was partly rewarded in 1993 when Nihon Shimbun Kyokai advised press clubs to admit membership to foreign correspondents. The decision is "symbolic," said Karel Van Wolferen, a journalist and author of "The Enigma of Japanese Power."

While most of the reporters would ask predictable questions and refrain from asking embarrassing ones at press conferences, Jocelyn Ford, a former Kyodo News Service reporter covering the Prime Minister, believes self-censorship is heresy to the profession. She asked what she thought readers in a democratic nation would want to or should know. Nevertheless, she said, officials did harass her.

In one instance, after repeatedly bringing up the issue of comfort women, or women forced to be sex slaves to the Japanese military during the war, secretaries to the top government spokesman told her to stop asking such questions. "When they called my boss and told him to convince me, he supported me," Ford said. "I thought I was merely doing my job as a journalist," she said, "but the secretaries would accuse me of trying to embarrass the government."

If individual citizens could gain information from government, press club reporters would have to hustle and that change would eventually reform the press club system. Unfortunately, there is no strong demand from journalists to enact a national Freedom of Information Act. On the local level, however, 45 of the 47 prefectures and more than 200 municipalities have adopted freedom of information ordinances, according to the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Shigeki Okotsu, who heads a citizens' group to demand freedom of information, notes that citizens, not press club reporters, have been successful in obtaining such records as breakdown of a mayor's entertainment, use of insecticides at golf courses, and records of bullying at public schools. He encourages club members to demonstrate their journalistic skills by obtaining what citizens cannot obtain.

One citizens' group has been active about watching the media behavior and protecting the rights of the people who are reported in the media. During the past decade, members of Citizens Liaison Committee for Human Rights and Mass Media Conducts has sponsored meetings and lectures on crime reporting and invited the press ombudsman from Sweden. The group's 500 members nationwide include lawyers, students, journalists and victims of crime reporting. The committee proposed in 1985 that newspapers stop the practice of eliminating honorific titles, like Mr. or Mrs., in articles about criminal suspects.

Like foreign correspondents, some citizens use their own methods to explore a story. Shinobu Naito, a publisher and editor of an investigative book on a victim of the false coverage by the media, learned how to get his side of stories published. "I use the data base, and look for a reporter who would be willing to listen to me," he said. "Or I first call a reporter I know, through whom I will reach the right person." Another lesson he learned in getting a publicity article run: "Reporters are lazy. If you prepare a ready-to-use story from a journalistic angle and send it with a photo to a press club, someone will want to talk to you."

Compared with their critics, reporters of the large media companies are reluctant about press club reform.

Reporters who belong to the press clubs see them as an important base for news gathering. But according to a survey conducted by the Nihon Shimbun Kyokai in 1993, only 15 percent of the respondents said a press club functions as a watchdog. More than 70 percent conceded that the press club led to uniformity in coverage and 65 percent said it allowed sources to manipulate the flow of information. While conceding faults with the system, 41 percent said press clubs should be maintained, compared to 27 percent who said the club should be abolished and 30 percent who expressed no opinion. Many reporters say they favor the press club system because it is so convenient for them.

In 1994, for the first time, reporters of the coalition newspaper unions came up with draft recommendations for press club reform. The proposals focus on the club's function of serving the people's right to know. "An autonomous body, the press club should be open to any reporter who wants to join," the proposal says. The press room, the proposals said, is "an access point" for the government and that it should be open to any reporter.

Demand by readers for investigatory reports is also expected to change Japanese journalism. The exposé by Asahi Shimbun's Yokohama bureau of government corruption in the Recruit payoff scandal in 1988 led to the fall of the Takeshita administration. It was an example of ideal journalism, said Keiichi Katsura, a professor of mass communication at Ritssumeikan University. Their work inspired other reporters to write more investigatory articles. News gathering and reporting will have to change fundamentally if the trend toward investigatory journalism continues.

Learning that the police had decided not to arrest a Kawasaki deputy mayor for bribery, Hiroshi Yamamoto, then Deputy Chief of Asahi in Yokohoma, decided to pursue the case. He organized some young reporters, granting them time out from their press club routines. The scandal turned out to be so extensive that Tokyo reporters joined in the coverage. In 1989 Yamamoto and his staff received a Special Award from the American Organization Investigative Reporters & Editors.

Kenzaburo Shiomi says "decency" is the key. The change of press clubs will take place when it is open to every citizen and if individual reporters realize they are supposed to write from the viewpoint of an ordinary citizen, not of the government or a police. If the media workers come to include more women, foreigners and other minority groups to reflect diversity of society, newsgathering and reporting will eventually change, he says. It won't be too late for Japanese reporters to ask whether they are doing their job as a journalist, not as a company employee.■

The Rashomon Effect at Kobe

T. R. Reid returned to the United States last fall after five years of reporting from Japan for The Washington Post. At a seminar for Nieman Fellows October 5, he said he "wanted to get off my chest this thing that I've been noticing this year, how much people's cultural expectations, national and personal, color coverage. It certainly happened with me, and I saw it happen in the Japanese press, too." Here are edited excerpts from his remarks on covering the Kobe earthquake.

The American press wanted horrendous news. They wanted people who had lost children. They wanted people digging through rubble and finding shattered arms. And they wanted confrontation. I went around with a really good reporter from ABC News. He would stick his microphone in people's faces and say, "Is the government doing enough for you? Don't you feel you've been let down by your government?" He was looking for the confrontational sound bite. And of course, he found it. If you're looking for it, you probably find it.

You don't complain in Japan. They have this concept of gamen, which means endurance or putting up with the unbearable. Gamen is a really crucial human value there: not complaining, just taking what fate gives you. So most people wouldn't complain. They'd say, "Well, it's tough but I've got to be strong. You just have to be strong."

Every once in a while, sure enough, he would find somebody who would say, "Yes! How come there's no water in here?" I remember particularly reading a story in The Wall Street Journal, and the lead is some guy saying, "What do we pay all these taxes for? I've been living in a tent for days and don't have any hot water." Well, go to the jump, and way down it says, "What Mr. Tanaka said, he probably represents one in five or six people who are willing to complain in public." Well then, how come he's the lead? How about the five people who don't complain?

I really felt the American coverage was looking for disaster and confrontation and complaint. This is what we expect. The Japanese were strikingly different. They were looking for harmony. They were looking for people getting along. They were looking for this concept of gamen, people being strong, because that's what you're supposed to do.

Deborah Wang, then an ABC reporter based in Hong Kong, was sent to Kobe to help. And she said to me that she was particularly struck by the difference in camera angles. Whereas the American camera got right in on the tears, or right in on the blood, the Japanese camera always tried to show the bigger picture. And they wouldn't close in on people's tears. They wouldn't close in on that body buried in the rubble. That was considered crude.

I saw a story in the Sunday Mainichi. It's a fairly serious Life magazine kind of magazine. They did a story on the press coverage, and they were very, very critical of a female reporter from one of the television shows because she went up to somebody and said, "Samuku naika" ("Aren't you cold?"). Well, it was getting cold there, and there was no heat and no hot water. And they got a hundred faxes and phone calls from readers, saying, "Leave these people alone." Don't harass them. It's tough enough, without having people stick microphones in their face and say, "How do you feel?"—which is the basic formula for American TV.

Togo, my staffer in Tokyo, came down after four days. There had been nothing in the Japanese press for days but the earthquake pictures. Huge coverage. He had read it all. He had watched Japanese TV 24 hours a day. And when he got there, he said, "I'm just stunned at the extent of the damage!" He couldn't believe how bad it was. It was much worse than what he had been led to believe.

One day after that, Karen Kasmauski of National Geographic flew in. She had been watching CNN and the American networks 24 hours a day, in America. And she said, "I'm just amazed how much of the city is still standing! I thought everything was gone."

To me, that really caught it. Togo watched Japanese TV, and he just didn't know how bad it was. Karen saw American TV and thought it was vastly worse than it really was.

At one point I was walking down the street in Kobe, and all these vending machines are on their side, and phone booths are knocked over. There's a glass phone booth knocked over, horizontal. The whole thing was twisted and shattered. I stepped over this broken frame and picked up the telephone and called America. No problem.

So I kept trying to report this. It's not 100 percent destroyed. A lot of the city is still here. And my editors just didn't want this. They kept saying to me, "You said that yesterday." But it was a striking part of the story, for me.

So I was really quite taken with covering Kobe, the way I thought that each society's cultural expectations dictated what people reported. I just felt that so strongly. I wrote a story on this. The Japanese press really liked that story. But the other American reporters in Tokyo didn't like my story at all. They just thought it was wrong. They just wouldn't agree with me that they were presenting a different picture.■

In Indonesia, Freedom Hope Is Dim

By Adam Schwarz

Fikri Jufri, grizzled veteran of a long and still far from completed battle to widen the boundaries for Indonesian journalists, falls silent when asked to speculate on the outcome. He struggles to find a silver lining. After a time, he gives up.

"It's bad here now," he says simply. "There's no public discourse in our society anymore."

Jufri has reason to be gloomy. His pride and joy, Tempo magazine, for which he served as deputy editor, was closed by government fiat in June 1994 along with two other publications, Editor and Detik, which had irritated the authorities.

But the gloom is not limited to journalists such as Jufri who have been targeted for persecution. Morale in the media industry, or at least in that part of the industry which holds out hope for a more free-wheeling, independent press, is low.

To be sure, even after the banning of Tempo the Indonesian press remains more lively than some others in the region. Journalists in communist nations such as China and Vietnam, for example, labor under even stricter restraints. In addition, solid economic growth in recent years has created a ready market for a rash of new publications catering to groups ranging from gardeners and computer hacks to stockbrokers and models. But despite these developments, many Indonesian journalists suffer from a bad case of dashed expectations.

In 1990, senior government officials, starting with President Suharto, held out the carrot of greater freedom to Indonesian journalists. The initiative came as a welcome improvement to journalists who have had to contend with stringent government controls for more than two decades. Kicking off a campaign known as keterbukaan, or openness, Suharto, Indonesia's ruler since 1966, said the increasing maturity of Indonesian society warranted a more lively press.

In a speech commemorating Indonesia's national day in August 1990, Suharto explained the rationale behind keterbukaan. "Democracy requires a great deal of consultation, discussion, exchange of ideas and dialogue," he said. "It is...wrong if our vigilance towards security is so excessive that it restricts our own movements. We must view differences of opinion as dynamic."

Indonesian journalists, aspiring to match the robustness of the press in neighboring countries such as Thailand and the Philippines, took his message to heart. For the next four years, reporting in Indonesia took on an increasingly sharp edge. Sensitive issues previously absent from newspapers and magazines suddenly joined the public debate.

The activities of Indonesia's economically domioant ethnic Chinese minority, the political ambitions of certain Muslim groups, the dissatisfactions of some outer islands, the long-running insurgency in East Timor, the monopolistic business dealings of Suharto's children, corruption in high government circles, and the debate over Suharto's own succession made a belated entrance onto the pages of mainstream publications. Although most publications continued to couch their reports in the careful language preferred by the authorities, there was no denying that the Indonesia media had gone a long way to presenting a more complete picture of Indonesian society to its readers.

But by 1994 it was becoming increasingly clear that the authorities didn't

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care much for the societal picture landing on their breakfast table every morning. When the government banned Tempo, Editor and Detik, Indonesian-style glasnost ran aground. Having tasted the fruits of (relative) freedom, many Indonesian journalists today are profoundly dispirited by the government's largely successful efforts to roll the clock back on editorial independence. The repercussions have extended well beyond the journalistic field, however.

Many in the Indonesian elite and middle class were shocked upon hearing the news of Tempo's closing. Founded in 1971, Tempo was the undisputed standard-bearer of Indonesian journalism. Its style, layout and use of language was copied by other publications. With a circulation of almost 200,000, Tempo was Indonesia's biggest newsweekly and had an enormous impact on pubic opinion. It was The New York Times, The Washington Post, and Time magazine rolled into one. No serious follower of Indonesian affairs could afford to do without it.

Its absence "has left a gaping hole," asserts Gene Galbraith, an American businessman who has lived in Indonesia since 1983. "I understand less from reading the papers now than I did four years ago. I feel more isolated from what policymakers are thinking. Banning Tempo has taken the wind out of the sails of Indonesian journalism."

The immediate pretext for Tempo's banning was a series of reports on plans by B.J. Habibie, the minister for research and technology and a close confidante of Suharto, to buy 39 aging East German warships. Habibie's original proposal was to spend over $1 billion to buy and refurbish the ships, upgrade the facilities at the PT PAL shipyard in Surabaya, and build a new, deep-water port in southern Sumatra. Some government economists resisted Habibie's urgings, deriding his proposal as an expensive make-work project for PT PAL, which fell under Habibie's purview. Tempo covered this intra-governmental debate in detail, an effort interpreted by Suharto as an attempt to sow divisions within the government. The effort cost Tempo its publishing license.

Newspaper boys selling papers and magazines during rush hour on a busy Jakarta street.

But the roots of Tempo's demise lie deeper. Ever since coming to power amidst the turmoil and despair of 1965-66—in which perhaps a half million Indonesians died in communal violence—Suharto has operated on the belief that economic progress can only be achieved in conditions of political stability. He has succeeded on both grounds.

An impoverished agrarian nation three decades ago, Indonesia is today an emerging economic power in Southeast Asia. Its per capita income is around $900, up from $70 in the late 1960's. The economy is slated to grow by more than 7 percent this year, with merchandise exports expected to top $45 billion. Economic success had bred more success in attracting foreign investment. Last year, Indonesia approved $26 billion worth of foreign-invested projects, a level it will comfortably surpass this year.

And Suharto has certainly achieved political stability, although at a considerable cost to civil society. Suharto's notions of political power stem from his view of society. Like Javanese kings before him, Suharto sees society as a family, with him in the role of father. He can tolerate a measure of discussion, even disagreement, but the line is drawn at dissent.

Adnan Buyung Nasution, an outspoken lawyer who heads the Legal Aid Foundation, says that to Suharto "it is considered insulting when people oppose or even question government actions....Opposition is interpreted as distrust of the good faith of the ruler; just as it would be inconceivable that children demand that their father account for his acts, it is inconceivable that the people demand that the ruler be accountable for his deeds." The risks of reporting in this environment are obvious.

In the early years of his rule, Suharto allowed the press a degree of leeway. Many journalists were for a time grateful of the stability that Suharto had imposed on Indonesia, and faithfully followed instructions that, in the government's parlance, they be "free but responsible." The honeymoon with the press started to go sour in the mid-1970's, however. Following violent demonstrations in Jakarta in January, 1974, Suharto ordered the closing of 12 publications, holding them accountable for stirring up emotions.

In 1982, a new press law required that all publications obtain a publishing permit known by its Indonesian acronym SIUPP. Offending publications can have their SIUPP revoked at the whim of the Information Minister, a position held since 1983 by Harmoko. All journalists are obliged to join the officially sanctioned Indonesian Journalists Association, a grouping with close ties to ruling party Golkar. Harmoko previously served as chairman of the organization, while the current head is concurrently chief of Golkar's department of information, publishing and mass media.

The government also made use of a variety of other means to keep journalists in line. Editors routinely received calls from information ministry officials or from the military with instructions to downplay or ignore altogether a particular story.

The murky environment in which journalists operate is further clouded by shifting lines of permissibility. The same story one paper runs unchallenged may cause trouble for another paper with less stellar political connections. An article that fails to excite censors in Jakarta may enrage authorities in a more distant province.

The four-year keterbukaan period saw a decline—though not disappearance—of the government's direct attempts to influence editorial decisions. But the banning of Tempo marked a return to the heavy-handed tactics of old.

At first, the government was caught unawares by the vehemence of the reaction to the Tempo closure. For several days, journalists and others demonstrated in the streets until riot police moved in to disperse them. Some reporters, enraged by the Journalists Association's acquiescence to the government's decision to ban Tempo, set up a new grouping, the Alliance of Independent Journalists, known as AJI. The unrecognized grouping subsequently published, without a permit, a new magazine called Forum Wartawan Independent, which promptly set about discussing a range of sensitive topics with an explicitness unseen in mainstream publications, even during the keterbukaan period.

The government soon struck back. Three members of AJI, including an office boy who worked in the grouping's makeshift headquarters, were arrested in early 1995 under a colonial-era "hate-sowing" law. They were tried in August and sentenced to terms ranging from 20 to 32 months. Journalists involved with the AJI publication say the decision to arrest the three AJI workers was prompted by stories alleging that Harmoko demanded ownership shares in several dozen publications for himself and family members in exchange for issuing a SIUPP publishing permit.

In a recent report, Article 19, a London-based non-governmental organization which follows international media affairs, said the AJI trials "appear to be motivated by a determination on the part of the government both to penalize individual critics and to intimidate the media as a whole into continued subservience and self-censorship."

In September, four journalists of The Lampung Post, based in southern Sumatra, were suspended after the paper ran an interview with Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Indonesia's greatest living novelist. Pramoedya, who was exiled to a prison island for ten years following Suharto's assumption of power, remains a closely watched man. His books are banned on the ground that they contain communist leanings; several Indonesians have been jailed in recent years for selling his books. Pramoedya recently won the prestigious Magsaysay award, given each year to Asians who have made a significant contribution to their societies. He was unable to receive his prize in person as the government refused to grant him a visa. Although other papers carried news of Pramoedya's prize without being punished, the Lampung Post was not so lucky.

Also in September, the weekly Media Minggu suspended publication for four weeks after offending government officials by publishing an interview with a well-known Islamic scholar, Nurcholish Madjid. In the interview, Nurcholish argued for the creation of new political opposition parties to challenge Golkar.

A popular television show, Perspektif, was recently canceled because the management of the station that aired it, which is owned by a powerful Indonesian-Chinese businessman close to Suharto's sons, said it wasn't popular enough. Media insiders said the real reason was because the host of the show, Wimar Witoelar, interviewed on-air the novelist and former journalist Mochtar Lubis. Lubis, who had his newspaper closed by Suharto in 1974, made the mistake of criticizing Harmoko, arguably the least popular government official in Indonesia, for clamping down on press freedom.

In addition, the Information Ministry this year has issued more than two dozen "official warnings" to newspaper and magazines in an effort to ensure more government-friendly coverage, according to Andreas Harsono, a journalist who lost his job with The Jakarta Post after joining the Alliance of Independent Journalists. According to several editors, publications have been told in particular to refrain from criticizing Harmoko, and from reporting on Pramoedya and the small Indonesian Democratic Party, which is headed by Megawati Sukarnoputri, the daughter of Indonesia's first president.

The government has worked equally hard at making it difficult for members of the Alliance of Independent Journalists like Harsono to stay employed at mainstream publications. Government and military officials have also issued a series of dire warnings about a perceived communist threat posed by dissident intellectuals, politicians, labor leaders and journalists. Publications which continue to cover individuals identified by the government as communists run the risk of sharing the Tempo's fate.

Jufri says the military rumblings are intended "as a kind of shock therapy to make people scared." And clearly, he says, they are having a chilling effect on the media.

Meanwhile, the techniques of censorship in Indonesia are undergoing a change. Several leading publications have been taken over by powerful businessmen close to Suharto who have little appetite for trying to push back government-set limits on press report-

ing. For example, Bob Hasan, whose ties to Suharto date back to the 1950's, was given a license to publish Gatra, a magazine which has set out (so far unsuccessfully) to become a new Tempo. Businessman and Manpower Minister Abdul Latief now owns Tiras, a magazine which was meant to replace Editor, another of the magazines banned in 1994.

Whereas previously censorship of the press was conducted by bureaucrats, especially those from the information ministry, more recently "the censor has come into the newsroom directly," says Goenawan Mohamad, a founder and former editor of Tempo. "Everyone is now aware of the closer proximity between journalists and the censors."

The same dynamic affects the television industry. Five new privately owned TV statioos have been established in the past five years, providing much needed competition to the staid, government-run broadcaster Televisi Republik Indonesia. At first, many thought the emergence of new TV stations would have an invigorating effect on print media by increasing competition in the industry. That has largely failed to happen.

All five of the new stations are owned by relatives of Suharto or by businessmen with close ties to the president. None has shown much interest in challenging the diktats of the information ministry. Goenawan believes the new TV stations have actually hurt the cause of press freedom in Indonesia. By providing TV programs in the Indonesian language, even if low on news content, the new broadcasters have reduced the incentive for middle class Indonesians to seek TV programming elsewhere, such as by satellite reception of CNN and BBC broadcasts.

Despite this bleak portrait, Goenawan sees some reason to remain optimistic for the future. Many journalists were cheered when an administrative court in Jakarta, ruling in July on a case brought by Goenawan and other ex-Tempo journalists, decided that Harmoko had exceeded his authority in banning Tempo, raising hopes that the magazine could be resurrected.

It is still possible that it might, but the odds are against it. First, a higher court still has to rule on the administrative court's decision. Most observers expect that Harmoko's original ban will be upheld. But even if it isn't, bringing Tempo back to life would be an enormous logistical challenge. Tempo's journalists and editors have scattered to other publications or left journalism entirely. Financing would be equally difficult to assemble. Finally, there is no guarantee that Harmoko would feel bound by a court decision to issue a new publishing permit to Tempo.

Still, Goenawan and other journalists in favor of a less constrained press have been encouraged by the commitment of many younger journalists to put at risk their livelihoods by joining the Alliance of Independent Journalists. At a recent AJI gathering, 82 journalists attended. "The resistance by the AJI journalists is inspiring other journalists to try to salvage their self-respect," says Goenawan. "It would be unfair to underestimate the persistence of many editors and journalists in trying to broaden the corridor of freedom."

Sabam Siagian, a former editor of The Jakarta Post, says morale amoog journalists not involved with the three banned publications is still reasonably buoyant. "Resilience is high," he believes. He notes that Indonesia's booming economy has helped the bottom line of many print publications, taking some of the sting out of government efforts to limit what journalists can write. Still, he adds, "more so than several years ago, editors have to read the political map very carefully."

The Internet, while still a new phenomenon in Indonesia, is also beginning to play a role in the Indooesian media. Estimates of the number of Internet subscribers in Indooesia vary widely, from 15,000 to over 100,000. But there is no shortage of information sources to choose from. More than two dozen bulletin boards discuss all aspects of Indonesian life, from the general to the arcane. Some newspapers, including the major daily Kompas and The Jakarta Post, put selected articles on the Internet.

As elsewhere on the Internet, discussions on the Indonesian bulletin boards are uninhibited; they often trespass on sensitive ground where mainstream Indonesian publications cannot tread. Internet clippings also make their way into a form of samizdat literature in Indonesia; they are copied into brochures and pamphlets and distributed anonymously in major cities.

Although the government is in general supportive of Internet services in Indonesia, there is growing concern that the information superhighway is diluting official efforts to screen the data available to Indonesiaos. In October, the military said it would set up its own bulletin board to couoter "oegative and bad" information.

"There is a lot of junk information on the Internet, especially misinformation about our country," said Air First Marshall Sri Diharto, the man charged with leading the military's Internet counterattack.

Dissidents such as Pramoedya and social worker George Aditjondro, among others, have used the Internet to circulate information and opinions that would never be covered by mainstream print and television outlets. Their success in doing so has clearly infuriated elements of the security forces. In October, a senior military officer, Lieutenant General Soeyono, lashed out at what he called organisasi tanpa bentuk, or formless organizations. "These organizations change their form constantly but the people behind them are always the same. Their objective is clear: to topple the government, split the Indonesian Armed Forces, and set the military against the people, and destroy this nation."

Soeyono, Suharto and other senior government officials have likened these "formless organizations" to the outlawed Indonesian Communist Party. The officials have repeatedly accused these organizations and the people behind them of spreading communist teachings under the guise of promoting democracy and human rights.

Some see these warnings as a sign that the government may be considering further press bans as a message to Indonesian editors to toe the line. "Ban-

ning Tempo was like throwing a bone to the wolves," says a senior journalist, Aristides Katoppo, who has had his own run-ins with the authorities over the years. "But while that may have slowed the wolves down a bit, the chase is still on."

Others see in the military's fulminations evidence that the government has given up any attempt at incorporating public opinion into its policymaking process. "The government's recent behavior just adds to the feeling we have that the government has run out of new ideas for running the country," says Goenawan. "The government has given up on the persuasive capacity of ideas."

Given the political realities in Indonesia today, it is difficult to see a return anytime soon to the relative freedom enjoyed by the press in the early 1990s. Events of the last eighteen months have sapped the energy of many journalists pushing for change. A campaign for a relaxation of government constraints is unlikely to draw much support from the elite or middle class, a good part of which is engrossed full-time in the business of making money and sees little point in pushing the government in an area where it has obviously chosen to make a stand. For the elite in particular, the government's restrictions on press freedom and flows of information are not much of a nuisance. Many of Indonesia's well-off have put satellite dishes on their roofs and are scarcely dependent on the local media.

Nevertheless, many critics of the government continue to argue that the government's heavy-handed control of the press is having a deleterious, if under-appreciated, effect on Indonesian society. They say that by insisting on a public discourse that is largely void of real content, the government is sowing the seeds of future trouble. On the one hand, they say, younger Indonesians are not being properly prepared for leadership positions in the Indonesia of the future because they are excluded from today's debate on many important political and social issues.

On the other hand, strict controls on the press are said by some to be partially responsible for a rise in sectarianism in society. Critics of the government argue that an inability to debate important issues in the public domain only hardens positions and fuels intolerance. As evidence, they point to the increasingly critical commentary emanating from publications that cater to specifically Islamic audiences. Recent coverage of riots in East Timor in these publications has focused on attacks on Muslim traders who have moved in numbers to the troubled colony in recent years. The same coverage largely avoided mention of the depredations heaped on the local Timorese population by Indonesian soldiers for much of the past twenty years. This is not entirely the fault of these publications: coverage of the military's performance in East Timor is one of the topics not considered fit for mainstream publications.

Another result of the government's abandonment of keterbukaan is the radicalizing of some of Indonesia's best journalists. The closing of Tempo, for example, has been an embittering experience for many of its long-serving editors and journalists. Goenawan, the soft-spoken poet and brilliant essayist, makes an unlikely radical. Admired by many as the conscience of Indonesian journalism, Goenawan now blames himself for the compromises he and like-minded journalists once made to stay within government-set boundaries.

"To me, anyone involved in the political conflict of the past 35 years was a participant, however unwittingly, in a conspiracy of repression," Goenawan recently wrote in an essay published abroad. In an interview, Goenawan expounded on his feelings: "We didn't work hard enough to get around the government's efforts to silence us," he said. "We were silent for too long about so many things, about East Timor, about the treatment of Pramoedya, about the rebellion in Aceh and Irian Jaya, about how Suharto came to power." But silence, he adds, sadly, is what the government seems to want from the press.■

Living Dangerously in Jakarta

Following is the text of a speech by Goenawan Mohamad at a recent meeting in Sydney, Australia, to commemorate the killing of Australian and British newsmen in East Timor in 1975. Mohamad, Nieman Fellow 1990 and the former Editor-in-Chief of the Jakarta newsmagazine Tempo, is organizing an institute to study the free flow of information in Indonesia.

On September 1, two young men were sentenced to two-years and eight months in jail in Indonesia. The judges followed faithfully the governments insistence that they committed a crime of writing stories that heaped abuse on and spread hatred against the government—and they published their stories in an unlicensed periodical. Both of them are members of AJI, (or the Alliance of Independent Journalists), a one-year-old organization of reporters, editors, writers and columnists created by young journalists who protested against the banning of Tempo and two other Indonesian publications in June last year. Almost a month before the verdict, on August 7, they celebrated the first anniversary of the organization, curiously, in a caged space in the Salemba Prison, in the eastern part of Jakarta, where they had been detained since March. About 50 AJI members and supporters were allowed to attend. Cakes and drinks were served, and people were invited to speak. Two of the journalists who joined the party were Australians. One of them, a Reuters correspondent in his twenties, made a short but moving speech about his feelings of his jailed Indonesian friends.

"My father didn't want me to be a journalist," he said in the Indonesian language. "He was concerned that I would become a cynical person. I had been to Sudan and to Bangladesh working with a UNICEF team, and I came back to Sydney to my parents, disillu-

sioned and bitter. Later I took journalism and came to Indonesia. Last month I went back to Sydney and my father asked me whether the Indonesian experience had made a cynic out of me. No, Dad, I replied, You don't have to worry. Because in Indonesia I saw people who believe in what is right and are ready to pay the price for this belief."

You see, things have changed a great deal decades after "The Year of Living Dangerously." Most of us have seen the movie and read the novel and remember that it is a story of one Australian reporter who goes to Indonesia and sees the country for the first time. He finds that Jakarta is a confusing place that has nothing to offer but the smell of clove cigarettes and the swarms of becak drivers and other things that can make a colorful backdrop to stories of poverty and political violence. The hidden narrator of the novel says: Most of us, I suppose, become children again when we enter the slums of Asia.

The Reuters correspondent I mentioned earlier is obviously very different from Hamilton, the hero of the novel. As for many young Australians today, for him the short distance between Darwin and Jakarta is real. He had been to Indonesia several times before he became a journalist. He speaks the language with confidence, like most members of the Jakarta Foreign Correspondents' Club who are Australians. He finds that he can get along very well with his Indonesian colleagues; he doesn't depend on a Billy Kwan, a person of indefinite origin and a rather fuzzy philosophy to guide him through the maze of Indonesian politics and society. The fact that the young Australian journalist whom I met in the party gives his thinly veiled support to the cause of AJI (and he is not the only Australian journalist who does this) indicates that the so-called cultural differences mean nothing when you come face to face with outright abuses of power and watch the attempts of simple human decency to defy them.

To prove this, let me compare the speech made by the Australian Reuters correspondent with the writing of a young Indonesian woman reporter who grew from a politically passive person into a committed AJI member. She publishes the story of her transformation in Banning 1994, a collection of writings on the aftermath of the governments action against Tempo and the other two publications.

"I never got worked up about political life....The government for me was like a banyan tree in the Bogor Palace yard which I observed from a distance when I was just a child: it seemed cool but haunting....It was untouchable, nor there was any need to touch it. It never bothered me. I didn't care if the bush and the grass failed to grow because its dense leaves prevented sunlight from grooming them, and its roots sucked the fertile soil."

But suddenly Tempo was banned, and she saw people go to the street to protest, and her reporter friends sign a petition of defiance. She began to realize that what really happened was the robbery of the right to express one's opinion and the right to livelihood and this right was taken without any legal trial. She decided to take part in the protest, although by doing so she took the risk of losing her job (she did, eventually).

"I do not know what will happen to me," she writes. "My boyfriend laughs at my attitude. Perhaps he thinks I am just trying to bang my head against a brick wall."

She knows she may not win, but she knows that somebody, somehow, has to create what she refers to as hope. Like her Australian colleague, the Indonesian woman reporter knows that the courage to stand against repression can save us from despair.

To be sure, there are differences between the Australian understanding and the Indonesian experience. The 20th Century has left no visible scar in the Australian psyche, except the appalling expulsion of the aborigines. In contrast, for Indonesia, this century is a harrowing one. It consists of long years of economic backwardness, political turmoil, including civil wars and massacres. Of course, we no longer live under colonialism. To be free from colonialism is by no means a senseless dream. Many willingly died for it; at least, I have a father who did. Yet while the dream of national independence was lucid, the ways to manage it had always been a little bit confused. The trials and errors of our post-colonial period have been mostly traumatic.

Even the last 30 years of political stability and economic growth have done a little to free Indonesians from their traumatic past. Let me give you one example which is now a rather old story, but which I personally knew intimately.

On June 21, 1994, the Indonesian government baoned Tempo and the other two publications.

Today, more than one year after the banning, the authorities have [still] not pointed out explicitly what particular Tempo story or stories angered them so much that they decided to close down the weekly.

Their main excuse has always been that Tempo's writings disturbed the national stability, although in the last 20 years there has been no major manifestation of social protest, or huge riot, or serious disputes among the political élite. The last time a violent anti-government demonstration took place in Jakarta was in 1974. Immediately after the incident, the government closed down more than five newspapers in one day.

The story may give you an idea of how a securely established government continues to behave as if the country is in peril and a free press is an unacceptable luxury.

Needless to say, the authoritarian regime takes it for granted that it has the sole right to draw the line between what is safe and what is dangerous to the people.

In a situation like this, journalism is nearly like an evil necessity, and an editor's job is to steer clear from anything that may jeopardize a long list of things: the national interest, his own career, his sense of mission, the newspaper's survival, the job security of his staff, the expectation of his peers, and what have you.

To give a better picture of it, Id like to repeat here my favorite metaphor: to be an editor in a country like Indonesia

is like being a pilot in a hijacked plane; you make one wrong move, meaning you do something the hijacker dislikes, and your plane, and many innocent people inside it, will be blown to pieces. Not literally, of course. The question is, is it worth it?

No doubt, the pay is rather good, much higher than that of academics. And there is a glamour in the job. Nevertheless, I found the editor's position increasingly frustrating. Because the rule is invariably annoying: and that is to try to be sweet, polite and docile.

Docility is not something unusual for an Indonesian, especially when you are from Java; to act docilely is a strategy of the weak, and to belong to the weak is to belong to the majority, which is not bad, actually. But to make constant compromises is corrosive to your self-respect.

Worse still, it is socially unhealthy when more and more educated people support the institutionalization of fear vis-à-vis the printed word in the media, which is essentially one of the few means available to break the silence of a bureaucratic power.

In 1992, I resigned. My plan was to continue to do my own writing, expressing my private views without having the burden of being too close to the powers that be. That was two years before my magazine was closed down, and three years before another shock of coercion made everybody hit the dirt. In March 1995, the Indonesian police arrested four people accused of publishing two unlicensed periodicals. Now all of them are still in jail, including the two members of AJI I mentioned in the beginning of this talk.

Shortly after the arrest, the government-sponsored journalists organization, the PWI, expelled 13 people, and pressured publishers not to hire reporters or editors involved with AJI. The Minister of Information, Harmoko, backed the move. At least 10 people lost their jobs, either being sacked or pressured to quit or demoted to non-editorial departments.

To many, this is another case of overreaction on the part of the regime. But it merges well with the larger canvas of abuses that prevails in contemporary Indonesia.

It has become a commonplace truth that when people in the government are the only ones who call the shots, often with an obvious contempt for basic legal niceties—and they can get away with it—they tend to impose a monologue of lies when truth is either dangerous or complicated.

Especially when the government would like everyone to believe that in a country like Indonesia, the only legitimate message has to be the good news, since economic development is indisputably good news.

That's why in Indonesia we'd like to share a joke about three editors from Asia being urgently summoned by God to come to a heavenly press briefing.

One editor is from the Philippines, one is from China and the other one is from Indonesia. God leaks to the three of them the latest information—that the world will end next month.

So the Filipino editor returns to Manila and writes that he has one piece of bad news and one piece of good news to tell to the public. The bad news is that the world will end next month, and the good news is that God exists.

In Beijing, the Chinese editor of People's Daily writes something more predictable: he's got two items of bad news. The first is that the world will end next month, and the other is that God has done something terrible to the party line: He exists.

Now when we read the story written by the Indonesian editor in Jakarta, this is what we get: he apparently has two items of good news to tell. One is that God exists—and the other is that beginning next month, there will be no poor people in the street.

Of course, I'm telling you this at the expense of my fellow editors who are now trying to survive the ordeal of being closely watched by a suspicious censor. And to tell you the truth, the joke is by no means original. I know also that I am being rather unfair, since when one reads Indonesian newspapers today, one can still discern various attempts to maintain some degree of self-respect.

I am the first to admit that the press in Indonesia is not exactly free. It may not be able to change the pervasive power that controls the country. But it's always capable of disrupting the rulers' monologue, just by making a fresh approach inside the parameter of permitted truth.

It's always a source of difference, when sameness, or uniformity, is being constantly staged; the society, from which the media get their support, just cannot escape its own heterogeneity.

The print media may not make a conscious effort to circumvent the governments information control, but it still can be distracting when the printed word looms in the mind of a tyrant like an interrupting voice. Of course, there are editors who readily become parts of the repression, selling their bodies and minds to the government, the highest bidder of them all, and thus make journalism the oldest profession No. 2.

But there will always be reporters in the existing media who try to assure us that, even if some lies are stubborn, they shall never remain a monolith.

In a country like Indonesia, for the press, to be free is to be responsible. As the French writer Albert Camus puts it, when freedom dies, it never dies alone. Innocence will be crucified every day.■

Goenawan Mohamad, at one of his court hearings. He was a 1990 Nieman Fellow.

Burma Repression Continues

By Bertil Lintner

"Inked Over—Ripped Out" is the title of a recently published collection of Burmese short stories. In Burma, a unique country in many ways, even the forms of censorship differ from those of other, totalitarian regimes. All books and most magazines have to be submitted to the censors not before but after printing, which in itself is a powerful incentive to self-censorship. A special state agency, the Press Scrutiny Board or the PSB, then checks the publication in question. If it is found to contain any story, poem, cartoon, passage or word not accepted by the PSB, it has to be eliminated before it can be sold to the public.

As Anna Allott, who compiled the (censored) short stories for the anthology, "This is done by ripping out pages, by gluing them together, by inking over with silver paint, or by sticking opaque tape over the offending item. The ripping and blanking out is carried out by the publisher, following the instructions of the PSB." After the pages have been torn out, they are sent back to the PSB, which knows how many copies of magazine have been printed. The PSB then counts the submitted pages to ensure that none has been left in or distributed separately, and destroys them.

Almost the only magazine not subjected to this scrutiny is a monthly literary magazine called Myet-hkin-thit ("The New Sword"), which carries no advertising. The magazine contains detailed accounts of anti-government elements, including surreptitious shots of their residences in exile in Bangkok or elsewhere, as well as sensational stories about the same people that would have been libelous in any country but Burma.

Other articles describe in minute detail rape, corruption and murder in certain foreign countries, with the aim of discrediting governments that criticize Burma for human-rights violations. Not surprisingly, this unusual magazine is the brainchild of Burma's powerful secret police, the Directorate of the Defense Services Intelligence, which today controls most aspects of life in Burma.

A number of prominent Burmese writers are languishing in jail, serving long sentences for expressing opposition to the regime, or just for independent reporting for foreign media. One of the best-known is Nay Min, a Rangoon lawyer who free-lanced for the British Broadcasting Corporation during the upheavals of 1988. He was arrested in that year and sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment for "sending false news."

Ma Thida, a 29-year old physician and writer, was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment in October 1993. Khin Maung Swe, a geologist in his mid-50's was arrested in August 1994 for attempting to meet the UN special rapporteur for Burma and to have information about the situation in the country published abroad. In October this year, a young student, Ye Htut, was arrested in Rangoon, accused of disseminating "false news" to media representatives in Bangkok.

Despite its repressive present Burma has a long and proud tradition of professional journalism. Modern-style newspapers, modeled on those in the West, were introduced in Burma by the British during the last century. The first newspaper, in English, was published in 1836. The longest-lasting, the colonial Rangoon Gazette, was founded in 1861 and survived until the Japanese occupation in 1942.

The once-influential New Times of Burma was originally set up as a government publication but was taken over by the famous politician Tin Tut after World War II. Under his editorship, it became a cautious but reliable and well-respected newspaper. The first vernacular newspaper appeared in the Arakan area in 1873, and it was soon followed by Burmese-language publications in both Rangoon and Mandalay.

The Burmese-language Myanma Alin, or New Light of Burma, was set up in 1914 and was for many years managed by U Tin, who became a minister in independent Burma's first government in 1948. Newspaper owners, editors and journalists played an important role in Burmese domestic politics, and given Burma's solid intellectual tradition, they had a high reputation in society.

After independence in 1948, Burma had more than 30 newspapers. Apart from the leading Burmese and English-language newspapers, there were five in Chinese, two in Hindi and one each in Urdu, Tamil, Telugu and Gujerati. Of the Chinese newspapers, the most influential was the Communist pro-Beijing Freedom Daily.

Bertil Lintner is a Bangkok-based correspondent for The Far Eastern Economic Review, Svenska Dagbladet of Sweden and Politiken of Denmark. Born in Sweden in 1953 he went to Asia in 1975, spending five years traveling before settling down in Thailand in 1980. There he established himself as an authority on insurgency and drug trafficking in Burma. In 1985-87 he and his Shan wife from Burma, Hseng Noung Lintner, trekked 2,275 kilometers through rebel-held areas in northern Burma, from northeastern India to the Yunnan frontier. The couple now live in Bangkok with their 10-year old daughter. Lintner is the author of four books about Burma.

What's Needed: Publicity

American correspondents reporting from war-torn or politically repressed countries in Asia usually receive a glimpse of the working conditions endured by their local colleagues. Yet few choose in their reports to highlight the persecution and hazards faced by many Asian journalists. In so doing, they overlook the greatest service that they can provide Asia's independent press: publicity.

A case in point is Indonesia, where the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) has tried to fill the void created by a government ban on three of the country's boldest publications by printing an investigative news magazine of its own. For their efforts, three members have been jailed and many others have been forced out of their jobs. This crackdown on Indonesia's only free journalists' union is unlikely to be lifted, however, unless it receives the same attention from the international media as the country's other labor and human rights abuses.

Exposing press freedom violations is more than an exercise in altruism. For in much of Asia the level of press freedom serves as a barometer of the broader state of civil liberties. Examples abound: Cambodia, where the frequent conviction of journalists under criminal libel and national security laws reflects the government's growing authoritarianism; Kashmir, where the interrogations, kidnappings, and slayings of local journalists reflect the continued splintering of the separatist movement and the heavy-handedness of Indian troops, and Hong Kong, where self-censorship in coverage of China reflects widespread apprehension about Beijing's commitment to a "one nation-two systems" form of government after 1997.

Besides reporting on press freedom abuses themselves, American journalists can also help their colleagues in Asia by alerting and joining international organizations that monitor and document attacks on the press. The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), for example, can rapidly disseminate information about arrests, killings, or newspaper closures internationally, aid in securing legal representation for asylum applicants, and locate sources of emergency funds for persecuted journalists.■—Vikram Parekh, Coordinator for Asia, the Committee to Protect Journalists

By political affiliation, there were three groups of newspapers: pro-government, right-wing opposition and left-wing opposition. The editor of the old right-wing Hanthawaddy daily, though a close friend of the then prime minister U Nu, did not hesitate to sharply criticize government policies when they thought them too sympathetic to the Left.

In fact, in the absence of any real opposition in the parliament, which was dominated by U Nu's Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League, the media served as an unofficial public watchdog, frequently keeping an eye on government policies, especially in frequent interviews with U Nu himself.

The centrist English-language The Nation, founded by editor Law Yone and first published in 1948, was often critical of the government, but positive in its comments. Its circulation reached more than 20,000 copies in the mid-1950's and its popularity was largely due to the dynamic Law Yone.

All this changed after the military takeover in March 1962. The army, led by general Ne Win, regarded journalists as potential trouble-makers whose activities only exacerbated the already chaotic political situation in the country, which was the stated reason for the 1962 coup d'état. General Ne Win was also clearly aware of the lobbying power that the press represented, and decided to curtail its previous freedoms. Step by step, the press was constrained to follow the policies of the new military government. The prestigious Nation was closed in May 1963, and Law Yone was arrested shortly afterward. Control was tightened in June of that year, when the government-run News Agency Burma (NAB, now News Agency Myanmar, NAM) was created to take over and select the flow of news from overseas.

The Working People's Daily was set up later that year in Burmese and English editions to compete with the private media, but before long there was no such press left as all non-governmental newspapers were banned or nationalized. A new press law, promulgated in 1966, also made it illegal to print newspapers in languages other than Burmese and English, which meant an end to all publications in minority languages, including Chinese and Indian dialects. The Burmese press became one of the most tightly controlled in Southeast Asia.

The state's strict monopoly on news continued until 1988 when the whole country rose up in revolt against general Ne Win's autocratic rule. Millions of people marched for democracy in virtually every city, town and major village across Burma and for a month, from mid-August to mid-September, it seemed as if the old order had collapsed. The traditional creativeness of the Burmese psyche flourished again after 26 years of virtual silence. By the end of August, Rangoon alone had almost 40 independent newspapers and magazines, full of political commentaries, witty cartoons and biting satires ridiculing the ruling élite. Even the two official newspapers, the Guardian and the Working People's Daily, began publishing outspoken political articles and pages full of pictures from the demonstrations.

The new, lively newspapers, some daily and others intermittent, had fanciful names such as the Light of Dawn, the Liberation Daily, Scoop, New Vic-

tory, the Newsletter and so on. Some were even handwritten and photocopied or mimeographed while others had access to professional printing presses, often free of charge since their owners wanted to show that they also supported the pro-democracy movement.

All this changed again when the military stepped in to reassert power on September 18, 1988. In the streets of Rangoon, thousands of people were gunned down as the army moved to shore up a regime overwhelmed by popular protest. For the media, it meant that their brief period of freedom was over. Henceforth, there was to be only one daily paper: the Working People's Daily in Burmese and English.

The paper later changed its name to the New Light of Myanmar—assuming the name of the old, well-respected paper that was nationalized after the first 1962 coup—in an attempt to adjust the government-controlled media to the new, free-market economy that the military reintroduced in 1988. But the context of the paper remains the same: government declarations, pictures of state leaders attending various functions, attacks on critics of the regime and foreign news that is almost invariably two days old because it has to be screened by government censors before it can be printed (as is all television news on the only, official government channel).

But this does not mean that opposition voices cannot be heard in the media. It just takes some imagination, and, after decades of repression, the Burmese have become extremely skillful in the art of deceiving the authorities. When the government some years ago ordered a cartoon to be made for the official Working People's Daily depicting a soldier standing in the midst of a crowd of unruly politicians with the inscription "de facto government" emblazoned across his chest, the cartoonist "misspelled" it. It said "defecto government", and several thousand newspapers were sold before the mistake was discovered and military intelligence officials had to search the markets to confiscate all remaining copies.

In another incident, shortly before the general election in May 1990, the foreign news page of the Working People's Daily carried a quarter of a page about elections in Turkish-held northern Cyprus, where "the democratic opposition were uniting against years of corrupt government under the ruling National Unity Party." In Burma, it so happened that the Burma Socialist Programme Party, which had ruled the country since the 1962 coup, had just been given a new name—by coincidence also the National Unity Party—and was facing opposition from the National League for Democracy, which later won the election but was not allowed to form a new government.

But more importantly today, when it is becoming more difficult to get away with such pranks in the government-media, many journalists and writers have formed ostensibly non-political literary societies. The northern city of Mandalay especially has become a center for these activities, and a leading figure there is Daw Ahma, a veteran writer and publisher who has been in the center of Mandalay's intellectual life for several decades. She, with her now deceased husband, ran Burma's last privately owned paper, the Ludu ("The People"), which was taken over by the government in 1967.

Apart from meeting to discuss new novels and short stories, these functions also serve a very clear political purpose, although often hidden in literary allegories and metaphors. As Allott points out, the author can then "only hope that the veiled message will be discerned by the reader, but not by the censor." That is not always the case, however. Daw Ahma's son, Nyi Pu Lay, is serving a prison sentence on trumped-up charges, but in reality for writing a short story called "The Python". The title refers to the Chinese and Sino-Burmese businessmen, drug traffickers and gem dealers who have moved into Mandalay to launder their profits by investing in local real estate, pushing the local population out of the market.

Burmese writers today live and work in an atmosphere of uncertainty and apprehension. But given Burma's strong intellectual legacy and the fact that being a journalist is still very prestigious in Burmese society, it is perhaps hardly surprising that Burma's old traditions are alive even under the present regime. The repression also shows how much the military fears the power of the pen, which in turn reflects the importance of the written and spoken word in Burma.■

South Korea's Curbs

South Korea continues to use its National Security Law to restrict freedoms, including the rights of journalists to gather and publish news.

In May, Reporters Sans Frontiers in Paris issued an alert on the basis of South Korea's refusal to allow a French reporter and photographer to enter the country. The journalist, Pierre Bessard, possessed a valid visa. He was questioned by Seoul officials on the purpose of his visit and expelled on the basis that he had violated the National Security Law by visiting North Korea.

A South Korean journalist, Choi Chin-sop was arrested in 1992 on charges that he had violated South Korea's National Security Law. Sentenced to three years in jail, he is due to be released soon.

Choi Chin-sop, a writer for Mal, a monthly current affairs journal, had written a number of articles about human rights issues, some of which were said by authorities to be pro-North Korean, according to Amnesty International.

He was also accused of belonging to an "anti-state" group, alleged to be linked to a "spy" ring operated by the North Korean government. Mal is one of the few publications in South Korea to have published detailed analyses of human rights issues.

Amnesty International said it believed the accused was guilty of no more than the non-violent exercise of his right to freedom of expression and association.■

Pearl Harbor in Nazi Berlin

By Angus MacLean Thuermer

The sharp knock on my door—tap-tap-TAP!—came at just about midnight. I opened it. Two men stood there in the dim blacked-out fourth-floor corridor. They were of medium height and dressed for the sharp Berlin weather of December 1941.

"Herr Thuermer?" With a motion of his wrist, as if he were pulling out a watch fob, the man nearer to me flipped a metal disk out from under his coat and raised it up to where I could read it.

"Geheime Staatspolizei! Come with us."

I didn't have to read the badge, or listen to him. I knew it was the Gestapo; my roommate knew it was the Gestapo, and Herr von Brederlow, my landlord, wordless and quiet in the darkness of the main part of his apartment, knew it was the Gestapo.

To the man who ordered, "Come with us!," I countered, "Where have you been?" This brought the proceeding to a dead stop. "Good Lord," I went on, "I've been waiting for you all evening. I got so fed up I got undressed, got in these pajamas, and was about to go to bed." They stood stock-still at the threshold.

"Pardon? You've been what?"

"Been waiting for you. Step inside, please."

What led up to the scene of the two astonished Gestapo agents—had anyone ever known they were coming, then had the cheek to address them so flippantly: scold them for being late, then asked them in?—began at a dinner party the evening before.

At the dinner, my chief, Louis Lochner, and his family, were the guests of honor. I had been included in the invitation. We were at dessert and coffee when the phone rang. I offered to take the call.

It was from Eddie Shanke at The Associated Press bureau. He was remarkably cool. "Is the chief there?" he asked. "We just got a cable from New York. The Japs have bombed Pearl Harbor."

Then came that little bit of true-life concern, and cablese, that made me realize what I was hearing really was true, it really was from the AP cable desk: "New York," Shanke continued, "says, 'NEED GERMAN FOREIGN OFFICE REACTION SOONEST.'"

By the time Shanke had got to the point of the New York cable that said New York wanted the German foreign office comments, my gestures back to the dinner table had brought Lochner rapidly to the phone.

From the AP bureau in the Zimmerstrasse, Shanke had already begun calling German officials and filing whatever short bulletins he could. From his host's phone, Lochner began making calls at once. What he was able to dig out in a few minutes, he then dictated to Shanke.

If ever a dinner party came to a stop, it was that one.

When the hurried phoning was over, I was dropped off at my quarters in the Giesebrechtstrasse. I didn't need to be told to be in the bureau early next morning. When I arrived, Shanke was still there. During the night, he'd added whatever he could to the German angles of the Pearl Harbor story.

Alvin Steinkopf was on hand, as was Ernest Fischer. Lochner went to cover the press conference at the Foreign Office.

Just before mid-morning, at faster than flank speed, Lochner rushed in, called out "Get Berne!," as he came through the door, peeled off his coat, and shot into his office. What did he know? What had happened?

"Get Berne!" was clear enough. On our long-distanced telex we dialed the AP bureau in Switzerland. Berne had been the route we had to use since our connections to New York through the Netherlands had been shut down after the Nazi occupation of Holland on May 10, 1940.

Our telex connection to Switzerland came through quite normally:

"ASSOCIATED BERNE" pounded out on our machine.

They were ready to take our copy.

From his office, Lochner's story began rolling out of his typewriter, take by take, plus his accompanying comments called out over his shoulder to the staff in the newsroom.

He said that as soon as foreign correspondents had assembled for the press conference—but before it began—the Foreign Office spokesman said that all American correspondents should leave the room at once. They should go home

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Before the bombing of Pearl Harbor Angus MacLean Thuermer covered the Nazi attack on Poland and the German announcement of the invasion of Russia. During the war he was a prisoner-of-war interrogator for the Royal Navy and Royal Marines and the Canadian, U.S., British and French armies. After his 1951 Nieman Fellowship, the AP sent him to Washington. He spent 26 years on three continents as assistant to four Directors of Central Intelligence as "no-comment"-ing CIA "spooksman." He lives in Middlebury, Va., with his wife, a former AP colleague, Alice Alexander.

Long a resident of Virginia's John Singleton Mosby Heritage area, the author holds the reins of his retired hunter, Marmalade, The Old Bay Mare Who Ain't What She Used to Be, but who proved there is such a thing as a free lunch.

and consider themselves under house arrest until further notice.

The Americans left, but not a soul followed instructions: they all dashed back to their bureaus and began filing the story as fast as they could.

And as for the big world news, Pearl Harbor, whatever was happening out there and in the U.S., I have no recollection. Certainly, we had the radio on all the time, and tuned to the foreign stations. We were so focused on the story we were reporting, however, that all else was swept aside.

Lochner finished his last paragraph. It had been punched up on tape and fed through the telex to Berne. There, bureau chief Tommy Hawkins was pushing it out over their radio links to the cable desk in New York as fast as it came in. Finally, from our end, that was all there was.

I was at the telex keyboard as the last graph went out. I can't recall whether I or Herr Paul, our regular German telex operator, sent it out, but at the end of the Lochner story I was seated at the telex.

There was a pause; then Berne punched through a little note asking what was going to happen now.

Lochner was telling the American staffers to get their coats, go home and stay there, as the Foreign Office had directed. The long-time German staffers, Rudy Josten, and the chief of AP Photos, Willi Brandt, would carry on until the situation cleared.

I sent off a cablese reply to the Berne what's-goin'-on question:

"BYE-BYE; WE JUG-WARDING NOW," adding my initials, "A.M.T."

Berne had already read Lochner's story about being ordered to our homes where we were to consider ourselves under house arrest. My cablese answer to Berne—the best I could conjure up—was a light-hearted exaggeration of our pending fate.

The Berne Associated Press Bureau, however, used it as a little sidebar. They wirelessed oot something along the lines of, "The last word out of Berlin came from lanky Angus Thuermer who Teletyped, 'Bye-bye, we are heading to jail now.'"

That would have been all right except that it was printed in a box in the center of the front page of The Chicago Tribune next morning. My father read it at breakfast.

We all went home and stayed inside. What we knew about the follow-up to Pearl Harbor was only what we could pick up from the official Deutschlandsender radio. Phones jangled all over Berlin as we kept in touch with each other. Finally, the word seemed to be that we should get ourselves packed up for a short stay—somewhere—and expect to be picked up by the Gestapo that evening.

I packed a bag, and sat back to wait, chatting with my roommate, Patrick Nieburg. He was a local-hire United Press staffer even younger than my 24 years. Some dolor must have rubbed off on him during a short spell he had already done in a prison camp. Just before the Gestapo men arrived, he gave me the equivalent of a sturdy Swiss Army knife. As he handed it to me, he said, "You'll need this where you're going." (After freedom from later journeys around a dozen or so further Nazi prisons, he is now a retired U.S.I.A. officer, ex-head of the Radio in the American Sector [RIAS] in West Berlin. About Pearl Harbor day almost every year, he calls me with a low-pitched voice to say, "I have here a knife I'd like to give you...")

Recovering from their shock, the Gestapo men came in the flat.

"Have a seat. How about a cigarette while I get dressed?" I offered them an open box of Chesterfields (we got them from embassy friends who had access to diplomatic stores).

"Ja. Danke sehr. Danke." For months, Germans had been puffing on what I would dislike to describe. Chesterfields were Elysian fields. They sat down to smoke them. We took our time. I dressed. We chatted. Yes, we'd been told that we were to be picked up.

Oh? They didn't know that. They puffed on. No hurry. I got on my overcoat and was ready to go. Would they like the rest of the pack of Chesterfields? Certain they would. It went into a vest pocket in a wink.

"Ja. I guess we should move along. Your chief is in the car downstairs. We picked him up first."

"What?" My boss had been outside shivering in the car as we chatted up the Gestapo? Ja. Lochner was too genteel to mention it more than once as we

headed through the cold, empty streets to the notorious Alexander Platz Gestapo headquarters.

There, we spent our post- Pearl Harbor hours. We slept the rest of the night away as best we could—the nerves of every one of the dozen or so of us were pretty taut—on desks and on the floor of a vacant Gestapo office room.

In the morning, we were fed some sort of a breakfast and we listened to a radio that was still in the room.

Lochner told the group that some time before a German Foreign Office contact said that if anything so unfortunate as a break between Germany and America ever occurred, correspondents would, of course, be treated in die nobleste Weise. This mixed German-English assurance that we would be treated in the most noble fashion was not happening.

No one came to inquire after us. As far as we were concerned, the attack on Pearl Harbor might have destroyed everyone in the U.S. section of the German Foreign office.

Then came our own personal experience of what was Hitler's fatal mistake. From the radio in our stark Gestapo office, we began to hear the fanfare that announced the imminent appearance of Hitler at the Kroll Opera House. That building had served as the stage for Hitler when he wanted to speak before his mangled version of the Reichstag, the German parliament.

To our astonishment, Hitler said that he had summoned the American chargé d' affaires. He used a phrase somewhat along the order of "and returned to him his papers." Hitler had handed back to the head of the American mission, Leland Morris, his diplomatic Letter of Credence. Hitler never mentioned the word war; but that was what it was.

And there we were in Gestapo headquarters. Although we certainly knew where we were, we didn't know what was to happen to us, or where we were going.

We soon found out as we were transferred to a house near Berlin's Wannsee, a weekend and summer estate area; but this was winter. Unbidden, Lochner's network of contacts told Mrs. Lochner exactly where the press was being held.

> I didn't have to read the badge, or listen to him. I knew it was the Gestapo; my roommate knew it was the Gestapo, and Herr von Brederlow, my landlord, wordless and quiet in the darkness of the main part of his apartment, knew it was the Gestapo.

She and friends turned up with edibles and warm clothing.

The time passed in the cold, unheated summer residence. Finally the "noblest fashion" boys turned up. They protested that they had to ask the Gestapo where we were, and they had just found out. Otherwise, of course, they would have been right with us. Another version was that they couldn't find out where we were because in the United States the F.B.I., which had picked up the German newsmen and put them with the interned German diplomats, wouldn't tell the State Department where they were.

By this time, Pearl Harbor was not flash or bulletin news. But one of the Foreign Ministry men could hardly keep to himself another truly flash story: the sinking of HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Victorious, the two great British dreadnoughts steaming toward future action with U.S. fleets in the Pacific.

You wouldn't want to say they savored this shocking news, but, after all, they had lived through the ignominious loss that May of their pride, the battleship Bismarck. I was particularly sensitive to that story as I had sent out the 11-word FLASH when the German High Command admitted the loss of the ship (and still have the yellowing copy).

After unloading the Wales and Victorious news bulletins, the Foreign office people made arrangements for us to join the American embassy staff and families, and we began a five-month internment in a hotel in a German spa, Bad Naubeim.

There, the newsmen secretly listened to the BBC on a portable radio. Shanke had passed it off as a camera hung around his neck in a leather case and carried right into internment with us.

In internment, we also listened to the rumble of the RAF's midnight bombings of Frankfurt over the horizon to our north; we saw the pale, pulsing light made by bomb explosions. It was an uneasy feeling. Those were "our" guys, out there, smashing a great German city to bits. What went through our heads was, keep remembering Coventry and who started it all. But that didn't mean we weren't aware of the fact that outside our internment location, just past the single Gestapo man acting as night porter, were the Germans who were being knocked to smithereens.

Finally, we were sent to Portugal, exchanged for German newsmen and assigned to various posts in the U.S. and abroad. The bad luck king was Phil Whitcomb. He had been rounded up in Paris, and incarcerated with us. He was assigned to Vichy. He hadn't been there long when he was clapped into a really long internment in Baden-Baden.■

Napoleon And the Press

"Tell the journalists that I will not judge them for the wrong which they have done, but for the lack of good which they have done."—*Napoleon, in a communication to the Press Bureau, which supervised nominations of all editors and publishers, after he took control of France in* 1799.

Why Foreign Correspondents Leave

Following is the chapter "Epilogue: Leaving" from "International News & Foreign Correspondence," by Stephen Hess of the Brookings Institution

There comes a time when foreign correspondents cease being foreign correspondents. The reasons are almost as varied as the people and assignments themselves: sheer exhaustion...twenty years of being shot at and I decided it was time to move on to other forms of journalism...my husband wants to return home...an ununderstanding editor...the normal three-year rotation, no star system so I had no choice but to come home...my paper closed its bureau in San Salvador...I was curious about my country...I'm sick of wretched Asian capitals.

Of the former foreign correspondents in the survey who offered their reasons for leaving, 112 cited normal rotation, 10 were expelled by a host country, 30 were promoted, 26 had personal problems, 6 wanted to leave journalism, and 10 followed spouses who had been reassigned. The reassigned spouse was usually male, and men were also more likely to cite normal rotation and promotion. Women journalists more often mentioned personal problems. Television reporters were most subject to normal rotation (62 percent compared to 46 percent for those who worked for newspapers and 41 percent for wire service reporters). Magazine writers most often cited promotion (17 percent compared with 11 percent for newspaper journalists and 3 percent for those in television).

Usually, however, a coalescing of reasons causes foreign correspondents to seek another kind of assignment or line of work. Having been overseas for nineteen of his past thirty years, Richard C. Longworth came back to the United States at the end of 1991. He was then the chief European correspondent of The Chicago Tribune, fifty-six years old, and spending half his time away from his London base. He left, he said, because of the end of a three-year assignment, a desire to return to more stable life in the United States, weariness of constant pressure, the superficial nature of correspondence, family pressures, advancing age, and the attractive offer of new job at Tribune as senior writer specializing in economics.

Such a collection of reasons can describe burnout, a common result of being in a stressful business for too many years. Howard A. Tyner, whose eighteen years abroad culminated in his return to the United States to become The Chicago Tribune's foreign editor in 1985, recalls legendary foreign correspondent Joe Alex Morris's adage for knowing when to leave. "The monkeys all were starting to look alike. Only the cages were different." Morris was killed in Iran.

In addition to continued interest, reasonable levels of energy and stamina are also necessary to avoid burnout. Blaine Harden of The Washington Post, forty years old and abroad nearly eight years in sub-Saharan Africa and Eastern Europe when he responded to my survey, concluded that the "extraordinary demands of finding oneself on a major world story are more wearying each year." Within a year he had returned home to write a book about the Columbia River. Elie Abel, later to become dean of the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, "discovered through personal experience that it's a job for younger men and women." (He underlined younger.)

Burnout can also be associated with particular country and regional assignments or assignments at a particular time. Karl Schoenberger, Tokyo correspondent for The Los Angeles Times from 1986 to 1991, talked of "Japan burnout syndrome." He returned to take the Asia-Pacific beat on the paper's business desk in Los Angeles. Charles Lane burned out covering Central American wars in the late 1980's, and Newsweek brought him back to New York to become a general editor. Donald Shanor, "tired of staring down [Eastern Europe's] communist hotel corridors in the evenings instead of seeing my family," became a professor of journalism. For Timothy M. Phelps the burnout assignment was the whole Middle East, Iran to Morocco, from 1986 until March 1991: "Too much work, too much travel and stress, too much illness." Newsday made him Supreme Court reporter.

Burnout, of course, need not be permanent. Tod Robberson, kidnapped in Beirut in 1984 and captured by the Salvadoran army in 1986, left Reuters for a job on The Washington Post foreign desk, but returned to foreign correspondence in 1992 from Mexico City. And Lane of Newsweek was sent to Berlin in 1992 to cover the war in Bosnia.

CNN's Irv Chapman defines overseas burnout as that point when the ratio of hassle to what gets broadcast or published becomes too high. The biggest hassles by far are with hostile governments. Some correspondents described the way countries, especially in the Middle East, withhold visas as a means of controlling press coverage. Others gave examples of official lying and surveillance. "Most of my assignments," Richard Hornik of Time said, "have involved dealing with repressive police states, most of which simply wear you down with delays and bureaucratic hassles." But one in ten correspondents emphasized that the confrontations can be more than psychological harassment. ABC's Todd Carrel was severely beaten and disabled by Chi-

nese secret police while covering the third anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen Square uprising. Reporters also face a host of daily irritants, including (listed in descending order by the number of times mentioned) undependable telephone systems, inadequate transportation, problems with home offices, unhealthy environments, lack of staff support, prejudice against women, and high costs of living.

Complaining about inadequate or unresponsive editors is standard operating practice. "It was like writing in a void," said a foreign correspondent who still is one. But some do quit because of what they consider editorial mismanagement. One correspondent who said he "had been given a posting with relevance similar to that of the nightclub correspondent for the Christian Science Monitor" now works for another publication in New York. The most common complaint is that editors are "unable to understand exactly what the job entails." Substantive arguments between editor and reporter are, however, rare. A reporter in Jerusalem said he and the home office had conflicts over what he considered "politically motivated editing," but a home visit straightened the matter out. Another reporter said his editor was more tolerant of black dictators in Africa than he would have been of white dictators; the reporter now works for another newspaper, and not as a foreign correspondent. Some quit, others get fired. According to one respondent from Europe, "AP sacked me in 1943, apparently for my anti-Soviet stance." More recently, a journalist who claimed to be the victim of a CBS News purge among its Latin America bureaus, commented, "If I sound bitter, it's because I am."

Other reporters have taken leave of foreign correspondence when an employer retrenched or went out of business. Michael Berger had two organizations shot out from under him. McGraw-Hill World News Service, which he joined in Tokyo in 1983, was discontinued in 1988. He then went to work for The San Francisco Chronicle, which closed its Tokyo bureau in 1991. "I decided at that time that consulting work, especially focusing on media consulting, would be a much more stable, long-term source of income than journalism."

"When I stop," commented David J. Schrieberg of The Sacramento Bee, "it will likely be from fatigue with newspapers in general and less a result of my foreign work." There is among some journalists a reaction to dailiness—daily routines, daily deadlines, stories not worth the effort—that is not limited to overseas correspondence. William Manchester, a foreign correspondent in the 1950s and 1960s, returned home "to devote most of [his] time to writing," by which he meant writing books of history and biography. Malcolm W. Browne, after years in Vietnam, Argentina, and the former communist bloc, "yearned for meatier stories, stories about physics and chemistry," which he then wrote for The New York Times.

Other correspondents have come back because, like David Halberstam in 1966, they concluded that "America had become the most interesting country in the world," or, like NBC's Robert Hager in 1973, there was "more news interest in the United States than abroad."

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For a few, becoming a foreign correspondent had been a mistake. "Got a late start," said Paul Delaney, who took up his first posting at the age of fifty-four. "Had I begun earlier in my career, I would've loved it more." A journalist who left Jeddah for New York said simply that he "got bored." A journalist who now prefers Pittsburgh to Bonn decided that "it wasn't terribly fulfilling." Janice C. Simpson, a Time writer, remembers her one overseas assignment as "a general discomfort ...particularly living and working alone as a black woman in Latin America." Being alone is part of the job description, although less so for television journalists, who have to travel as a collectivity. As Bob Deans of Cox Newspapers told me in Tokyo, his base for covering all of Asia, "a foreign correspondent should be a person who doesn't mind being alone."

The personal problems that cause reporters to leave foreign correspondence are most often the difficulty of reconciling marriage or family relations with a job that involves so much travel, danger, and unpredictability. Holger Jensen worked abroad from 1968 to 1983, then left Beirut with his wife and three-month-old daughter at the outbreak of civil war. Why did he stop being a foreign correspondent? "After years of covering wars and the third world, I finally decided to come back and live in the first world. The marital strains caused by foreign correspondence were a factor." James Smith, who worked for The Los Angeles Times from 1980 to 1990, also experienced job-related marriage difficulties. In August 1989 his South African wife returned to Johannesburg from his posting in Buenos Aires because she was unhappy away from home. A year later he left the Times and returned to South Africa, without a job, to try to save the marriage. He decided to change careers and entered an MBA program.

Children can also cause tensions between career and personal life. "With kids getting older, schooling became more of an issue," said David Shipler, whose oldest child was entering college when the family returned to the

United States after eleven years abroad. The AP's James Psipert and his wife spent sixteen years in Moscow, London, Johannesburg, and Nairobi. "All of our sons were born abroad. One of my sons asked me at breakfast one morning: 'Dad, are we really Americans?' It was time to come back."

Matthew Storin of The Boston Globe came back from Tokyo to be his paper's national editor. He had been city editor before going overseas. He was "primarily interested in an editing career," he commented. "Foreign assignment was considered part of this training." Coming home can, then, be the reason for going abroad.

For many the coming home is difficult. After fifteen years and four postings on three continents with The Washington Post, William L. Claiborne discovered how hard it can be for each member of the family. His wife missed the diverse cultures, and his daughter, who had been abroad since she was six, found her college classmates had interests far different from hers. The correspondent who has returned usually talks of lost independence: after having one's own office, a desk in a crowded newsroom becomes a symbol of a place in a crowded hierarchy. As Gay Talese wrote,

It is never easy for a foreign correspondent of The [New York] Times to return to the home office, no matter how severe his life might have seemed abroad. There are compensations with those hardships. One is not surrounded by so many editors, so much interoffice pettiness when one is thousands of miles away.

A further problem is that few newsroom jobs are better-better paid, more interesting, more creative. As Dan De Luce, an American freelance in Prague who writes for several U.S. newspapers and the English-language Prague Post, observed, "If I go home, what am I going to do—cover the city council?" There may be jobs on the foreign desk, but not all news organizations have a foreign desk, and editing is a skill very different from reporting. Major outlets have diplomatic correspondents in Washington, positions often filled by former foreign correspondents, although job descriptions for the two are very different. Some former overseas correspondents will be sent to New York to report from the United Nations. Finally, for others the best job after being a foreign correspondent is to be a foreign correspondent again, and they search for other employers who will send them overseas. Thus Mark Fineman now reports for The Los Angeles Times instead of The Philadelphia Inquirer. But most who remain in daily journalism get assignments that are not connected with what they did abroad. They cover the Justice Department in Washington or report from Denver for the AP or even, as Richard Eder has, become a paper's book and film critic.

Former foreign correspondents with marquee value sometimes eventually accept high-level government appointments, usually as spokespersons (Bernard Kalb at the State Department, Ron Nessen at the White House) or as directors of information agencies (John Chancellor at Voice of America, Gene Pell and Kevin Klose at Radio Free Europe). Several have become ambassadors, such as Herman Nickel (South Africa) and Smith Hempstone Jr. (Kenya). The experience of being a spokesperson is rarely satisfactory. Kalb, for example, resigned to protest a government disinformation program that was reported in The Washington Post. But increasingly there is a revolving door that can return them to journalism. Dean Fischer had been Time's correspondent in Nairobi, London, and Jerusalem before he became spokesperson for Secretary of State Alexander Haig; after that he became Time's correspondent in Cairo.

Some former correspondents remain abroad as expatriates, especially if they have a foreign spouse, choosing a place where the living is less expensive or more pleasant. Others find lives after journalism. Steven Rattner of The New York Times became an investment banker specializing in media companies. Peter Osnos of The Washington Post joined a major New York book publisher. When Newsweek closed its South Pacific operation in 1989, Carl Robinson, after almost 20 years as a foreign correspondent, "decided to make a break and open my longtime dream restaurant, Vietnamese food. Business is great."

In 1940, when he was 19 and a sophomore at Harvard, Ben Bradlee was part of an "adult development" study in which a psychiatrist noted that he had an "emotional feeling toward [the film] 'A Foreign Correspondent.' As a matter of fact, he has seen this picture four times and is looking forward to seeing it again. He feels that a foreign correspondent is one of the most 'romantic' and 'glamorous' persons that live today. He is looking forward to doing this sort of work."

And indeed, foreign correspondents looking back often recall the compensations as exceptional. There was the world to see. "Give me a road map or an official airline guide," commented David Lamb of The Los Angeles Times, "and I can lose myself for hours." There were events to witness. Asked to list three of the most memorable, Christiane Amanpour of CNN named the Gulf War, famine in Africa, and civil war in Yugoslavia. Joseph Albright of Cox Newspapers particularly recalled the bombing of Libya, the terrorist attack on the U.S. marine barracks in Beirut, and travels with Afghani guerrillas. For Deborah Wang of National Public Radio it was the Gulf War, the Kurdish crisis in Iraq, and the Cambodian civil war. And for any correspondent there was always the self-testing. Ryszard Kapuscinski, the Polish journalist, remembered, "I was driving along a road where they say no white man can come back alive. I was driving to see if a white man could, because I had to experience everything for myself."

A world to see. Events to witness. Testing oneself. Interesting people. Some ask for nothing more. Others, of course, found the romance was rarely what it had been cracked up to be. Standing in a roped-off area at the edge of the tarmac of Rhein Main Airbase waiting for the arrival of several recently freed hostages, a reporter was heard saying to no one in particular, "You know, being a foreign correspondent is like being a maitre d' in a fine restaurant. You meet too many distinguished people under such humiliating circumstances."■

Nigerian Editor Receives Lyons Award

On October 26, the Nieman Foundation presented the 1995 Louis M. Lyons Award for Conscience and Integrity in Journalism to Olatunji Dare, former editorial chairman for The Guardian Group of Newspapers in Lagos, Nigeria. When the 1995 Class of Nieman Fellows selected Dare he was still chairman and columnist for what was considered the most responsible newspaper in Nigeria.

The Guardian, however, had been shut down in August 1994 by Gen. Sani Abacha after the paper reported on power struggles within his military government. This fall, The Guardian was allowed to resume publication under rigid self-censorship terms after its publisher recanted to the government and the newspaper printed an abject apology for its earlier behavior. Dare refused to knuckle under and resigned. The United States Ambassador to Nigeria, Walter C. Carrington, who nominated Dare for the Lyons Award, wrote:

"Giving this award to Dr. Dare would recognize not only his courage, but that of all his colleagues. It would help stop the government from silencing Dr. Dare, a man whose life exemplifies the highest traditions of journalism. It would give moral support to the Nigerian press at a time when it desperately needs such help."

Born in Kabba, Kwara State, Nigeria, in 1944, Dare received a bachelor's degree in mass communication from the University of Lagos in 1974. He received a master degree from the Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism in 1977 and a doctorate at Indiana University in 1983. These are experts from an article Dare wrote for Nieman Reports:

"These are the worst of times for the Nigerian press, which has more newspapers, radio and television stations than all the other countries of West Africa put together, and in which the problems and prospects of the media in that region are perhaps more accurately reflected. At this writing, 17 titles comprising two dailies and their Sunday editions, one weekly newsmagazine, one business weekly and assorted journals and periodicals published by the Concord and Punch groups have for unexplained reasons been kept out of circulation for a year by a banning order that the government says cannot be challenged in any courts of law...."

The Guardian apology "was made despite a court ruling that the decree under which The Guardian was purportedly banned was no decree at all, but a legislative punishment impermissible even under what remains of the Nigerian constitution...." Four editors were in jail and two others in hiding; the editors and staff of the weekly Tell abandoned their office but continued to publish "in the most improbable of circumstances...a tribute to the resourcefulness and perseverance of the staffers."

"Ironically, these travails occurred in the aftermath of the June 12, 1993, presidential election that was supposed to be the culmination of the seven-year program of transition from military to democratic rule. At no time in the 126-year history of the Nigerian press have so many newspapers been banned. At no time has the political climate been so illiberal and yet, paradoxically, there is some truth to the claim that the Nigerian press still ranks among the best in Africa.

"No first-time visitor to Nigeria can fail to be astonished at the publications on offer, ranging from the complaisant, fawning newspapers sponsored by the government or its clients, to newspapers and magazines with banner headlines that would in other African countries attract a prosecution for seditious libel at the very least. In between are independent and, for the most part, privately owned newspapers that pursue the news thoroughly and with a sense of responsibility and professionalism.

"The latter group is now an endangered species, however. The publications that are yet to be unbanned, and the unbanned Guardian, belong in this group. But the newspapers and magazines that often do willful violence to the facts and to the reputations of innocent individuals have been spared and are thriving. The official thinking seems to be that nobody takes them seriously and that banning them might confer on them a respectability they do not deserve."■

1996 Nominees Sought

The Nieman Foundation invites nominations for the 1996 Louis M. Lyons Award for conscience and integrity in journalism. The winner, who receives a $1,000 honorarium, will be selected by the current class of Nieman Fellows on the basis of work done in 1995. Any full-time print or broadcast journalist is eligible.

Nominations must be made by third parties. News organizations may nominate their employees. Applications, which must be postmarked by February 1, 1996, must include an official letter of nomination, a one-page biography of the nominee, two letters of recommendation and three samples of the nominee's work. The applications should be sent to the Lyons Award Committee, Nieman Foundation, One Francis Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138 USA. Suggestions can be made on the Internet to yingchan@fas.harvard.edu.

Lewis on Soros

By David C. Lewis

My assignment was to do a profile of "an interesting im migrant" for a show for Cable News Network. When I approached George Soros, he agreed, on one condition: that I travel with him on his next trip to Europe. The billionaire philanthropist and philosopher wanted to be seen in action where he was giving his money away, not just where he was making it, on the trading floor in New York. While I found the idea of an all-expense paid jaunt through Europe inherently tedious, especially the two and a half free days in Prague with nothing to do except have boozy lunches with fellow 1994 Nieman Jaroslav Veis, I grudgingly agreed to the task.

The trip began in London, with Soros, who became famous in 1992 as "the man who broke the Bank of England" by making about a billion dollars in one day by betting against the British pound, doing heavy duty publicity on his new book of edited "conversations" called "Soros on Soros." He dashed around town in his chauffeured BMW station wagon from book signing to radio and TV interviews. I spent much of my time sleeping off jet lag and watching this 65-year-old whirlwind with awe.

We met first at a booksellers' party hosted by his publishing company. Soros was introduced to the crowd by one of the top fellows for the publisher, who told a long story about a dancing dog. The punch line was something about how the dog should be congratulated for dancing, even if it didn't make much sense. The inference was that Soros should be congratulated for making his philanthropic efforts around the world, even if some are suspicious of his plans. I asked his bemused public relations person, the energetic Frances Abouzeid, if Soros had ever been compared to a dancing dog before. "Not in my memory" she said with a smile.

With other American reporters I breakfasted the next morning with Soros, at his elegant London pied-a-terre on Onslow Gardens. The press asked him predictable financial questions, which bored him. He lit up when the discussion turned to the world of ideas and foreign affairs. He so obviously wanted to talk about Bosnia and the United Nations and not about the future of the yen.

I interviewed Soros three times. The first interview was in Budapest, at the Central European University, which he had created to spread his ideas. He had recently moved the school from Prague, and appropriately, had put it in a former prison he had bought. He arrived an hour late and seemed uncharacteristically frazzled. It turned out "the fund lost a little money" over the last couple of days. I asked what "a little money" meant to him. "About a billion," he replied with a smile "...but it's good. Keeps you on your toes. A billion here, a billion there..."

Despite his billions, Soros says he doesn't really care that much about money, it's merely "a means to an end." The end for his is philanthropy, and it's what makes him interesting. In a sense he's created a personal foreign policy with the nearly billion dollars he has given away. He believes, and wants others to believe, that "it's not enough to be concerned with ourselves, our narrow interests, either as an individual or as nation....We should be concerned with what goes on in the rest of the world."

The interview really began after I got uninspired answers to the usual questions about his money, success and childhood. He came alive when, slightly annoyed with his demeanor, I asked him if it was boring being treated like a great man all the time. "Yes!" he replied, and finally became engaged. We continued to talk as we wandered around Budapest, shooting video as we walked over one of the old bridges crossing the Danube..

Soros had gone to Budapest to meet with staffers from 15 of his foundations. I watched him work the issues with his foundation heads. I also got to enjoy smoky barroom conversations with skinny Sarajevans and beefy Ukrainians, while learning how disgusting the Hungarian brandy Unicum is. Soros's people spoke with grim pleasure of their various challenges, from the everyday inconvenience of the lack of hot water in Moldova to the anti-Semitic attacks Soros and his people face in Belarus.

And what I came to understand from this odd collection of free thinkers is that Soros is essentially trying to test his philosophical theories about "Open and Closed Societies" through them. Instead of studying his philosophical concepts from afar, he is trying to help plant his democratic ideals. He does it by giving his millions to local activists who then plant the seeds of freedom. He channels the money through foundations he has started, mostly in Eastern Europe, in 25 countries.

One of Soros's greatest success has been in his native Hungary, where he jump-started dozens of educational and cultural groups that quickly spread ideas that had been hidden. A stroke of genius was giving hundreds of copying

machines to government scientific institutes. Before the government knew what had happened they had lost control over the flow of information.

Yet even though Soros has extraordinary power in the world of financial markets and through his foundations, he remains unconvinced of his own genius. He takes himself far less seriously than others. In fact, for a billionaire, Soros is surprisingly humble and approachable. He enjoys nothing more than having his ideas challenged and has a sharp sense of humor, especially when it is focused on himself. While he isn't a particularly warm person, it's not because he's arrogant. It's just that he's not the touchy-feely type. Despite the adulation he receives, and the fact that he literally gets to play God with the money he gives to desperate people, he understands that he isn't superhuman. Perhaps childhood experiences hiding in basements to avoid the Nazi tyranny gave him a sense of mortality that keeps him disarmingly down-to-earth.

At a speech he gave early in the trip at the London School of Economics, he described his weird global status as having created "the illusion that I have something to say." He has a complicated philosophical theory he calls "reflexivity" which is how he approaches both investing and life. Boiled down, this means that he assumes that most decisions, including his, are wrong. What matters, is how you react. He believes that he merely reacts better than others, especially to his own mistakes. He attributes his success to both luck and to being just a touch sharper than the rest.

After Budapest, I traveled with Soros to Graz, Austria. He was there to meet with refugee college students from the former Yugoslavia, now scattered all over Europe. He's paying for them to continue their education. We flew in a private plane Soros had rented for the day, though he usually flies commercial and does not surround himself with the trappings of great wealth. The plane was so small that my producer, Amos Gelb, and half the camera equipment, got left on the tarmac in Budapest. In his book, Soros describes himself as a "classic limousine liberal:" someone who became committed to a cause only once he became rich. I reminded him of this as we were zipping along in this winged limo. "Well, I don't know..." he said with a laugh, looking at the cramped space, "It's not really up to my standards!"

After four hours in Graz we flew onto Prague where Soros was to appear on a panel and meet with President Vaclav Havel at the top of the historic Old Town Hall. When Havel arrived, the TV lights and crowd descended on him. For the first time in my many days of travel with Soros, he was not the most important person in the room. He stood off to one side, as if he didn't know what to do when not the center of attention. He actually looked a little put out.

After a private meeting with Havel, Soros was back to his usual bouncy self. He and I walked down the many steps of the building together and he asked my reaction to a new idea. He had come up with a way to encapsulate his philosophy into a single slogan, simply: "The Right To Be Wrong." I suggested he put it on T-shirts.

Like many journalists who can live vicariously through their subjects, I began to imagine we had established a camaraderie of sorts. Our parting moment in Prague quickly brought me back to reality. I asked him to sign a copy of his book for my businessman brother-in-law, then, thinking our time together over the last 10 days would make him write something amusing, I asked him to sign my copy as well. "Sorry," he said, "but what's your name again?" Ah well!■

Peter Jennings Explains His Interest in Faith

Peter Jennings, Senior Anchor and Editor of the American Broadcasting Company's "World News Tonight," spoke at the Harvard Divinity School's Center for the Study of Values in Public Life, on November 15, 1995. Here are excerpts from his speech:

During one discussion we had at ABC about covering the faith factor in people's lives, a young producer pointed out the dilemma this way. A plane had crashed. One survivor was confronted by a reporter who asked, "How did you manage to get through this alive?" "God got me through," answered the passenger." "Yes, but what really happened?" countered the reporter.

There is a fundamental difference in the way we as secular journalists see the truth and the definition of truth accepted by many people of religious faith. People of faith believe that what they believe is true. We secular journalists are trained to believe that it is our obligation to put what we encounter to a rational test that we can comprehend.

In almost every corner of the world I have seen, as any foreign correspondent who was paying attention would, how people's faith has sustained them in times of great worldly stress. Even before a Polish Pope had been selected I had seen how Catholicism was an element of survival for millions of people in the darkest days of Communism. I went to Poland with John Paul on that first astonishing trip home for him.

I have reported on the new freedom for the Russian Orthodox Church in Russia, seen first hand what a profoundly destructive force religion has been in the former Yugoslavia and earlier in Northern Ireland.

Most of all I had the good fortune to spend seven years in the Middle East, where the Bible is quite literally a guidebook, and where I lived every day with the great impact that Judaism and Islam have had on one of the great news stories of any time.

Eleven years ago when I came back to my current job, and began to wander around this country again, I was very struck by how in the midst of such plenty, so many Americans were hungry for something more than our vaunted consumer society could provide them. And very slowly I began to realize the most obvious fact—that people's faith and religious beliefs were connected in so many ways to everything that was going on around me.

And I am completely convinced that there is such a dimension to many news stories, and that when we report on that added ingredient we more accurately capture the human experience and thus we are more relevant as reporters.■

News Alone Is Not Enough

By Tom Regan

A few months ago, it was all so easy. You put your paper on the World Wide Web, or on a commercial service. You hired a few people with HTML/CGI skills to "repurpose" your content, and perhaps a few others to sell ad space. You weren't making money yet, but you were an industry leader.

But that was then, and this is now...

Simply sticking your content—or "shovelware"—on a web site just doesn't cut it any more. With the tsunami of newspapers flooding the Internet, the need to differentiate yourself is crucial. And the introduction of programming languages like Java, and Microsoft's Blackbird, means the need to stay on the cutting edge of on-line technology is greater than ever.

Then again, maybe it doesn't...

All of which sums up the debate taking place within electronic publishing circles about the best way to create an on-line product.

One side believes that only repurposed content will make the grade because it's relatively easy and cheap to produce, and it's what the people want.

Internet publishing guru Eric Meyer argued this case recently during an on-line discussion about TimesLink's decision to move from Prodigy to the Web. Meyer noted, "Nearly every shred of evidence I've found points to the idea of general-interest on-line newspapers functioning best as 'technically' repackaged extensions of print newspapers, and not as separate editorial entities."

"Trying to make more out of on-line publishing than it is likely ever to be isn't just foolhardy for an individual newspaper," Meyer continued. "It hurts the industry by contributing to a fad image..."

Meanwhile, the other side hates shovelware. They long for products unique in their own rights, products that take advantage of the opportunities presented by the Internet—especially its ability to allow users to interact with reporters and with each other.

Rosalind Ruskin, another Internet publishing expert, falls into this camp.

"To invite readers to join us in this brave new interactive environment, then brush them aside because we're too busy putting out the paper, is a strategy that will doom even the slickest on-line publications to failure," she wrote recently.

Well, both sides are right...and both sides are wrong. In fact, a multipurpose electronic news product is possible.

Two sorts of people visit newspaper sites: folks who want the news, and folks who want to talk about what's happening in the news. And so far, the folks who want the news outnumber those who want to talk about it, even in areas that offer both services.

That will change, however, with time, as a larger section of the general public comes to the Web. Yet there will still be a large number of those pure information seekers hunting for content.

So here are a few points to think about when designing a multipurpose web site:

- Remember your market is not just a local one. Many on-line papers have found huge numbers of readers in the ex-pat community—local residents who have moved away and want news from home. These people want news.
- The coming generation—the market of the future—wants their news on line. Our challenge is figuring out how to give it to them.
- The truth is that some people don't want to interact—they just want to read news. (For instance, yours truly.) If sites lack content, these info hounds won't be back.

On the other hand—

- Many people want to interact and your on-line publication can give them the place to do it.
- Interactivity creates a better newspaper and a more involved staff.
- Creating a site that takes advantage of technology is important. Being cool still counts for a lot on the Web.

The answer—a site that fulfills the needs of both sides. But how?....

- Create a homepage that takes advantage of your brand name, while putting a new shine on it. Your WWW site shouldn't look exactly like your print product. Nor does it need to look like something from another planet.
- Use that homepage to help create that sense of community, of which the newspaper is the key element in keeping members of the community informed.
- Pick the best of each edition for the on-line site—say 10-15 stories. Offer a brief summary of each story that leads into more in-depth coverage. Let the user decide how much he or she wants to read.
- Link these stories with audio, video and chat groups—and other sites. Build an interactive community around each important story.
- Give your readers a place to talk about what is happening in their world. Build communities around specific issues—fleshed out by the paper's content.

So in the words of my old pottery teacher, make the flaw part of the design. The end result will be a dynamic on-line product that will keep people informed, involved, and coming back for more.■

Tom Regan is the Managing Editor of The Christian Science Monitor's On-line Edition, due to hit Cyberspace in early 1996. Tom also writes about the Internet and on-line publishing for The Halifax (Nova Scotia) Daily News, and NANDO's on-line site. You can find Tom's homepage at http://www1.usa1.com/~tregan/Home/tom.html.

Books

The Making of a Great Editor

A Good Life
Newspapering and Other Adventures
Benjamin Bradlee
Simon & Schuster. 514 Pages. $27.50.

By Nick Kotz

That Benjamin Crowningshield Bradlee and some of his friends chose careers in newspapering gives "A Good Life" a special appeal for reporters and editors. The unexpected pleasure in reading Ben Bradlee's memoir is to discover that it opens with an absorbing and meaningful coming-of-age story. With literary grace and irreverent wit, Bradlee describes how a generation of young Americans, tested and matured by World War II, came home fired with a romantic determination to make a better world, and to live a good life in the process.

"A Good Life" captures a particular blend of wartime experience and postwar optimism that fueled the careers of young veterans from the generation of John F. Kennedy. Kennedy's and Bradlee's lives crossed and connected at a critical moment in their careers, which heightens this story of a generation confidently coming to power in America.

Bradlee devotes nearly half the book to his pre-Watergate life—from growing up in Back Bay Boston with the silver spoon in his mouth tempered by childhood polio and Depression reality—to a devil-may-care Harvard education during wartime, to his three years as a young naval officer on a destroyer in South Pacific combat, to his joyful, striving adventures honing the skills to become a fine reporter and editor. This journey is enlivened with well-told anecdotes that make you laugh as Bradlee punctures pomposity, cheer as he learns how to navigate a destroyer under fire, and appreciate that special comradeship of newspapermen and women that he portrays so lovingly.

The second half of Bradlee's memoir, from Kennedy's presidency through Watergate and its aftermath, however, is somewhat less satisfying, perhaps because these are many times-told tales to which Bradlee adds little new information, and few new insights. (Or is it because we've already seen the movie?) Bradlee is candid in saying that this is "a memoir pure and simple, memories of the events that have left their mark on me," and "nowhere near a collection of my thoughts on the state of journalism, or on the proper relationship between the press and public policy. I'm still collecting them—still changing my mind."

Deep reflection about either journalism, or history, or life is not the forte of this engaging man who was perhaps the most important newspaper editor of the last 25 years. He has other talents.

Bradlee is foremost a journalist of action who loves great stories and knows how to inspire others to go out and get them. (I personally observed and benefited from his leadership during the three years I worked for The Post in the early 1970's.)

He provides a valuable account of The Washington Post's recipe for mastering the Watergate story: boundless energy and determination, courage and imagination, deep conviction of journalism's obligation to expose wrongdoing, finely honed basic skills in investigative reporting, and classically excellent leadership from publisher Katharine Graham down through the ranks of editors. And finally, a newspaper owner with the resources and the commitment to spend them to achieve excellence.

It sounds so simple. But remove any one of those elements, and the most ambitious investigative reporting into powerful institutions will flounder and fail. As Bradlee is quick to admit, there is no way he could have achieved similar results with The Washington Star, a once fine newspaper that eventually

died because afternoon newspapers are no longer viable in large metropolitan markets.

Bradlee's memoir begins with evocative memories of his privileged boyhood in Boston, his years at prep school and at Harvard. His father, Frederick Josiah Bradlee, Jr., whose family roots in America went back to 1631, became an All-American football player at Harvard, and was sailing along as an investment banker until he lost everything in the Depression. Helping his father, Ben learned early on how to work with his hands. He attended the right schools because maternal grandparents and other relatives picked up the bills. Bradlee is filled with affection and appreciation for the hard-drinking, blunt-speaking father who scrapped for a living, as well as for his socialite mother, whose greatest ambition was for her children to become well educated.

At St. Mark's School, Bradlee, at age 14, was one of 20 boys stricken by polio. His roommate died. Ben Bradlee was paralyzed. In two years, however, he fought his way back—first to walking clumsily, then to full physical vigor, helped by the demanding encouragement of a former Notre Dame football player. At age 16, he got his first taste of newspapering as a copy boy for The Beverly (Mass.) Evening Times, where he was paid $2 for a column of local news shorts, and learned that "people will talk if they feel comfortable."

On August 8, 1942, Bradlee, age 20, graduated from Harvard "by the skin of his teeth" at 10 a.m.; was commissioned an ensign in the Navy at noon, with immediate assignment to a new destroyer; and married Jean Saltonstall, "the first and only girl I had slept with," at 4 p.m. He was soon on his way to postgraduate school in the South Pacific.

In two years aboard the U.S.S. Philip (DD 498), and another year aboard other destroyers, Bradlee and his shipmates fought the Pacific war. Eight months out of college, he qualified as Officer of the Deck, in command of a 370-foot warship, responsible for the safety of more than 300 men. His regular job was command of the combat information center.

"This responsibility was more educating than Harvard, more exciting, more meaningful than anything I'd ever done," writes Bradlee. "This is why I had such a wonderful time in the war. Loved the excitement. Even loved being a little bit scared. Loved the sense of achievement, even if it only meant getting from point A to point B....I found that I liked making decisions. I liked sizing up men and picking the ones who could do the best job. Most of all I liked the responsibility, the knowledge that people were counting on me, that I wouldn't let them down."

(This passage about World War II could just as well be a description of Bradlee during the Watergate story nearly 30 years later. Yes, there was the search for truth, getting to the bottom of the story behind the burglary and the cover-up. But in the end it was all-out war with Richard Nixon, and Bradlee relished fighting it as much as he did World War II.)

After the war Bradlee joined a group of veterans who pooled $57,000 to found and run The New Hampshire Sunday News in competition with The Manchester Union-Leader. For 25 months, Bradlee and his merry band of six partners put out a 64-page, four-section paper that won awards and exposed corruption in state government. The paper went under, writes Bradlee, when New Hampshire's conservative business leaders "chose the right-wing nut [William Loeb] over the liberals."

Bradlee next went to work as a court reporter for the metro section of The Washington Post, as press attaché to the American Embassy in London, then as Newsweek's European correspondent where he wrote vivid battlefield dispatches on the 1956 war between Israel and Egypt. Later, he came back to the United States with his second wife, Tony Pinchot, to join Newsweek's Washington bureau.

With Newsweek about to be sold, Bradlee had the nerve and the good instincts to call Post publisher Philip Graham in the middle of the night, initiating the process through which The Post bought Newsweek. As a finder's fee, Bradlee was given stock in The Washington Post Company, and he became Newsweek's Washington bureau chief. A few years later, he moved over to the newspaper, to launch the ascent of The Washington Post from a good to a superior newspaper. He jump-started the process by hiring the best seasoned professionals he could find from other publications, while The Post started developing its own talent.

Bradlee's youth, his wartime service and his early journalism career comprise the most compelling, best written part of his book. In addition, those experiences combined to prepare the editor to take on Watergate and dozens of other challenging stories—evidence that a person is handicapped to achieve the very best in journalism if he or she comes to this work equipped with no significant experience in life other than a college education.

Buried deep in this memoir is a curious account of an old episode about which Bradlee raises at least as many questions as he answers. In a newsworthy revelation, he offers his version of the aftermath of an affair more than 30 years ago between President John F. Kennedy and Mary Meyer, the sister of Tony Bradlee, Bradlee's wife at that time.

This, in summary, is Bradlee's story:

In October, 1964, Mary Meyer was murdered by a single gunshot wound as she walked along the towpath by the C&O canal in Georgetown. (The man charged with the crime was not convicted.) The next day, following the instructions of Meyer's closest friend, Anne Truitt, Bradlee and his wife searched Meyer's house for her diary. Twice during the prolonged search, at Meyer's house, they encountered James Jesus Angleton, the controversial CIA expert on counterintelligence. Bradlee tells us that Angleton's wife Cicely also was a good friend of Mary Meyer, but he expresses "complete surprise" to learn that Angleton also was looking for the diary.

Bradlee and his wife found the diary in artist Meyer's studio, and discovered for the first time in reading it that Meyer

had carried on an extended affair with President Kennedy, who had been killed just 11 months earlier. The next day, Bradlee and his wife gave the diary to Angleton, believing he would destroy it. At least 12 years later—perhaps longer—Ben and Tony Bradlee learned that Angleton, "for whatever perverse or perverted reasons," had not destroyed the diary. Tony Bradlee demanded that Angleton give her the diary, and when he did, she burned it.

One can accept Bradlee's explanation that he did not know about Kennedy's affair with Meyer or with anyone else. One can appreciate Bradlee's attitude at the time of his sister-in-law's murder that the diary was a private document which should be destroyed. What is harder to digest is his tone in 1995 "that this was in no sense a public document despite the braying of the knee jerks about some public right to know."

Even in October of 1964, there were a lot of unaoswered questions about the assassination of John F. Kennedy. The CIA, as well as the FBI, was still busy investigating the circumstances of Kennedy's murder. Would not the CIA and FBI have a legitimate interest in knowing whatever they could find out about Kennedy's many love affairs—including the one in which he shared a mistress with a Mafia boss?

With what we now know about Kennedy, Bradlee still expresses puzzlement about the interest of James Angleton in the diary, not to mention the interest of historians. And he doesn't bother to remind his readers at the relevant point in his story that Cord Meyer, Mary's estranged husband, also was a high ranking official of the CIA.

Cicely Angleton, the widow of James Angleton, disputes Bradlee's account about her husband's role with the diary. In an October 23, 1995 letter to the editor in The Washington Times, Mrs. Angleton and Anne Truitt offer a much different version of events. (According to them, Anne Truitt's instructions on the night of Mary Meyer's death were that Meyer wanted Angleton to obtain the diary and protect it.)

Sorting out these events may be impossible. James Angleton was a man who saw plots within plots as he searched for Soviet moles within the CIA. But if Ben Bradlee chose to open up his version of the Kennedy/Meyer diary story at this late date, he should have done so in a much more meticulous manner, befitting his skills as a reporter and editor.

The moral here, if any, is that the work of journalists becomes even more complicated when they have close relationships with public officials. Having said that, Ben Bradlee has written a fine—if sometimes uneven—book about his truly distinguished career in American journalism.■

Nick Kotz, who has been a journalist in Washington for 30 years, is a former Pulitzer Prize-winning Washington correspondent for The Des Moines Register and a former Washington Post national reporter.

Reporters and Heroes of Vietnam

Once Upon a Distant War
William Prochnau
Times Books. 608 Pages. $27.50.

BY MURRAY SEEGER

If Robert Redford was Bob Woodward and Dustin Hoffman was Carl Bernstein, who will play David Halberstam and Neil Sheehan? "Once Upon a Distant War," the detailed story about the ace reporters who covered the early years of the Vietnam War, was sold to Home Box Office before publication.

There were days when the movies portrayed only make-believe journalists like those in "The Front Page," a play by and about Chicago newsmen that has been a hit on stage and in film. But truth is stranger than fiction, so the journalistic heroes of the Watergate scandal made easy movie heroes. We will have to wait and see if the Vietnam brethren can be transposed as well.

In historic terms, the coverage of Vietnam by Halberstam, Sheehan, Malcolm Browne, Peter Arnett, Charlie Mohr, Homer Bigart and others was to journalism what the war itself was to American politics and foreign policy. Their coverage changed American policy by changing domestic opinion about military intervention in what had been another country's colonial dispute.

Vietnam forced President Johnson to run for a full term, helped to defeat his second in command and introduced the Nixon era. Watergate changed America further by forcing the resignation of Nixon; the journalism of Vietnam set the stage for the journalism of Watergate.

So, are journalists naturals for cinema beatification? Prochnau's book lends itself to that conclusion because he has given the well-known adventures of Halberstam, Sheehan, et al., a soap opera quality. His version goes deeply into the personal lives of all of its characters and has the advantage of Sheehan's recent writings on Vietnam.

A former Washington Post reporter who did two tours in Vietnam, Prochnau has assimilated all of the available documentation on the journalists' war with White House, Pentagon and Vietnamese officialdom. A younger generation of readers for whom Vietnam is ancient history will find this a fascinating read.

On the other hand, the book covers only a short period of that agonizing period of history. Many of the diversions into the correspondents' personal lives do not contribute to the central plot—how a handful of journalists bravely and successfully challenged a distorted official policy of their own government.■

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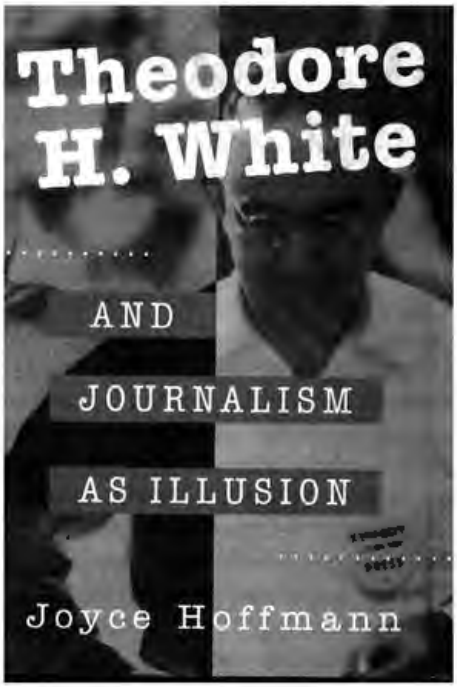
How Teddy White Shaped Perceptions

Theodore H. White and Journalism as Illusion
Joyce Hoffman
University of Missouri Press. 224 Pages. $27.50.



By Marcus W. Brauchli

In April 1962, Theodore H. White arranged to interview President John F. Kennedy in the Oval Office. White had mythologized Kennedy a year earlier in the first of his political epics, "The Making of the President." Now, he wanted to chronicle the administration.

After some thought, White had decided to profile the youthful government's éminence grise, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, and he wanted to offer Kennedy the chance to characterize his cabinet's senior member. To White's astonishment, the President immediately displayed exasperation and anger with his secretary of state.

"When Rusk talks, he never gets it out on the table," the president complained. "There's nothing to chew on."

Taken aback, White later pondered his notes, then asked White House Press Secretary Pierre Salinger if the president intended for his views to appear. A worried Salinger quickly arranged another interview. Again the president was out of sorts. "How do you get rid of a secretary of state?" he asked White.

When White's flattering profile of Rusk appeared in June 1962 under the headline, "Does He Drive or Is He Driven?," Kennedy was quoted only as saying, "I wouldn't want to make a decision on a vital matter involving our security until I'd heard his view. He sits on my right." Alone, it was an enigmatic, even meaningless, quotation; in the right context, it might have been incriminating. The problem was, White never supplied the context.

Indeed, Joyce Hoffman argues in an intriguing new book, "Theodore H. White and Journalism as Illusion," White routinely cheated his readers of context and truth. From his earliest days as a Time magazine correspondent in wartime Chongqing through his coverage of Watergate, White depicted the world as he wished it were, Hoffman writes, not as it was. He tried to shape events by shaping his coverage, and to preserve his access and the reputations of those who trusted him. Truth was important, but—as always in politics—perception was truth, and Teddy White learned early he could shape perceptions.

It may be naive to suggest that any journalist could fail to learn the same lesson. Sensationalist newspapers of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries made a practice of influencing opinion, on everything from sexual scandal to, notably, the need for a war with the Spanish. And the list of influential journalists who tried to shape public policy and the national mood is marked more by its luster—Walter Lippmann, Joseph Alsop, James Reston—than by its brevity.

Hoffman is more interested in the persona of objectivity, the craving for truth that White projected in his renowned career. Indeed, in an irony Hoffman makes much of, White learned that he could shape the truth in his career-launching break with his first powerful boss, Time-Life founder Henry R. Luce. Luce, the son of missionaries in China, pressed White to praise and support China's wartime nationalist leader, Chiang Kai-shek. White, like most of the journalists then in China, considered Chiang a corrupt, ruthless and incompetent dictator, and filled his copy with arrows aimed at Chiang. Gradually, Luce began to filter White's copy to protect Chiang—so much so that White put a sign above his desk in the mud-walled press hut in Chongqing: "What is written in this office has no relation to the things that appear in Time magazine."

At Harry Luce's side, Teddy White learned the power of the press to shape public perception. It was, by Hoffman's lights, a lesson he never forgot or failed to use. He espoused objectivity but dwelt in a polemical realm. He engaged his subjects in conversations and letter exchanges on how they should act and what policies they should pursue. He let politicians and statesmen review and even rewrite articles about themselves.

In indicting White's purported objectivity, Hoffman has relied on a meticulous paper trail White himself left. From his days at Harvard College in the mid-1930's, White kept copies of his letters, his diaries, his notebooks, drafts of articles and books, even press credentials and the occasional trinket. Now stored at Harvard's Houghton Library, the materials gave Hoffman more than enough evidence for her case.

In the interest of disclosure, I should say that I met Hoffman in 1992, when she and I were plowing through the White archives—I out of curiosity at the end of a Nieman year, she for her book. The book, originally her Ph.D. dissertation, is sprinkled with personal anecdote and color that livens the story.

Hoffman misses some telling personal details that might have added a dimension to her book. For, beyond his desire to shape public perception or to convey what he wished were true, the Teddy White who emerges in the musty letters in Houghton Library was a deeply insecure man for much of his life. The tone he took in dispatches to Time or his colleagues there often was a false bravado; letters he wrote at the same time to his family depict a lonely, almost desperate young reporter, wanting badly to be accepted by the powerful people he met in his job.

Like so many journalists today in the world's capitals, White throughout his life mistook his sources' need for attention for respect for a reporter's views. White even had the audacity to suggest ambassadorial appointments to Kennedy. Hoffman only indirectly addresses this fundamental threat to independent and objective journalism, yet it surely shades the career of Teddy White—as it does so many journalists today.■

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Patching Up the Economy

Rethinking America:
A New Game Plan from the American Innovators: Schools, Business, People, Work
Hedrick Smith
Random House. 474 Pages. $25.

World Class: Thriving Locally in the Global Economy
Rosabeth Moss Kanter
Simon & Schuster. 416 Pages. $25.

For a country that is not exactly broke, a lot of people have prescriptions for fixing it. Or, at least, patching it up to get into the next century.

Hedrick Smith (Nieman Fellow 1970), a leading Kremlin-watcher who years ago switched his attention to America, and Rosabeth Moss Kanter, a professor and former editor at the Harvard Business School, provide two quite different approaches in the patch-and-fix-contest.

Smith's book draws on raw material gathered for a television documentary, "Challenge to America." While he and Ms. Kanter both profile some of the most successful modern American corporations, Smith is much more specific in his prescriptions for making the United States a better competitor in the world economy.

Smith has also studied the performances of Japan and Germany to get a good feel for the differences in educational systems that are so essential to training a work force able to achieve higher levels of technology in all forms of employment. He even explores official "industrial policy," a topic that is rarely discussed in this age of rampant privatizing.

Ms. Kanter concentrates on the success of several urban communities in reshaping their economies to enter the new world of global competition. She singles out Seattle, Cleveland, Boston, Miami and Greenville-Spartanburg, South Carolina.

To succeed, cities and surrounding communities must develop cooperative programs that will attract new foreign and domestic corporate investment through what she terms the "three C's: concepts, competence and connections." She paints a rosy portrait of towns that have apparently succeeded in adopting this formula.

But Ms. Kanter also concedes that the growth of new industry in South Carolina has done little to correct the problems of the core cities in the region or to make life better for minorities. Her analysis is faulty, in general, because she concentrates her attention almost exclusively on the decisions of business leaders and virtually ignores the interests of working men and women and the many who are outside the work force.

Smith, on the other hand, has talked with union leaders and explained successful collaborative arrangements that some corporations have made by taking workers into their confidence in decision-making.

Neither writer has much to say about official economic policy as influenced by the Federal Reserve Board of Governors, the White House or Congress. And neither has a proposal for dealing with the lowered standards of living faced by working people with less than highest-level skills. In the era of reduced government spending at all levels, the atmosphere for economic innovation is less ebullient than either of these writers allows.■—MS.

Connecting With the Community

Public Journalism & Public Life
Why Telling the News Is Not Enough
Davis "Buzz" Merritt
Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. 129 Pages. $17.50 pb, $36 hc.

By Robert W. Chandler

American journalism is no more free of fashions and new "truths" than any other American occupation. After World War II, some editors agreed with the Hutchins Report, dealing with problems and practices of metropolitan newspapers. Other editors were outraged because respected people had recommended oversight and public criticism of newspapers. Inside newsrooms support of the idea that editors and reporters should be "objective," should isolate themselves from their communities, was overwhelming.

Currently objectivity is under examination, or attack if you prefer. Now journalists discuss with varying degrees of approval or disdain the "public" journalism, or "civic" journalism views first circulated widely in studies by Jay Rosen of New York University.

A meeting of journalists can hardly be held without a speaker expounding upon the subject, or a panel discussing it. Trade papers and professional journals are filled with debate. Few of those discussions and few of those speeches are greatly enlightening.

Too few American journalists study or pay much attention to Rosen's theories. A notable exception was the late Jim Batten of the Knight-Ridder Newspapers. He experimented. He turned to a Knight-Ridder editor, "Buzz" Merritt, and a Knight-Ridder newspaper, The Wichita Eagle. He gave Merritt time and money to try some ideas. "Public Journalism & Public Life" is one result.

Merritt helps. He outlines major problems in American journalism, laying much blame on the widely held commitment to independence, to objectivity. He gives chapter and verse of various attempts to put Rosen's ideas into practice.

But he doesn't do us the biggest favor he could have done. He does not say exactly what "public" or "civic" journalism is. Nor has anyone else given us a useful, simple definition.

Merritt does, with telling detail, relate the problems he and some others see as the results of present practices—the alienation of the reading, viewing and listening public. Our public esteem is at a low ebb—as is the public esteem of Congress, of the White House, and of federal, state and local governments. In fact, there has been a major decline in public confidence of nearly every group, from medical practitioners to religious leaders.

Journalism does not respond to the concerns of its audience, he tells us. That audience in too many cases thinks we are a major part of the problem, and not helpful in trying to find solutions.

We caused our own problem. Absent simple definitions, one observer, The Washington Post's Geneva Overholser, listed the causes of the problem. Speaking of newspapers, she wrote, too many readers view us as negative, presenting each story as a conflict, hiring reporters more attuned with their sources than with their readers—and editors who allow it—and paying little or no attention to the voices and concerns of the public.

The answer, according to Merritt and various others, is to move beyond "objective" reporting—which often can be sterile reporting—and lead readers and the communities to get real. Get involved, lead the community into serious discussions of concerns, and thus lead to action and solutions. Participation by both journalists and the public is the answer. The aim is to help the public, politicians and various governments develop useful policies and courses of action that can improve life and solve problems.

Willingness to undertake such a course of action varies widely. Acceptance of blame is by no means universal. No doubt some disassociation exists simply because those who direct news coverage and editorial comment have little knowledge of and no real ties to the communities in which they are located, often temporarily.

I think problems are worst in institutions headed by the "traveling editor," someone in a community for as short a time as possible, trying to build a record, eyes fixed firmly on every prestigious prize or honor, which will result in promotion to a better job or a bigger community. The magic weapon too often used is a tired repeat of an exposé tried elsewhere, or a belief that fancy graphics can do the job that editorial staffs seem unable to do. That job is to attract the respect, if not the loyalty, of large groups of readers.

The practices of newspapers attempting to board the "public" or "civic" train vary widely. Some, as Merritt notes, form partnerships with local television stations or radio broadcasters. Some create their own focus groups on which to test ideas and programs. Many have editorial boards. One puts the telephone numbers of columnists at the end of each column. Some attempt to address the problems of specific turned-off groups. Others seem to be marketing-driven.

Attempts at instant magic seldom produce instant favorable results. We can measure a newspaper's circulation growth, or a broadcaster's audience. But those are influenced by factors other than public trust or respect. Promotion budgets, shifts in publication patterns, reorganizations of circulation departments and distribution systems, experiments in news presentation, the skills of individual reporters and the play

given popular columnists are only a few of the factors that can affect ratings or circulation figures.

In spite of the breadth and depth of the current discussion, the problems addressed by Merritt and others are not universal. There are newspapers and broadcast outlets that maintain the respect of readers and viewers.

They are closely connected with their communities, but do not act as shills for particular causes or groups. They do report the news without fear or favor. They do comment from strong principles, approving things they like and admire. They offer reasonable and responsible suggestions for solutions. They castigate what they see as the wrong steps of government, of business and of community groups, including the ubiquitous Chamber of Commerce.

They do not fear smiting evil hip and thigh. They do those things without attracting charges of pandering, something not welcomed by any American journalist.

These journalists report on public concerns and issues, not on huge questions of national or international import, but on such things as the safety of local school bus or transit systems, the cleanliness of local restaurants as measured by health inspections, the need for new pavement on well-traveled streets, the problems local citizens face in getting building permits, on successes as well as failures of local school systems and their graduates, needed improvements in libraries and other local institutions. Coverage and commentary emphasize things of direct and immediate interest to their audiences.

That is not selling out to boosterism, or kowtowing to those forces before which many readers feel powerless. Ratings then are good, remain so and improve. Circulation grows over time. Those practitioners are strong and respected voices in their communities because they understand those communities.

They are not looking for promotions to the next largest newspaper in the group. They do not send tape after tape to the Big Three networks, or to CNN or Fox, or to a selection of big market stations. They are the friends of their audiences; they know what problems concern those people. They furnish leadership to their communities, leadership in discussing and solving concerns of readers and viewers.

These journalists do not depend upon editorial boards to shape their opinions or to soften their criticisms. They need no crutches. They give voices to their audience, and the audience responds, in telephone calls, in vigorous and numerous letters to opinion pages on matters of local concern.

Occasionally a few words are passed on the street or at a lunch table. Wives and husbands are part of the process; they pass on information and opinions gathered at their workplaces and in various other gatherings from a service club to the PTA or PEO or during workouts at the favored body shop or athletic club. The newspaper is part of the community.

"Buzz" Merritt's book is of considerable value to those who want an exposure to the debate beyond the buzz words, who want to see general details of who tried what and some assessment of their success.■

Robert W. Chandler has been editor of The Bulletin in Bend, Ore. for 42 years. He is the founder of Western Communications, Inc., which owns The Bulletin and seven other small newspapers in Oregon and California.

Competing With Men

Broken Patterns: Professional Women and the Quest for a New Feminine Identity
Anita Harris
Wayne State University Press. 220 Pages. $39.95 hc, $17.95 pb.

BY LOIS FIORE

Anita Harris tells compelling stories in "Broken Patterns."

The stories are culled from interviews with 40 successful career women in their mid-30's who chose to go into traditionally male-dominated professions. Harris, a 1982 Nieman Fellow, is insistent in her questioning: why did they choose to become journalists, doctors, lawyers, when they knew how hard it would be for them to succeed? Was their decision influenced by the choices their stay-at-home mothers made in their lives? Their grandmothers? Fathers? How did they reconcile the emotional toughness needed to succeed in a man's world with the nurturing qualities so admired and identified with being a woman?

Harris describes the difficulty of competing with men in a male-dominated workplace as a "push-pull" conflict: being successful at work often means that women need to separate themselves from the values of their mothers; but the women also feel it important to stay emotionally connected to their mothers. The conflict is wrenching.

One of the journalist's interviewed, an editor of a newspaper, said "the emotional side is a help to you in reporting in a way that it may not be in other professions. It doesn't hinder you because it makes you sensitive to stories, to others, to what the management needs." But that emotional side caused problems when the woman became a manager because "every nuance of facial expression would register" and she "internalized everything....I wanted to achieve consensus to influence people rather than tell them what to do...."

Frustration runs strong in these stories. "Why," Harris asks, "despite all of the advantages these women had enjoyed, should the role of women and the role of professional still seem miles apart?"

A good question. Harris's questions and the answers she elicits from these professional women—struggling for, achieving, but often confused by success—are crucial for us to understand if we ever want to work, men and women together, with equality.■

Lois Fiore is Assistant to the Publisher of Nieman Reports.

Swallow Hard—We Aren't as Important as We Think

The Power of News
Michael Schudson
Harvard University Press. 272 Pages.
$29.95.

By Lorie Hearn

A bright pink flyer appeared on our newsroom bulletin board recently, advertising a seminar about jobs outside journalism. It's a disheartening subject, especially for those of us who can't imagine another calling and worry that we might not be capable of doing anything else.

It seems bad enough that newspapers are closing, downsizing and restructuring so many good people out of the business. But even among us who remain, soul searching about whether we still have a vital role in society seems to have become as much a part of newsroom banter as stories cooking for tomorrow's editions.

Journalists who are serious about raising the level of that conversation would be wise to pick up a copy of "The Power of News," a carefully documented book about the history of the American media and the role of news as culture. Its author, Michael Schudson, a Professor of Communications and Sociology at the University of California, San Diego, has no magic formula for quelling our worries. But some of his observations are useful for putting us in our place, which, in his estimation, is not a bad place to be.

Part of the gist of this book is that the media need to swallow hard and accept that we are not all of the things we imagine. Settle for reachable goals rather than the stars, abandon the notion that we can make a sweeping difference and be "schizophrenic" in sizing up the public whose attention we try to capture. Journalists have an essential role in democracy, Schudson concludes, but the message is strong that we better ratchet down whatever shreds of idealism we have left.

"American journalism may be better today than ever before," Schudson says, but "the media are not nearly as important as the media, media culture, the talk show culture, and popular reflexes suggest."

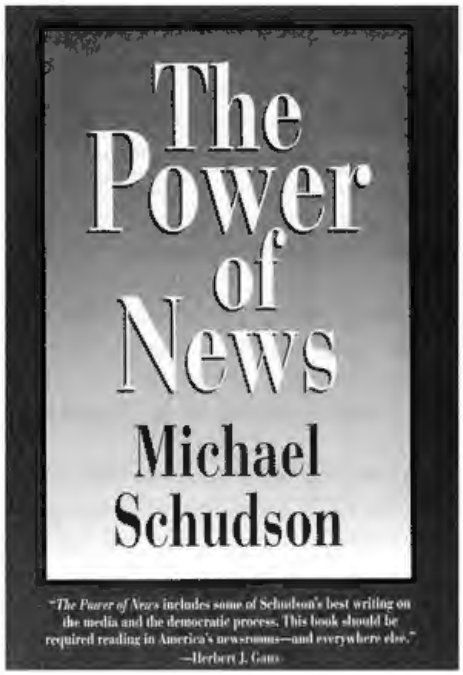
"Critics look at the press," he writes, "and see Superman when it's really just Clark Kent."

Make no mistake, Schudson does not tear down the media and leave them in a hapless heap. More accurately, he assumes the role of difficult taskmaster. There are a lot of facts in this book worth pondering.

Consider, for example, that the plethora of information today fools people into thinking they are informed. But the volume of available facts holds a false promise if people are not equipped to use the information. There is a big difference, Schudson notes, between a citizen with information and an informed citizen. Helping to build that framework, he suggests, should be one of the media's most important objectives.

"The Power of News" is a compilation of essays Schudson has written since 1982. They are introduced by a lengthy forward that can stand on its own as a primer for rethinking the media's position on the stage of American democracy.

"We can understand the news media better if we recognize that what they produce—news—is a form of culture. This is to assert that news is related to, but is not the same as, ideology; it is related to, but is not the same as, information; and it is potentially, but only indirectly, a social force," Schudson writes.



"Certainly," he says, "the press more often follows than leads; it reinforces more than it challenges conventional wisdom."

In shoring up his theories, Schudson tries to debunk common myths—the power of the press in the Watergate scandal, the perceived public popularity of an actor-turned-President, the impact of images over words—to name a few. He makes a strong case for the ability of words to "trump" visuals on TV.

This is all against a fascinating historical backdrop, which Schudson uses to suggest that as a culture, news (shared public knowledge) has ebbed and flowed with the currents of societal change. Schudson laments the fact that the history of American journalism is poorly recorded, so he sets about doing

impressive work, detailing the evolution of such indispensable modern journalistic tools as the summary lead and interviewing.

Schudson directs most of his commentary around political coverage. Because they are a traditional mainstay of journalists, politics and government are not a bad place to focus. Yes, maybe political reporters operate too much as insiders. And maybe we don't look behind the scenes enough. Maybe we need to shed some of our cynicism and be better guardians of tax dollars.

One of the weakest chapters may be Schudson's attempt to get to the bottom of "What is a Reporter?" by paralleling the autobiographies of Harrison Salisbury ("A Journey for Our Times") and Lincoln Steffens ("The Autobiography of Lincoln Steffens"). It is clear from his anecdotes, examples and insight throughout the book that Schudson got out of the university classroom and library often to talk to working journalists, but this chapter ends with the feeling that the question of "What is a Reporter?" is as elusive to reporters themselves. How true. The more useful question for us is posed in the essay's last paragraph: "who is the reader?"

The final analyses of citizenship are sobering yet disappointing. The essays in the book build up to something of a crescendo, igniting hope that all this meticulous documentation and study will provide a grand recipe for press redemption.

Not so. But this is perhaps more the fault of reader anticipation for an easy answer than Schudson's failure to deliver.

Schudson urges the media to act as if "classic democracy," and its ideal that all citizens are interested in public matters, could be a reality. At the same time, he says, we must acknowledge that this is not possible, that there are in fact only small interested constituencies. In this view, he says, the "schizophrenic" media are guardians of the public rather than communicators with people.

The media don't shape what people think, but rather what people think about, he says.

His observations about the decline of political parties in America, the increasing role of business in influencing the democratic process, and the dangers of opinion polling and the over-reporting of single-issue factions make sense. Much of it we know, but it's worth hearing again in a different context.

"I believe the news media can contribute to a more democratic society and should try to do so," Schudson writes.

Touché, Mr. Schudson.■

Lorie Hearn is Legal Editor for The San Diego Union-Tribune and was a 1995 Nieman Fellow.

Role of Faith at Waco

The Ashes of Waco:
An Investigation
Dick J. Reavis
Simon & Schuster. 320 Pages. $24.

A major problem with journalists' books is that they are often overtaken by events. In the rush to print this examination of the disastrous 1993 siege and raid of the Branch Davidian compound outside Waco, Texas, a lot of good investigative work will be lost in the continuing official re-examination of the case.

Dick Reavis (Nieman Fellow 1990), a journalist who knows his Texas, has gone beyond the usual reportorial territory to tell us the theological attraction for the small band of followers who clung to the words of David Koresh even as an army of federal law agents surrounded their shabby headquarters.

The Waco case is worth examining in this detail since it has been reopened by Congress and proved to be a precursor to the later Idaho shootout and Oklahoma City bombing disaster and the new attention to the rise of armed, unofficial militias. ■—MS.

About Journalism

Basement Seat to History, A: Tales of Covering Presidents Nixon, Ford, Carter and Reagan for the Voice of America. Philomena Jurey. Linus Press. 364 Pages. $16.95 pb.

Electronic Magazines: Soft News Programs on Network Television. William C. Spragens. Praeger. 168 Pages. $49.95.

Free Speech Yearbook, Volume 32, 1944. Dale H. Herbeck, ed. Southern Illinois University press. 256 Pages. $49.95 hc, $19.95 pb.

Managing the Publishing Process: An Annotated Bibliography. Bruce W. Speck. Greenwood Press. 360 Pages. $69.50.

Nothing to Read: Newspapers and Elections in a Social Experiment. Jeffery J. Mondak. University of Michigan Press. 191 Pages. $16.95 pb.

Pictures at an Execution: An Inquiry into the Subject of Murder. Wendy Lesser. Harvard University Press. 270 Pages. $24.95 hc, $14.95 pb.

Popular Religious Magazines of the United States. P. Mark Fackler and Charles H. Lippy, eds. Greenwood Press. 616 Pages. $125.

Press in Time of Crisis, The. Lloyd E. Chiasson Jr., ed. Greenwood Press. 272 Pages. $18.95.

Press, Rosenbergs, and the Cold War, The. John F. Neville. Praeger. 224 Pages. $55.

Radio-TV Newswriting: A Workbook. K. Tim Wulfemeyer. Iowa State University press. 188 Pages. $24.95.

Warriors' Words: A Consideration of Language and Leadership. Keith Spencer Felton. Praeger. 224 Pages. $55.

Women's Periodicals in the United States: Consumer Magazines. Kathleen L. Endres and Therese L. Lueck, eds. 528 Pages. $99.50.

Readers as Seen by Artists, Marketers and Hollywood

News for All: America's Coming-of-Age with the Press
Thomas C. Leonard
New York: Oxford University Press. 304 Pages. $30.00.

By Loren Ghiglione

The history of news, Catherine L. Covert, the Syracuse University scholar, persuasively argued, too often gets told only through the exploits of media hotshots who personify autonomy, change and victory, reporters who publish blockbuster stories first, moguls who win big-city newspaper wars, editors who introduce technological innovations.

What if we looked at the history of news, however, from the viewpoint of those on the receiving end? Thomas C. Leonard, Associate Dean at the Graduate School of Journalism, University of California, Berkeley, offers a refreshingly original perspective on U.S. journalism by examining news readers as viewed by artists, targeted by marketers and caricatured by Hollywood screenwriters.

Americans' passion for news, Leonard argues, has tied them together as citizens. News has helped create what Leonard calls "a democratic public in the marketplace," a valued sense of national community that early American artists portrayed in images of readers and listeners gathered in taverns or at home.

Through the end of the 19th Century, the myth of the male as the only person with access to newspapers and time to read them was conveyed in paintings of home hearths where, almost without exception, the father or husband, seated in his throne chair, devoured the paper. "There seem to be no paintings of the American home before the end of the 19th Century," writes Leonard, "in which the female has news and the male does not."

In exploring Americans' preference for local news and distrust of news and ideas from afar, "News For All" also reflects on the power of new media. In 1845 Congress voted a subsidy for local weekly newspapers; they could be mailed free for up to 30 miles from the publisher's office. The racial status quo supported by many of those local weeklies in the South was threatened by the pre-Civil War abolitionist newspapers' attacks on slavery and by TV's coverage of desegregation demonstrations in the 1950's and 1960's. Leonard recalls the time a mob of small-town Mississippians in bib overalls cornered John Chancellor. The broadcaster raised his microphone and shouted, "All right, come on, the whole world is going to know what you're doing to me." The mob stopped advancing.

Leonard is at his most interesting when his approach is most novel. A chapter on discriminating readers, for example, rips aside Thoreau's skewering of newspapers to reveal a man who saw himself as a "reporter" of nature and fan of the gossipy news he found in Concord village "circulating either from mouth to mouth, or from newspaper to newspaper, and which, taken in homeopathic doses, was really as refreshing in its way as the rustle of leaves and the peeping of frogs."

That chapter also looks at the more than 60 still lifes of daily newspapers by William Harnett, in which the reader disappears and news as "male vanity" dominates, and at the Depression-era photos of shacks where the bare inside walls are papered with newspapers and magazines. Chance alone does not explain which pages were used, says Leonard: "Poor people were editing the news." He cites Margaret Bourke-White's photo of a shack in Marshall, Arkansas. The homeowner had framed a moving news photo of Charles Lindbergh's kidnapped baby with a wide black border, just as newspaper editors had done.

Leonard examines how Hollywood movies (often written by ex-journalists) depict not only journalists but also their audience. The readers of news are frequently shown as mindless ciphers, unthinkingly accepting whatever newspapers publish. That disappoints Leonard, who calls for Hollywood to include the reader—for example, "the citizen who wants to straighten out the editor"—in its newspaper movies.

But usually newspaper movies are fairy tales about the independence and industry of the truth-seeking reporter, the individual against the big-city system (the corrupt police, the greedy publisher, the competing scandal sheet). With or without the reader, such formulaic fantasies allow the audience to identify with the journalist as private eye/action hero—the Clark Kent who out-sleuths the cops to capture the villain, the heart of Lois Lane and a place on page one for his story.

At one point, Leonard contrasts the popularity a century ago of John Philip Sousa's "Washington Post March" and other uplifting newspaper marches with the absence in contemporary music and popular culture of newspapers. Guns 'N Roses and other contemporary music groups, however, have commented on the press—typically to attack it as a lying, privacy-invading parasite. "Candle in the Wind," by Elton John and Bernie Taupin, suggests the press hounded Marilyn Monroe to her death; even

after her suicide, "all the papers had to say was that Marilyn was found in the nude." The community-building good guys have become, says today's music, unprincipled bad guys.

Running throughout "News For All," is Leonard's tough question: why the amazing spread of U.S. newspaper circulation in the 19th Century versus its failure to even keep pace with population growth in the 20th Century? In the 19th Century publishers offered premiums, reading clubs and contests to hook subscribers and then kept delivering newspapers to them, even when they turned into deadbeats and failed to pay for years. Leonard writes, "The assumption was that everyone mattered and that no potential reader could be wasted."

But in the late 20th Century, Leonard says, newspapers often target a narrower audience—only, say, subscribers who pay their bills or readers judged affluent enough to buy the goods newspapers advertise. In the 1970's, many regional newspapers, to save delivery costs, began discouraging readership outside their core metropolitan trading areas—"the basis for ad rates," Leonard notes.

Leonard questions that strategy. If Time and other newsweeklies could bold their circulation, why did the percentage of adults who read a daily paper drop from 80 percent in 1970 to 62 percent in 1990? Leonard blames "the structural complacency and the indifferent salesmanship of daily papers." Newspapers, often local monopolies that are among the most profitable of businesses, have failed to "reinvest profits in gathering news and readers."

Leonard contrasts newspapers to magazines, which promote circulation with premiums and sweepstakes prizes. "Every household gets the message," he contends, "that taking a magazine opens a door to excitement." Newspapers, however, fail to effectively hustle subscriptions. "Perhaps it is a sign of the dignity of the press that newspapers cannot bring themselves to write a buy-or-die letter," Leonard concludes with a touch of irony. "But it is also a sign of the marketing savvy of a monopoly product."

For democracy's sake, Leonard wants newspapers to pursue a marketing and news-coverage strategy of inclusiveness, not market segmentation, reaching out to the blue-collar, working-class and non-citizen. One can agree with his goal and still feel he oversimplifies newspapers' challenges.

More than monopoly, greed needs to be addressed. Literacy declines. Newsprint prices soar. Main Street advertisers die. Wal-Mart-style mega-retailers, which rarely advertise in newspapers, thrive. Cable TV and other electronic media take away advertising dollars required to serve readers and keep newspapers healthy.

While Leonard may not have solved the challenges newspapers face, his provocative book truly illuminates the past and present of news in America. "News for All" deserves to be read by all Americans.■

Loren Ghiglione, Editor of The News, Southbridge, Mass., is the author of "The American Journalist," which accompanied a 1990 Library of Congress exhibit.

For the Record

Typewriter Battalion
Dramatic Frontline Dispatches from World War II
Edited by Jack Stenbuck
William Morrow. 397 Pages. $23.

Reporting World War II
Part I: 1938-1944
Library of America. 912 Pages. $35.

Reporting World War II
Part II: 1944-1946
Library of America. 970 Pages. $35.

The 50th Anniversary of the end of World War II produced these volumes that are invaluable records of the earlier generation of battle correspondents who had little time for political theorizing and simply told the story as best they could. "Typewriter Battalion" is a selection of good reporting while the Library of America editions are encyclopedic in their content. The three books elevate war journalism to literature.■

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NIEMAN NOTES

COMPILED BY LOIS FIORE

A Gentle Bridge to the World

BY LESTER SLOAN

Every profession has its heroes, and then there are the icons. For those of us who came of age in the 60's, Alfred Eisenstaedt clearly belongs in the latter category. He was both a dedicated craftsman and an unobtrusive professional whose style and intellect provided the underpinnings for his images. He was an artist who brought as much to his subject as he took away. He was part of Life's heyday and photography's golden age.

Many younger photographers complain that his pictures lacked an edge, as if that is the only criterion used to measure true greatness. There were no tilted horizons or ghost images; it was direct and came straight at you. His pictures were engaging without shouting for attention; they encouraged dialogue stripped of hyperbole.

His preparation for a shoot was oftentimes no more than a willingness to wait. He worked until he was done, until it was right. Photography was his life's work. When he died at the age of 96, he was still working.

"He taught us that photographers shouldn't be lazy," says Magnum photographer Eli Reed.

The immediacy of television coupled with a preponderance of visual information has pushed many photographers toward the edge. Subtlety as a gentle bridge to understanding is lost on this new generation of in-your-face lensmen. If we can't wait, we'll simply make it happen. The force feeding of images to a gluttonous world leaves little time for reflection. Eisenstaedt's work reflects gentle engagement even in the face of adversity. Nothing captures this more than his picture of Goebbels, the dreaded Minister of Information of Nazi Germany. The bemused arrogance in the face of this killer leaves nothing to the imagination. This picture foretold the future and speaks to the quiet courage of the photographer.

Long before the "Life and Times of the Rich and Famous," Eisenstaedt's pictures were taking us into the homes and lives of those who lived above the fold. He did so without fanfare, not as a fan with a camera, but as a seeker of truth with a purpose. Some would say that we lived in gentler times. I say that a gentle man left his mark on the times.

As we modem toward the 21st Century, we as journalists can benefit from his example. While technology is getting us there faster, it would seem that we haven't the slightest idea where we are going. What's important is that we get there before the next guy, and touch down first at the scene of the next disaster. We should remember that we are the link that connects the public with the event, not the event itself. We should concern ourselves more with seeing and less with being seen.

This small man and his body of work remind us that our greatest contribution is simply helping the reader or viewer bridge reality, and by doing so, understand it.

We as journalists are front-line historians, and as such, our responsibility goes well beyond documenting life's great tragedies. It's the total package that counts.

As his age indicates, Eisenstaedt was a long-distance runner who was tireless is the pursuit of his passion. Maybe his work did lack an "edge"—so what? There is a life beyond the six o'clock news. Eisenstaedt toiled in that arena, and what he left us will stand the test of time.■

Lester Sloan, Nieman class of 1976, is a contributing photographer for Newsweek and a regular contributor to NPR's Sunday Edition.

Courtesy David N. Berkwitz

Eisenstaedt with some of his famous photos.

—1941—

William Moss Pinkerton, 85, died August 5 in Lexington, Mass., of a stroke. The retired journalist and News Officer for Harvard University lived on Cape Cod, in the town of Orleans.

Born in Oshkosh, Wis., Pinkerton covered government agencies and edited the Sunday magazine of The Omaha World-Herald after graduating from the University of Wisconsin in 1931. After that he wrote and edited news features for The Associated Press in Washington and New York City before his Nieman year.

During World War II, he served as a naval officer in the Aleutian Islands and in Washington.

Pinkerton was News Officer for 25 years under Presidents James Conant and Nathan Pusey. Until his retirement in 1976, he worked as Assistant to Charles Daly, Vice President of Community Affairs. During those years and even in retirement he was a friend of the Nieman Foundation, serving on committees and contributing to Nieman Reports.

When Pinkerton became head of the News Office, there was no central place for visitors and newcomers to find material about Harvard. So he established the Harvard Information Center, which published booklets on Harvard's history and architecture and "Lives of Harvard Scholars." He also taught practical writing at Harvard's Extension School.

He received honors from the Wisconsin School of Journalism and from the American College Public Relations Association.

After retiring to the Cape, he remained active, writing, teaching, singing in a chorale, and playing the clarinet in the town band and a church orchestra.

He leaves two daughters, Ann MacPhail of South Strafford, Vt. and Barbara Pinkerton of Maynard, Mass.; a son, David Pinkerton of South Hadley, Mass.; a son-in-law, Bruce MacPhail of Vermont, and four grandchildren. His wife of 51 years, Lucile, died in April, 1995.

—1953—

Melvin Mencher's textbook "News Reporting and Writing" has won the McGuffey Award for "excellence and longevity" by the Textbook Authors Association. Now in its sixth edition, it is used by more than 300 journalism programs and has been translated into several foreign languages.

William Holmes McGuffey compiled the first four of the six McGuffey Eclectic Readers that were published from 1836 to 1920. Sales of the Readers totaled 122 million and were a major influence in shaping 19th Century Americans with their message of traditional morality. Mencher's journalism textbook was first published in 1977; his sales have not yet approached McGuffey's. Mencher has also written "Basic Media Writing," which is in its fifth edition.

Mencher welcomes contributions from Niemans for his next edition of "News Reporting and Writing." His address is 450 Riverside Drive, Apt. 52, New York, New York, 10027.

—1964—

Thomas B. Ross was named Vice President, Communications, for Globalstar L.P., an international consortium developing a 48 satellite-based mobile telecommunications services network. Ross had been working in the White House as Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Public Affairs of the National Security Council. The Globalstar announcement, made in September, said that in his new position Ross will be responsible for public relations, investor relations and government relations. He will be based in New York.

—1965—

Art Geiselman celebrated his 70th birthday in July. Here are some of his thoughts about the occasion:

"I'd especially like to tell my friends and colleagues about how two guys with whom I shared the [American Newspaper] Guild's Heywood Broun

Memorial Award on separate occasions finally got together with me for a photograph.

"I hadn't seen either in years so when they both came to my big shindig in Baltimore on July 29 I got them to pose with me for a picture taken by my trusty wife, Helen.

"Enclosed is a copy of that photo. At left is Sam Stafford, who shared the Broun Award for 1963 and who while with the old Washington Daily News was as good an investigative reporter as any ever. At right is Aaron Epstein, who was co-winner with me in 1957 when he was with The Daytona Beach Journal. Now with Knight-Ridder's Washington Bureau, he long has been the best U.S. Supreme Court reporter in the business. [Mr. Stafford died of cancer shortly after this photo was taken. He was 70 years old.]

"In each case I was a reporter with The Gazette & Daily, the most liberal and controversial mainstream daily in the country. It was located in my hometown of York, Pa., but now is gone.

"Each time, the judges couldn't make up their minds which entry was better and gave both of us the award.

"In my entries I had written about the problems of the black and poor. So did Stafford and Epstein in their winning stories, six years apart....

"Anyhow, I always wanted to get the three of us together for a photo and I got my chance.

"With some pride but not much humility I might note that I was only the second reporter to win this award twice. The first was **Wallace Turner** (NF 1959) of The Oregonian.

"Among those attending the party were Nieman classmates **Ray Jenkins**, retired as Editorial Page Editor of the

now defunct Baltimore Evening Sun, where I once worked, and **Ron Ostrow**, still top reporter for The Los Angeles Times Washington Bureau.

"I'm still going strong after 44 years in print and television, have had a pretty good career so far and don't plan to retire just yet.

"Can you believe it? Three of the six papers I worked for are gone!"

——1977——

The following was received mid-September:

"To all who may read these letters, Greetings:

"Hereby it is certified that upon the recommendations, yea, the earnest pleas, of various and sundry weary professors and doctoral committees, the Regents of The University of Washington and The University of Michigan have conferred upon **Cassandra Tate** and **Dolores Jean Katz**, in recognition of the satisfactory fulfillment of the prescribed requirements and required number of hoops the degrees of Doctor of Philosophy in History and Epidemiologic Science, respectively, with all the rights, privileges, and honors therein pertaining here and elsewhere, including the rights to be addressed as Dr. Tate and Dr. Dolly, respectively.

"Dr. Tate is currently marshaling the energies required to shepherd her dissertation, on the anti-cigarette movement of 1880-1930, to publication. Queries on the foul weed can be sent to her at 3616 SW Othello, Seattle, Wash., 98144. Dr. Dolly, who has always hated the cold, has accepted a position as an Epidemic Intelligence Service Officer with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, based in Tallahassee; she will accept warm greetings only at 1900 Centre Pointe Blvd., #231, Tallahassee, Fla., 32308."

——1978——

Fred Barnes is now Executive Editor of The Standard, a new political journal published in Washington. For many years Barnes was with The New Republic, most recently as Senior Editor.

——1979——

Lawrence Walsh writes to say that he spent a month this summer teaching at Sarajevo's Soros Media Centre as part of a visiting journalist program organized by the London-based Institute of War & Peace Reporting. The program is funded by the Soros, Ford and MacArthur Foundations and the European Union, among others.

Walsh had been asked "to coach young would-be journalists in the practicalities, standards and folkways of Western (or at least Anglo-American) reporting, in the face of everything that has gone on in Sarajevo since 1992...."

——1985——

Lucinda Fleeson, after 15 years at The Philadelphia Inquirer, is taking a slight detour out of newspaper journalism. Beginning Aug. 1, she became director of development for the National Tropical Botanical Garden in Hawaii. She writes:

"Initially the job didn't attract me because it was outside of journalism. But I reconsidered because it is a chance to have an exotic adventure in some fields I care about: botany, horticulture and environmentalism.

"The garden's headquarters are on the island of Kauai, one of the most remote of the islands, and some say, the most beautiful. NTBG has three gardens on Kauai, one on Maui, and a garden-estate in Miami, as well as a number of wild preserves. The Limahuli garden on the north shore of Kauai includes a mountain that was used as Bali Hai in the movie South Pacific. Mitzi Gaynor washed that man out of her hair a few miles down the beach. No kidding.

"The garden in Maui includes archaeological remains of the oldest and largest heiau in the world, a football-field-sized temple on the side of a cliff that the native Hawaiians used for human sacrifice.

"The job is fund raising, but I also will have other responsibilities on the management team to bring the garden into more prominence and leadership. The gardens are still recovering from the 1992 Hurricane Iniki, and a lot of building has yet to be done. The NTBG is also a center for scientific research, and its botanists and plant hunters scale remote cliffs and valleys to collect and bring back rare and endangered plants and propagate them. As Hawaii is known as the extinction capital of the world, this effort is now puny. I will be living a semi-rustic existence, but will travel frequently to Honolulu and the rest of the Hawaiian islands, as well as throughout the mainland, primarily in San Francisco, Chicago, Miami, Washington, and the Philadelphia-Wilmington area, so I will not be gone and never seen again.

"Making this decision to move to the other side of the world and work in a new profession has been difficult. I plan to continue writing, although I'm not certain in what form."

Lucinda can be reached at National Tropical Botanical Garden, P.O. Box 340, Lawai, Hawaii 96765. Phone: 808-332-7324. Fax: 808-332-9765.

——1986——

I. Roberto Eisenmann Jr., Founding Editor and Publisher of the preeminent Panamanian daily, La Prensa, was awarded a special citation by Columbia University for promoting press freedom and inter-American understanding. The special citation was given as a part of the 1995 Maria Moors Cabot Prizes. The Cabot prizes were won by four journalists, two from the United States, one from Jamaica and one from Guatemala.

Carmen Fields, spokeswoman in Boston for District Attorney Ralph C. Martin II has been recognized for developing a documentary on the Greenwood area of Tulsa, Okla., her hometown. The recognition took two years: Fields wrote and produced "Goin' Back to T-Town" which aired in March of 1993 as an episode in PBS' "The American Experience." Fields was honored in October in Greenwood at the opening

of a cultural center. The Greenwood area, Fields says, is where most African-American Tulsans trace their roots.

——1987——

This just in from **Doug Cumming**:

"Members of this class have been getting back together almost every two years, in sweet spots from British Columbia to the North Carolina coast. This past July, another gathering drew nine Fellows, their spouses and six children to a place in the North Georgia mountains where a defunct Depression-era development has been passed down like a wilderness Brigadoon to undeserving generations, including the family of Doug Cumming. Cumming, who covers education at The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, hosted classmates who came, for a few nights or a week, from as far away as Vancouver and Pretoria. They were: **Chuck Alston**, communications director for the Democratic Leadership Council; his wife, **Susan Dentzer**, a columnist with U.S. News & World Report; **Jamie Lamb**, who has left The Vancouver Sun to write books; **Nancy Lee**, photo editor of The New York Times; **Al May**, political editor at The Journal-Constitution; **Ira Rosen**, a producer for ABC-TV's 'Prime Time;' **Linda Wilson**, in features at The Longview (WA) Daily News, and **Dries van Heerden**, who is helping to invent the business of lobbying in the new South Africa with a public relations firm called Sussens Mann. Plans were made for the next tribal gathering in Woodstock, N.Y. in '97."

——1988——

Rosental Alves has been named the first holder of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation Chair in Journalism at The University of Texas at Austin. Alves will assume the position on January 16, 1996. The Chair is to be the basis for an international journalism program at the university, with an emphasis on Latin America. Alves, most recently Executive Editor of Jornal Do Brazil in Rio De Janeiro, has been an international correspondent and also has developed one of Brazil's first online daily publications.

Lindsay Miller wrote and produced a documentary called "Islam in America," which is still being shown on PBS stations around the country. It has won some nice awards, from the CINE Golden Eagle to the Muslim Public Affairs Council Media Award. Miller says:

"I've appreciated the articles in Nieman Reports about the coverage of religion or the lack thereof. The work I did on Islam made me realize how strong my stereotypes were and, often, how far from the truth. The coverage of Louis Farrakhan and the Million Man March has generally missed the fact that even though he may call himself a Muslim, the views of members of the 'Nation of Islam' are about as different from the views of traditional, mainstream Islam as are the views of Mormons and Moonies from traditional, mainstream Christianity.

"Right now, I'm leading the challenging life of a freelancer, which means everything from magazine articles to developing a CD-ROM and television projects from Fox to Moyers. Now, that's a stretch."

——1989——

Cecilia Alvear, field producer with NBC Network News based in Burbank, California, is now also Editor-at-Large for Sí, a new magazine. Sí is "about Latinos, by Latinos, for Latinos—but also for anyone who wants to learn more about the Latino cultures in the U.S," Alvear says. "Latinos in the U.S. are not a monolithic group; we are very diverse. We want the magazine to explore our similarities and our differences, to expose our hopes, fears, what makes us laugh and cry. We want it to be a showcase for Latino writers, photographers, artists, and designers....We hope the magazine will provide a forum for discussion among the many Latino cultures, and between Latinos and non-Latinos." The magazine will run fiction, "a genre in which Latinos excel," according to Alvear. The first issue features two short stories by Sandra Cisneros, a prominent member of the wave of Latina literature being discovered in recent years. Sí will also cover serious issues like affirmative action, immigration and political empowerment. "And we hope to do all of this with 'chispa'—with wit, with style," adds Alvear.

The editors of Sí are targeting a segment of the Latino population not being served right now: young, educated Latinos whose main language is English but who still have a connection to their roots, whether they were born in the U.S. or immigrated here. "And we are getting incredible responses from readers. They are telling us that this magazine speaks to them and reflects their experiences. That is extremely gratifying," says Cecilia, "because putting out the magazine is a labor of love."

Joie Davidow is Publication Director, Eileen Rosaly is Director of Operations, and Michael Lassell is Executive Editor. Among the contributing editors are Pulitzer Prize winning columnist Liz Balmaseda, host of NPR's "Talk of the Nation" Ray Suarez, author Esmeralda Santiago, novelist Francisco Goldman, Amherst Professor Ilan Stavans and NPR reporter Mandalit del Barco.

The first issue of Sí is on the newsstands now. In 1996 it will be a quarterly. The next issue is March 1996.

Peter Richmond's book, "My Father's War," will be published by Simon & Schuster in May of 1996. It's based on a piece he wrote for GQ, where he is special correspondent. Richmond's first book, "Ballpark," was issued in paperback recently by Fireside, Simon & Schuster's in-house imprint.

——1990——

In July, **Monica Flores** was married to Cristobal Williams, an Argentinean chemist and part-time writer on economic issues whom Monica met while she was Editor of the opinion page of a newspaper in Patagonia.

Flores still works as a correspondent

in New York city for the Argentinean daily "Pagina 12" and is thinking, she says, "of exploring some new avenues in my career and also to pay more attention to my literary work, fiction and poetry, that I have always put off for the news of the day."

Wu Guoguang is in the post-doctoral program at the Fairbank Center for East Asian Research at Harvard, where he is revising his dissertation on political reform in China in the late-1980's. When he completes the program in January, he will go to Hong Kong to teach political science at the Chinese University. Wu, who recently married Ziao Ying, received a Ph.D. from Princeton in August of 1995.

——1991——

Raj Chengappa, Features Editor for India Today in New Delhi, writes to say that he was selected as a visiting fellow to the Henry L. Stimson Center, a Washington-based nonprofit, nonpartisan institution devoted to pubic policy research. From September to mid-November he researched sub-continental security concerns.

——1995——

Karl Schoenberger left The Los Angeles Times in September to join Fortune magazine as a senior writer and Hong Kong bureau chief. He will cover Asia for the magazine. His wife, Susan Moffat, also will work for Fortune in Hong Kong as a contributing correspondent.■

The Missing Stories on AIDS

By Thomas Morgan III

Journalists are missing an important segment of the AIDS population in what is being called a pandemic by health officials and social service providers. Too often, those who speak for people living with AIDS are white and middle class, and however well-meaning, they represent only a facet of the many faces of the disease.

AIDS services are not reaching a growing segment of the AIDS population in minority communities. As the pandemic grows from one affecting predominantly gay men, to women and IV drug users, the model for care and treatment needs to be revisited and tailored to treat an increasingly diverse population.

Social service agencies in large urban cities are already noticing the change within respective client groups. In New York City, for example, which has the largest number of AIDS cases, the diversification is quite striking. Nearly 50 percent of those seeking social services come from black and Hispanic communities. The number of heterosexual women seeking care has increased as well.

In the United States, AIDS is now the leading cause of death among African American women between the ages of 25 to 44. In 1994 alone, approximately 14,000 American women were diagnosed with AIDS, nearly one-fifth of all women diagnosed since 1981.

Leadership in the large agencies continues to be mostly white gay men and lesbians. Journalists must actively seek other minority voices to understand how this disease has evolved and how it affects a diverse population.

Homophobia in minority communities is a significant impediment to delivering services when the groups delivering those services are clearly identified as being predominantly white gay organizations. Meanwhile, some large gay organizations are reluctant to extend AIDS social services beyond gay and lesbian enclaves in urban cities where the need historically was great. The client base has changed but the groups delivering services have not.

At a time when federal, state and local funds are dwindling, not-for-profit organizations are competing for funds. White gay organizations tend to have fundraising departments with experience in writing and lobbying for grant proposals. Social service agencies in minority communities tend not to have extensive fundraising experience, nor the political contacts to win grants from governmental agencies. To make matters worse, each group often views the other with suspicion as competitors.

The answer to this disparity is to insist that both groups work together in outreach efforts, in fundraising and in the delivery of services. In New York City, the oldest and largest AIDS social service provider, the Gay Men's Health Crisis, has no satellite facilities outside of Lower Manhattan, an area that includes typically upscale gay and lesbian communities.

For the most part, minorities and women who live in other boroughs must come to Lower Manhattan for assistance from GMHC. People with AIDS often have difficulty traveling or have trouble mounting the energy to deal with agency bureaucracies. They face waiting lists for needed services. The unsophisticated usually give up when confronted with requests for doctors' statements and other personal information in order to receive assistance.■

Thomas Morgan III, Nieman Fellow 1990, is on the board of the Gay Men's Health Crisis. He left The New York Times in 1994 and is on long-term disability with AIDS.

The Detroit Strike

By Janet Wilson

There was once a newspaper I loved named The Detroit Free Press.

Marketing consultants would say love is not the proper word, that people "form strong attachments" to newspapers, that one of the "most dependable buying habits" people have is to buy what they consider "their" newspaper.

I considered it love. When I burst in the neo-Gothic front door on Lafayette Boulevard at the end of a grueling day of reporting, sang out a greeting to the sardonic security guard, and raced up to my computer terminal to type what I'd got as fast as I could, I was happy in a way no one and nothing else could give me.

When people asked me why I'd left my hometown of New York City for Detroit, I'd shrug. There was no point in dwelling on the cold picket line, the depressing strike headquarters, the frozen Christmastime rallies outside The Daily News building.

There was even less point in remembering my editor there, who'd come to work with alcohol on his breath, then sidle up behind my terminal dripping cigarette ashes on my shoulder as I typed.

"I own you," he was fond of announcing to me and other new reporters.

There were afternoons, before I was assigned to the Bronx State Supreme Courthouse, that I'd wait for the night slot editor to come in so I wouldn't be the only woman in the vast seventh floor newsroom. I'd heard The Daily News had some fine African-American reporters—it wasn't until I worked weekends and visited the Brooklyn bureau that I met any of them.

But The Free Press was different. There was a black managing editor, a woman page one editor, and a black city editor. Within months of my arrival there was a woman nation/world page editor. I didn't agree with or respect all of these people and their work, but I was far more comfortable. The reporting staff was the most diverse in the country—not that 20 percent is enough in a city that is 80 percent black, but there was a genuine commitment to the values I'd been raised with. Most of all, for me, there was a woman editor who drove herself and others harder than anyone I'd ever worked with. She fought for her reporters' stories, she understood what I was saying when I phoned with information, and thought three steps ahead of me in terms of how the story could be developed.

Old-timers grumbled about the joint operating agreement, and how the paper had changed from the days when Kurt Ludtke and Neal Shine had produced a top-notch roster of writers. They also hadn't had a raise since 1989, and top contract wages were only $749 a week, even though The Free Press was the sixth largest paper in the country. But reporters always grumble, I thought to myself, otherwise they wouldn't be reporters. As far as I was concerned, The Free Press, and Knight-Ridder under the direction of a decent newsman and chief executive named Jim Batten, was a fine company.

I poured my heart into covering the biggest story in Detroit besides cars—the loss of a generation of Americans to violence and drugs. I covered Jack Kevorkian and Malice Green and hundreds more stories. With the backing of my editors, I won a Nieman Fellowship—a proud honor.

Two weeks before my fellowship ended, a strike was called in Detroit. At first, my co-workers were determined, but not fearful. Editors and reporters hugged, and assumed they'd see each other in a few weeks. After all, strikes are nothing new in Motown.

But Jim Batten was dead, and a new CEO named Tony Ridder was in charge. Rupert Murdoch and his bussing of strikebreakers to Wapping, Ronald Reagan and his firing of air traffic controllers had created a new climate where it is acceptable to permanently replace your entire workforce. The Free Press's offer was, in the view of the Newspaper Guild, tantamount to suicide for collective bargaining: miniscule across-the-board raises for the first two years and none the third year, with only "merit" raises to be awarded.

So, some friends and family asked me, what's the problem with merit raises for a good reporter like you?

I thought back to The Daily News. I thought back to New Jersey and the first newspaper where I'd worked, The Hudson Dispatch, a nonunion paper. In 1986, new reporters earned $245 a week before taxes. And we were earning more than staffers who'd been there for decades. Three years later, Dean Singleton sold The Dispatch and it was shut. A copy editor named Frank Brooks who'd been there for nearly 20 years was given $3,000.

I thought of Frank Brooks when the strike started in Detroit. I thought of older reporters and longtime staffers who were earning less than newer arrivals like me. And even though I was considered a top reporter, less experienced folks hired after me were already being paid more. What good would a $20 weekly raise every other year do me?

But more than anything, I couldn't bring myself to cross a picket line manned by colleagues and friends. To do so would be to violate some principle deep inside of me that I can't fully explain. It's just there, a commandment that makes me suffer, but more often helps me.

Unions have been out of fashion for years, painted as corrupt, aging institutions dedicated to keeping deadwood and no-shows on company payrolls.

But that perception is changing, even as the AFL-CIO has changed leadership and the Newspaper Guild prepares to merge with a strong Communication Workers of America.

Corporations have reaped enormous profits in a healthy economy for the last four years, while workers' wages and benefits have remained stagnant or fallen. Temporary, part-time, and low-wage positions are the catchwords of the '90's for business; for middle class and working class families that has meant deep sacrifices and rising anger.

Unions don't kill newspapers. The Hudson Dispatch was not a union shop when it closed. The Dallas Times Herald was making a profit when it was summarily shut. The New York Daily News building reaped profits for its Chicago parent company the year before the strike. Then the Tribune Co. lost at least $400 million before acknowledging that its anti-union efforts had failed.

Mort Zuckerman did in a week, through bankruptcy laws, what the Tribune Co. had struggled to do for months at The Daily News: summoned people one by one to a conference room where an envelope was handed to each person. If the packet was thick, it was your employment offer at the "new" Daily News. If it was thin, you were no longer an employee.

One of my most interesting teachers at Columbia Journalism School was Joseph Ungaro from Westchester Gannett, who taught would-be crusaders that newspapers were not charities, they had to be profitable. But he also said that any editor who tried to compromise a story in favor of an advertiser ought to get out of the business, that they were not just paper mills. I also learned that newspapers are accustomed to double-digit profits. What could be better? A business with scruples that made money.

I'm a relative benchwarmer in this strike, having been through the agony of a picket line at The New York Daily News. But the tactics and heartbreaks are the same. The return of colleagues to the newsroom is wrenching. The eagerness of out-of-town young replacement workers to rush past the people whose jobs they are stealing is breathtaking. But the conversion of editors into people who don't care about those who worked for them is the most frightening for me. My favorite editor at The Free Press has metamorphosed. When I was told to call her by a company attorney in late October, I remarked that she sounded cheerful.

"I am. We're just about back to normal here," she gloated. I thought of my colleagues Roger Chesley, Jim Schaefer, Bill McGraw, Renee Murawski and so many others who had given years of their lives to her. Now they had pulled their kids out of daycare, lost mortgages, started waitressing or running home repair businesses, deferred dreams for principles. I can't understand what happened to her, or to the valiant old-school publisher and son of union workers who signed the letter saying we would be replaced.

The strike is not going well for the unions. While advertisers have pulled out, as they did in New York, Daily News strikers had the advantage of having their advertising boycott peak during the heaviest sales time of the year. When Macy's pulled their Thanksgiving Day ads, it was a major coup. The advertising boycott in Detroit peaked in August, the slowest time of year.

Most hurtful of all, nearly 300 Newspaper Guild employees have crossed the picket lines, although only 100 other strikers from the five other unions have done so. Newspaper Guild leadership was not popular with many Free Press employees, and it has showed. Also, some were upset that the union did not accept a September offer from management that would have scrapped merit pay and granted small across-the-board raises. Guild leaders decided to stick with the other unions.

Ironically, some of those who have returned are workers the company tried to fire or had placed on probation, workers the union successfully defended. They have no guarantee they will be kept in the future, obviously. But many of the returning workers have done so in violation of their own beliefs for economic reasons, and their unhappiness shows in the hunched shoulders as they pass the picket line, and in the listless quality of their work.

"It was a choice between being a whore or a martyr," said one returnee. Things are far from normal. The newsroom and other departments are divided, eerily silent places.

The National Labor Relations Board, which ruled in favor of the Newspaper Guild in New York against The Daily News, has hearings set for February. Even if they do win, the management of both companies has vowed to drag out appeals for years if necessary.

"This strike is not about winning, it's about survival," says John Lear, an assistant business editor and a key Guild negotiator . "Things will never be normal at The Free Press again."

Many strikers have moved on, finding jobs at The New York Times, The Boston Globe, The Newark Star Ledger, and elsewhere. The Free Press appears to have hired ignorant kids, and one laid off reporter from New York Newsday who had worked at The Detroit News returned there. Of course, it is not only the newspapers who have lost reporters, designers, and editors with years of knowledge and contacts with their communities, but the city of Detroit and the surrounding suburbs.

This strike is not about featherbedding truck drivers or printers keeping an honest business from being profitable. The craft unions have taken cuts for years in economically depressed Detroit, and they made offers to do the same this time. This strike is doing battle against greed; against an abdication of principles and a loss of commitment to what the newspaper business used to be about: questioning the smug authority of institutions that rule and affect ordinary life.

As my colleague Roger Chesley said, "I have to do this partly for me. You can't just have principles when it's convenient, you're supposed to have principles when it's tough. As journalists we go around detecting foibles and character weaknesses and flaws of people and institutions for a living. Well my goodness, what does it say about our character if we forget about what's right?"■

Janet Wilson is a 1995 Nieman Fellow freelancing in New Hampshire.

End Note

'You See, You Can Do Anything'

By Dori Maynard

Driving was never my forte. I came to driving late in life and wouldn't have come at all if it had been up to me. But after my family moved to California, it was either learn to drive or give up going out. Still, I was hesitant. I didn't think it prudent to go faster than 30 mph. I certainly didn't think it wise to drive longer than an hour, largely because the steady rocking of the car slowly lulled me to sleep.

My father, who never believed in the word "can't," especially when it originated in "don't want to," had no truck with my anti-driving stance. While teaching me to drive, he kept up a steady stream of conversation, talking being the easiest way to distract a Maynard from almost anything.

Then he would announce, "When we pass this stop sign, we will be at the top of the highest hill in San Francisco." He would chatter on as I negotiated the steep slope with my heart in my throat. Or he would suddenly note that he had just directed me on to the Golden Gate Bridge; did I mind driving to Marin and back during rush hour traffic? After one of his surprises ended with my narrowly avoiding killing the two of us, Dad turned to me and said, "You see, you can do anything." As confident as he seemed, I did notice, however, that our driving sessions ended.

Years later, less than a month after my father died, I packed up almost all I owned and drove from Detroit to Oakland. I hadn't planned it that way. But nobody volunteered to drive my car while I flew.

It's a long drive and I had a lot of time to think. I thought about the chores my father left behind. He had asked me, only weeks before his death, if I would finish the work he had yet to complete. Three books. He had a contract to compile his columns into a book. He wanted me to turn his journal into a writing textbook for young journalists, and then there was the book of social theory he had just begun. I agreed quickly, remembering the psychic who assured me in June of 1993 that not only would my father live at least another year, he would live to complete great work. So there I was in September of 1993, driving by myself across country wondering about the possibility of psychic malpractice, wondering whether my father knew that other parents left their children money, and most of all wondering what Dad had gotten me into this time.

Still raw with grief, I was somehow soothed by driving. The long stretches of empty road no longer had the power to put me to sleep. Instead I found they gave me space and privacy to think about and talk to my father. For it was on the road, somewhere between there and here that I began to sense my father's presence.

By the time I got to Oakland we had begun to make some headway on the first project, "Letters to My Children," the compilation of my father's columns. In fact, we agreed to share, and that I would write introductory essays to each chapter. Earlier, while he was still alive, we had decided the book would have a family theme and include the columns that either talked about family life or included the values and lessons with which Dad wanted to raise my brothers and me.

Three months later, after having read every one of the more than 1,000 columns Dad wrote in Oakland, I felt as if I had gone through an intensive writing seminar. As I worked, people would ask me if I found it difficult to go through my father's words. I did indeed. I found it daunting. I had always admired Dad's work, but I had also taken it for granted. Now I could see the simple precision of his language, the clarity of his thought and the humanity of his message. I wanted to reach back and tell Dad how much I was learning while culling through his columns. He was helping me hone my writing as he was teaching me about myself. For in those columns I discovered my family history. There were some disappointing as well as exhilarating moments. Traits I thought all my own, turned out to have been passed down to me by a grandfather I had never known in life.

"Why do you think I left you this project?" I heard him answer me. To this day, I'll never know how much of my father I hear in my mind, how much of my father I have absorbed into my daily life and how much is my father figuring out how to keep our almost 35-year conversation going.

I do know that as we worked together during the last two years, I learned that death does not end a relationship.

Concerned about how to convince the publisher the book was still viable despite Dad's death, I clearly heard him direct me to his old friend Jack Hilton. Sure enough, Jack came up with a campaign which resulted in the book being published.

Advised by some well-meaning friends to pester Ann Landers for a mention of the book in her column, I didn't need to consult Dad. It just wasn't his style. While once I may have tried it anyway, I found that without my father to rebel against I began to "father" myself.

Once fearful of speaking in public, I remembered my father's lessons just months before his death, a lesson that ended with his admonishment that I, too, would one day learn to love public speaking.

Now, as I tour the country touting the book, I only suffer mild bouts of anxiety before speaking and often, like my father, seem not to want to stop once I've started. Sometimes, when I've finished, I hear my father's smug voice, "You see, I told you. You could do anything." But I notice his presence is generally gone before I get behind the steering wheel.■

Dori Maynard, Nieman Fellow 1993, put together "Letters to My Children," a book of columns by her late father, Robert, Nieman Fellow 1966, Publisher of The Oakland Tribune.

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