NIEMAN REPORTS

THE NIEMAN FOUNDATION FOR JOURNALISM AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Vol. 52 No. 3 Fall 1998

Five Dollars

Serving the Poor

The Underreported Story—Widening Gap Between Haves and Have-Nots

New Perils to the First Amendment

Arrogance vs Civility in Watchdog Reporting

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

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

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First Amendment

Watchdog Journalism

The Journalist's Trade

Foreign Correspondence

Cover photograph © Frank Van Riper from "Down East Maine/A World Apart."

Curator's Corner

Storytelling vs. Truth Telling

As this issue of Nieman Reports goes to press, Sirius, the Dog Star, rises with the sun. We are in the midst of dog days, and the suspicions of the ancients that it is a time liable to madness are hard to ignore.

Consider this record of the American press under the influence of the Dog Star these last three years:

• July-August 1995 saw a massive reorganization of media companies with the merger of Walt Disney-Capital Cities/ ABC, a merger which, along with that of Time and Warner Brothers, placed the masters of fantasy in charge of major news organizations.

• In July-August 1996 three journalists of national stature—Newsweek Editor Maynard Parker, Newsweek political columnist Joe Klein and Random House Publisher Harold Evans, entered into a conspiracy to lie about Klein's authorship of the book "Primary Colors" to protect the promotional campaign to make the book a bestseller.

• July-August 1997 were the days of the paparazzi pursuing Princess Diana's death car through Paris and raising again questions of the excess of a celebrity-drunk press.

• And now, falling like the blows of a trip hammer, we see CNN and Time Magazine stand accused both of libel and of cowardice at this summer's end—libel by the Pentagon for airing and then retracting the most explosive charges since the My Lai massacre, and of cowardice by the two producers fired by CNN; we see Stephen Glass at The New Republic and Patricia Smith at The Boston Globe exposed as liars and a weeks-long drama in which Mike Barnicle forced The Globe to withdraw a demand for his resignation over a column many thought had been plagiarized and then, a few days later, resigned after being confronted with a 1995 column written without checking the facts.

One veteran journalist in Washington was saying he feels as if he's cleaning out the urinals of journalism as he reports on this scandalous behavior. More humiliating to American journalists who have inspired, prodded and goaded international colleagues with lofty rhetoric of the First Amendment were the words of Gustavo Gorriti (Nieman Fellow 1986) published in late July in The New York Times. Gorriti, Associate Director of La Prensa in Panama, wrote, "From afar, the recent spate of journalistic embarrassments in the United States suggests that something more disheartening is at work than an epidemic of editors falling asleep at the wheel."

It would be comforting to be able to point to the calendar of the record and blame it all on our stars. But something more fundamental in ourselves is at work and even the most complacent journalists today are beginning to ask: Can you believe the press anymore? Or has the market economy and the lust for self-aggrandizement completely eroded the foundation of the notion of a journalism in the public interest?

Gorriti is right. It is something more disheartening than a few inattentive editors. The thread that binds these journalistic abasements is the growing practice of treating journalism as an entertainment propelled by public relations to achieve the brightest flash and capture the highest box office.

That was the thread used to stitch the conglomerates together in 1995 in pursuit of a market-dominating strategy called synergy, which subordinates news to entertainment values. It is a strategy that puts mass marketing interests first, the information needs of the consumer further down the list. Newsweek and Random House were searching for the synergy that would sell a work of political fiction for Random House and gather notoriety for Newsweek's political writer. Keeping faith with readers seemed secondary. CNN and Time were effecting a synergy to provide a jet-assisted take-off for a TV news magazine. Network marketing, program timing and production were the primary consideration.

Even the reckless behavior of the paparazzi, the artful lies written by Stephen Glass and Patricia Smith, and the celebrity of Barnicle were as dependent on synergy's pull as the tide is on the attraction of the moon. International megamedia corporations with potential markets numbering in the billions of consumers can offer huge rewards to the journalist who produces the "must see" photo or the "hottest" copy.

This depressing record is especially difficult to contemplate here at Lippmann House as the Nieman Class of 1999 arrives. This will be the last class of Niemans who will return to their jobs in the 20th Century. How do we help these Fellows think about the future of journalism and their place in it? How can this record become a tool with which to "promote and elevate standards of journalism?"

I don't have an answer yet. But I suspect the answer lies in a renewed emphasis on individual responsibility—where most answers usually lie. In this case the answer would seem to be a simple dedication to truth telling, not storytelling.

This has been a century in which journalism has achieved heights of importance and power never before imagined. Here and abroad this has been a century of struggle for the freedom to tell the truth in the face of government propaganda and defying state control. Far too many still die in that struggle and far too many are still imprisoned. But that struggle may no longer be the only threat, or even the most dangerous threat to journalists, to journalism.

The emerging willingness to ignore the boundary between fiction and nonfiction, whether to make our work more entertaining or to make ourselves more celebrated, can do what no outside power can ever do—it can make journalism irrelevant to free people.

It may be that the freedom to tell the truth, which has withstood coercion and death, will be willingly sacrificed in pursuit of personal fame and corporate profit. These are the things the Nieman Class of 1999 will have to consider. ■

LETTERS

Newspaper-Tobacco 'Unholy Alliance'

Angola, Indiana

To the Editor:

It was refreshing to read Morton Mintz's article, "The ACLU and the Tobacco Companies" [Nieman Reports Spring 1998]. Such an exposé is long overdue, and I applaud you for printing it, especially since it is apparent that other publications are not willing to risk the ACLU's ire by questioning the organization's financial ties to tobacco. I also applaud Mintz for sticking to his guns [Summer 1998] after being fired upon by a retaliating ACLU, caught with its finger in the tobacco pie.

Interestingly, the ACLU defends its bedfellow politics with some of the same excuses that the National Newspaper Association, composed mostly of 4,600 small papers, spouts for accepting money from Philip Morris to help fund the NNA's annual conventions.

I became aware of this unholy alliance in 1993, when I attended the NNA convention in Cincinnati to collect a first-place award in commentary in the NNA's Better Newspaper Contest. At that time Philip Morris sponsored a video featuring first-place winners. Although the video's cost was minimal, I was dismayed to find my award tied to a product I often criticized in my columns. Imagine my surprise when I learned that the video was just a crumb compared to the whole loaf of bread Philip Morris provides in other ways to NNA conventions.

Consider: It is traditional for Philip Morris to sponsor an entire evening of free entertainment for the more than 400 newspaper families that attend the conventions. For example, two such extravaganzas sponsored by Philip Morris at past NNA conventions included "A Gatlin Brothers Evening" in St. Paul, Minnesota, seven hours of live country music, dining, dancing and merry-making and an evening of similar activities in Fort Worth, at Billy Bob's Texas, "The world's largest honky-tonk."

Since 1993 the NNA has discontinued Philip Morris's sponsorship of the first-place award-winners' video. However, in its place is a piece of candy that bypasses individual writers like me who might complain about tobacco sponsorship and instead tempts editors and publishers to overlook who sponsors it: an "economic development" award to newspapers themselves. The top award is $1,000 that goes to a community organization of the winning newspapers' choices. According to NNA literature, the award "promotes America's communities by recognizing the contri-

Continued on Page 63

Full Quotation on Newsroom Ethics

Athens, Georgia

To the Editor:

Undoubtedly under severe space constraints, my good friend Phil Meyer and his co-author, M. David Arant, plucked a six-word quote from my book to lead their fine article on newsroom ethics ("Changing Values in the Newsroom," Nieman Reports, Fall 1997.)

The partial quote has me finding that "everywhere are signs of ethical deterioration," and it's true that I so find.

However, I don't want my many newspaper friends to infer from that partial quote that I've gone bonkers and joined the lunatic fringe that sees only error in what newspapers and other media do. My 351-page book is much more balanced than those six words imply.

The full quote is on pages XII and XIII of "Media Ethics," published by Allyn & Bacon in 1995:

"Overall, media performance today in news and information is better than ever. Newspapers and magazines generally are far superior to those of yesteryear. Some broadcast journalism is outstanding. New, exciting means of electronic communication are just beyond the technological horizon. In the commercial marketplace, many public relations and advertising firms can be lauded for principled handling of ethically sensitive issues.

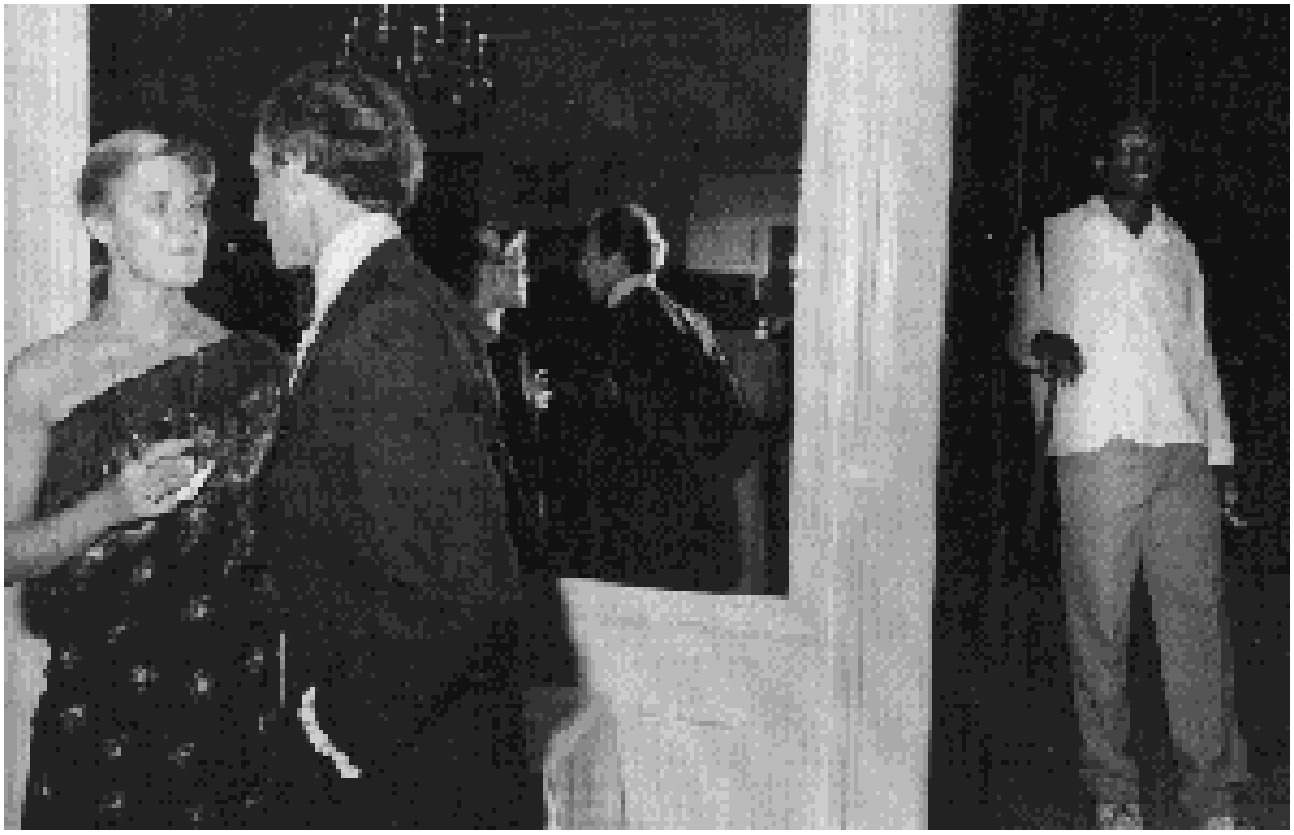
"Yet, everywhere are signs of ethical deterioration. NBC News admits to the worst institutional journalistic fraud in recent memory—staging a pickup truck explosion to illustrate an exposé on vehicle safety. Individual print and broadcast journalists are accused of unreasonable invasion of privacy, insensitive treatment of victims of rape and other crimes, and a host of other ethical lapses.

"Opinion polls show much of the public views media performance negatively. Journalists are regarded by many as arrogant, biased, unfair, unethical. Unarguably, there is widespread distrust of what the media do and how they do it."

CONRAD C. FINK

The writer is William S. Morris Professor of Newspaper Strategy and Management at the University of Georgia.

Serving the Poor



Belle Meade Country Club, Belle Meade, Tennessee, 1981.

In a lecture last March, shortly after Maxwell King stepped down as Editor of The Philadelphia Inquirer, he said "I think a strong argument can be made that the residents of [poorer] areas are severely disadvantaged—as citizens, as workers, as consumers—by the lack of serious coverage from television and the lack of local coverage of their neighborhoods by newspapers." The reason, of course, is that the media, regardless of their claims of serving all the people, aim for the affluent, the audience that advertisers seek. It would seem, then, that if newspapers want to expand readership they would be worried about the growing gap between the rich and the poor. If such worries exist they are not reflected in their coverage of economic inequality. Moreover, civic journalism and the various committees and studies of what's wrong with the media have also neglected the problem. In the following article Michael Kirkhorn explores this neglect.

Widening Gap Between Haves and Have-Nots

By Michael J. Kirkhorn

In recent months the daily press has perched on the edge of repentance. With some justification it has been blamed by critics of all stripes for falsifying, trivializing, distracting the public with juicy gossip, chasing sensational stories in the company of the shameless tabloids, disregarding major social issues and discarding useful safeguards such as the verification of facts.

The demeaned and distrustful public compounds journalism's dilemma by demanding better journalism while at the same time patronizing the worst. The public's ambivalence is reflected in journalistic indecision. In other tabloid periods—the 1920's, for example—editors argued that the public demands trash and as long as it does, not much can be done to improve the quality of journalism. While they may at times be tempted, editors of the late 1990's who are trying to find ways to revive the affections of readers and viewers cannot afford to blame the public.

Blaming the vulgarians might have been possible in more confident times, but not in an age of prolific, crisscrossed competition when nobody can feel very confident about having a hold on any large part of the public. The tendency to blame the public has shown itself at times, usually in shruggingly apologetic what-can-we-do anyway disclaimers, but it's not convincing. The precious credibility of journalism is at stake and journalists have to find more effective answers for the misdoings of all sectors of that blurred entity called "the media."

The time seems right for a frank acknowledgment of errors committed by careless or greedy journalists, or crypto- or pseudo-journalists, and for a determined revival of the values that most journalists have been following in any case. "I can't recall a better time for owning up to our mistakes," said Reid MacCluggage, Editor and Publisher of The Day Publishing Company of New London, Conn., and President of the Associated Press Managing Editors. Like many editors, MacCluggage is feeling very frustrated by the fact that at the same time the reputation of journalism has been suffering, newspapers themselves "are better than they ever have been," and many if not most are making some efforts to get the public involved with their local papers.

The time also may be right for a return to serious explanatory reporting on unfinished business. There are a number of issues that have not been receiving much attention in the newspapers, magazines or broadcast journalism. One of the most threatening and in a way most shameful of these issues is the persistence of poverty in cities and the countryside and the growing gap between rich and poor that former U.S. Labor Secretary Robert Reich has said threatens the United States with a "two-tiered society," with relatively few Americans living luxuriously and many, many others barely making a living or trapped in poverty.

Some believe that by paying little attention to an issue as ominous in its social and political implications as this one, journalists are committing an act of malpractice that far overshadows the handful of sensational plagiarisms and lies and deceptions that get the headlines.

It's not stated anywhere that American newspapers and broadcast journalists must pay attention to the poor; it is a kind of inherited sentiment—one that once allowed the press to proclaim itself champion of the underdog, comforter of the afflicted and afflictor of the comfortable, with a duty, as one writer said, to "represent the unrepresented." Practiced with passion by honest and persevering editors, reporters and photographers, the exposure of poverty often has provided journalism with the satisfaction of doing good. In the time of Joseph Pulitzer or E.W. Scripps, it built readership among the laboring poor who could afford a penny or two for a newspaper. Journalists like Dorothy Day, founder of the Depression-era Catholic Worker, or Carey McWilliams, Editor of the Nation, could from their positions on the margin play

Michael Kirkhorn was a Nieman Fellow in 1970-71. He has worked for five newspapers, including The Milwaukee Journal, and he has taught at several universities. He is director of the journalism program at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington. Through December of this year he will be living in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, with his wife, Lee-Ellen, who has a post-doctoral fellowship in nursing research at the University of North Carolina, and with their three-year-old daughter Amelia. He has been working for some time on a long manuscript on the question of the independence of the press and hopes that it might turn out to be an acceptable book.

advocate for social justice for the poor, and champion the downtrodden in the tradition of the abolitionist and muckraking reporters of other eras—and in that way inspire mainstream journalists to make greater efforts of their own.

It's no longer profitable to expose poverty amid wealth, but there are journalists who still believe that reporting on injustice is at the heart an ideal of American journalism that has lately been overlooked. Newspapers, however, seem to be looking the other way, diametrically the other way, up at their more or less comfortable, highly-paid or mutual-funded subscribers with the suburban cul-de-sac addresses advertisers love to see in the subscription lists.

Important in itself, in an atmosphere of embarrassment over lapses in ethical standards and sound practice, the coverage of the poor also seems to help focus some of the discussion of the need for a clearly articulated "new professionalism" that would clarify journalism's responsibilities on major social issues, and perhaps push American newspapers beyond what Sandra Mims Rowe, Editor of The Portland Oregonian, has called the "hand-wringing" response to journalistic problems. It also portrays in broader context some innovations of recent years. Even among those who dislike "public journalism" for, as they see it, threatening the integrity of the newsroom by involving journalists in the issues they are supposed to cover, there is a recognition that innovation is needed to win public support for good journalism, and that a responsibility for the creative solution of public problems should be part of that strategy.

Editors may disagree, as MacCluggage does, that poverty and the rich-poor gap are being overlooked, but a conversation with him, as with other editors concerned about the future of good journalism, suggests that problems of this dimension are less likely to be ignored if the newspaper is in touch with readers in active and imaginative ways.

"I've seen a lot of reporting about the so-called growing difference between rich and poor," MacCluggage said in an interview. "…I don't know if I believe it or not. There are people in need but there seem to be plenty of social programs for them. We're living in the richest time in our history. We live in an extraordinary time. We report on three of the poorest cities in America, Hartford, Bridgeport and New Haven, but I don't see much of it in our circulation area. It does show up in our reporting of other issues—impoverished housing, bad schools, crime, drugs, poor health care…"

Source: Edward N. Wolff, "How the Pie is Sliced," The American Prospect no.22 (summer 1995): 58-64 (http://epn.org/prospect/22/22wolf.html).

But MacCluggage, like most editors, knows that coverage of all issues will improve when journalists forge a stronger bond with their communities. When I talked with him, his paper had recently been visited by some representatives of the Freedom Forum's Free Press-Fair Press initiative, and they had left the impression that confessing journalistic problems to the public was not a bad way to learn about the problems of the communities the paper serves. "What we need to build is a relationship with the community we cover," he said. Papers ought to consider admitting not only factual mistakes but also "own up to structural problems," he said.

Among those structural problems some would see the apparent indifference to the poor, or at least a less determined coverage than might have been found in other periods when social issues were pushed to the forefront by protest, government action or press attention.

There are many reasons for the apparent neglect of the issue: the conspicuous villains of the kind that cartoonist Thomas Nast skewered when he was attacking Tammany Hall and Boss Tweed's shredding of the public interest are today cloaked in respectability; President Clinton has raised the issue of racism, but there is no ringing FDR- or LBJ-style crusade against poverty that would carry journalists out on fact-finding expeditions to dramatize poverty in Harlan County and rural West Virginia or Watts; there are few crusaders in the daily press, certainly not of the stature of Joseph Pulitzer; much of the coverage of poverty has been re-channeled, where it appears in stories on other issues, principally, for many broadcasters and newspapers, crime; some would argue that the tendency to abandon troubling issues is an expression of the way journalists succeed in their careers.

Larry McGill, Director of Research for the Media Studies Center in New York City, suspects that editorial career tracks influence coverage of poverty. Back in the 1980's he heard reporter J. Anthony Lukas tell an audience that the impoverished "underclass" was not covered by the press "because journalists cover power." Anyone who doubted that, Lukas said, should look at how editors become editors.

McGill investigated the proposition in a Northwestern University doctoral dissertation and found in a survey of 400 editors that among top newspaper editors who had been reporters, 85 percent had covered politics. The lesson: you don't get promoted by covering the poor.

As newspapers aim higher on the income scale for prospective readers, the so-called "underclass" drops almost entirely out of sight. Only a truly feisty newspaper will devote much effort these days to a strong series on poverty and only the feistiest will look seriously at the growing disparity between rich and poor, which in some places and in the view of some observers seems to threaten the very existence of the bedrock middle class, a major source of social stability and economic prosperity.

© Barbara Norfleet, "All The Right People," Little, Brown and Company.

New Providence Island, The Bahamas, 1982.

The problem is not resources. Newspaper companies have been doing quite well financially. Nor zeal. More than 1,100 reporters and editors attended the recent annual conference of the Investigative Reporters & Editors (IRE) in New Orleans, and although the top-ten list of investigative stories recognized at the conference contained none specifically on poverty and wealth, clearly there are many reporters and editors who could do a good job exposing the issue.

Several developments in journalism suggest that it is now possible as never before to monitor the situation of poor Americans and find at least some support with a public that professes, at least, to be tired of sleaze and eager for a better kind of journalism.

Through its emphasis on the disaffected, who often live in poorer communities where the local newspaper may arrive at one in five homes, the still-controversial movement called civic or public journalism should be able to direct the press's attention to the unrepresented. The further development of "precision journalism," called "computer-assisted reporting," allows statistical information to be studied with ever-greater exactness by reporters and editors who are willing to endure a little training. Phil Meyer, a professor of journalism at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and originator of "precision journalism," the application of social science research techniques to journalism, said of recent developments using the computer to gather and correlate information, "Precision journalism makes it possible to report on social problems with power and precision. Poverty is among the major issues."

It wouldn't be fair to suggest that poverty has been overlooked entirely. Fifteen Pulitzer Prizes for investigation that involved poverty have been awarded over the last six decades, including several in the 1990's. IRE provided Nieman Reports with a list of more than 170 newspaper, broadcast and magazine projects in the past decade that report on the persistence of poverty in a number of respects, including failures of poverty agencies, misuse of food stamps, poor schools, Medicare scandals and lack of health care, the abandonment of poor neighborhoods by banks and savings and loans, violence in poor neighborhoods, homelessness, devastated families and exploitation of children, corporate squeezing of the poor, and high disease rates, infant mortality and early death among the poor. The list is both a record of journalistic accomplishment and a profile of the persistence of poverty in the United States.

The issue has been put in a constructive context of reform by forthright voices within journalism. At a keynote speech at the 1998 annual Institute on the Ethics of Journalism at Washington and Lee University, Maxwell King, retiring Editor of The Philadelphia Inquirer, provided a pessimistic conclusion tinged with hope for a "new professionalism" that would guide journalists back to fundamental responsibilities.

"What does it mean for a democratic society like ours, in which there has been a 25-year trend of the poor growing poorer, the rich growing richer, the divide between the have more and the have-lesses growing steadily?" King asked. "A society in which 45 percent of those filing tax returns in 1993 met the federal government's guideline definition of working poor. A society in which the richest one percent of the population owns almost one third of the nation's resources? The United States today has the widest gap between rich and poor of any industrialized nation. How will such a society, already being split along class and capital lines, be affected by a media environment in which the rapidly growing poor segment has little access to relevant information?"

The widening gap between rich and poor is not easily straddled by the daily press, even by newspapers that try to uphold their principles, King said. In spite of efforts to cover the city as well as the suburbs, newspapers find themselves moving with the wealth into suburban coverage. "The economic pressures inexorably push the newspaper toward more detailed coverage of sectors with the sort of demographics that support the effort," King said. "We have struggled hard at The Inquirer to keep a strong commitment to city coverage, to keep a strong team of reporters assigned to the city, and to provide the sort of neighborhood, lifestyle coverage for the city it so clearly needs. But, frankly, there's no real comparison; the city neighborhoods and the poorer sectors of our region are getting coverage that isn't even close to the suburban 'neighbors' coverage."

And it's not only the newspapers that have migrated. King observed that "the situation is even bleaker when one looks at other media serving the poorer communities: most of the weeklies follow the same pattern as the dailies….

Television and radio, the primary sources of news in poor neighborhoods, rarely cover any community news whatsoever, other than crime and violence."

John Seigenthaler, an editor of great experience and founder of the First Amendment Center at Vanderbilt University, agreed that "journalists are not looking at the gap between rich and poor," and implied that the lapse was an aspect of the press's persistent problem with credibility. He said that the press ought to continue to investigate its values and practices internally and "if these studies dig deep enough they will find that at root anytime the press ignores an issue it robs the public and betrays itself."

What is needed for the press to direct some steady coverage to the economic polarization of the United States? Seigenthaler recalled the urban riots of the mid-1960's when poor districts of American cities were the focal points of a continuing national discussion of racism and poverty. "Suddenly we were all on a guilt trip," Seigenthaler said; editors across the country had to recognize that they "had never paid any attention to the inner city, and as a result there was no constructive reporting of the quality of life. This was a gap in coverage. The ghetto had been ignored."

Common sense and some knowledge of the complicitous habits of American journalism might suggest that the press could use another political crusade that would justify greater coverage of poverty. Seigenthaler disagrees. Government action should not be needed: "The press doesn't need political leadership on this issue. It would seem to me that the opportunity would come as naturally for the press in an administration that ignored black candidates for cabinet positions and nominated Clarence Thomas for the Supreme Court."

Neglect of economic and social problems during the Great Depression should remind journalists that when the press waits for political leadership on an important issue, it may wind up misleading the public. In the early years of the depression the lack of national relief and reform allowed the press to

Source: Edward N. Wolff, "How the Pie is Sliced,"The American Prospect no.22 (summer 1995): 58-64 (http://epn.org/prospect/22/22wolf.html).

ignore the real consequences of the stock market crash of 1929 and instead to publish palliatives from Wall Street, the White House and congressional conservatives. This lapse, said press critic George Seldes, was the press's "greatest failure in modern times." In his book, "Freedom of the Press," published in 1935, Seldes scolded newspapers for following the Wall Street line.

By following the Wall Street line, journalists wound up deceiving the nation in a way that seemed almost deliberate, he wrote. When the stock market crashed after a series of drops called "technical corrections," the daily press, Seldes said, "instead of furnishing America with sound economic truth, furnished the lies and buncombe of the merchants of securities, which termed an economic debacle a technical situation, which called it the shaking out of bullish speculators, which blamed everything on lack of confidence. The press accepted the declarations of the President of the United States, a famous engineer, and also the economic viewpoint of the economically illiterate ex-President Coolidge, who blamed 1929 on 'too much speculation' and 1930 on 'dumping from Russia' and 1931 on 'the economic condition of Austria and Germany' breaking down."

Ignored during this period of paper prosperity and collapse were "American economists who proved that in the boom years there was no national prosperity, that there were two million unemployed; that the farmers were bankrupt, that 30 million of them were suffering; that 71 percent of the population was living on a scale hardly above the margin of necessities. But such economists were considered traitorous radicals in 1928 and 1929; the newspaper would not touch their anti-American ideas or facts.

"Meanwhile the booming industry of advertising kept intimidating the public into more installment buying, kept inculcating the theory of more waste more prosperity, fostered the idea of living-beyond-income and kept up the 'new standard of living' by high pressure salesmanship. The nation's press was party to this achievement of the advertising profession."

Seldes detected no desire to expose the weakness of the economic system. He found only self-interest: "Obviously just as stores and corporations are the sacred cows of certain smaller newspapers, so Big Business is the great Sacred Golden Bull of the entire press."

Seldes quoted The Nation, which said editorially that the daily press is unable "to see, hear, or know any evil in advance of catastrophic events which implicate the mighty."

There is another possible analogy between the journalism of 1929 and

the journalism of 1998. About the time of Seldes's indignant outburst, other critics were daring the newspapers to step out in the open and express clear standards of accountability to the public. Protected by the First Amendment, therefore free of outside interference, the press was accused of practicing a "negative freedom" without clear purposes beyond the protection of profits. This, the critics said, was a form of social irresponsibility. This criticism has been restated recently by some editors as a way of encouraging public allegiance for clear journalistic purposes—even though forthrightness about journalism's purposes makes newspaper lawyers nervous.

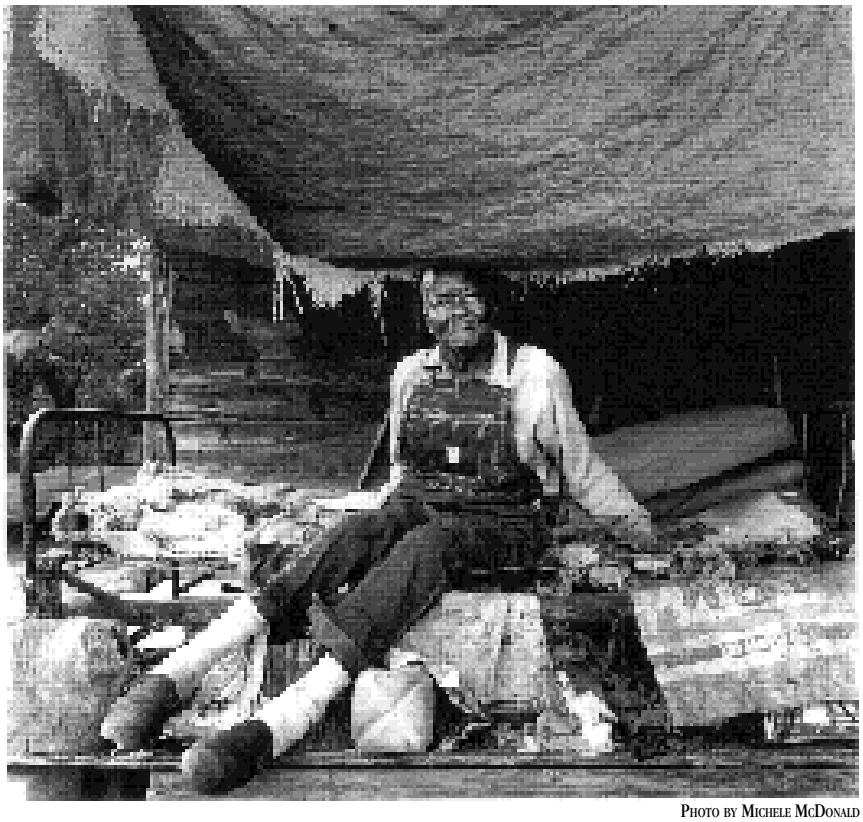


PHOTO BY MICHELE MCDONALD

This man was living outside the town of Buena Vista, Georgia, without running water when this photo was taken in 1992. Water lines didn't go out to the stretches of town where poor blacks lived.

In his Washington and Lee speech Maxwell King said that what was needed is a "new professionalism in which we combine a commitment to issue-oriented explanatory journalism with a bold, aggressive articulation of American journalism's professional ethics and obligations. This new professionalism would harness the newspaper's distinctive strength—the capacity to organize, articulate and explain complex issues—to the power of professional ethics."

King said that during much of this century, "journalists in this country have eschewed professionalism, preferring to rely solely on the power of the First Amendment. In fact, we often have hidden behind the First Amendment's protection of free speech, taking a legalistic position on our professional obligations."

He criticized the caution that turns newspapers away from expressing their responsibilities for fear of retaliation in libel cases, where their professed standards might be used against them in court. This "timorous posture" has led to a "relative lack of professionalism among journalists; compared to physicians, scientists, academics and even lawyers, ours is a poorly articulated profession in terms of standards and codes."

Seigenthaler agrees with King. Like King, he is a critic of public journalism and believes that change in newspapers should come from within the profession in projects such as the American Society of Newspaper Editors' three-year investigation of "the root causes of journalism's dwindling credibility," rather than through broader social efforts such as those supported by the Pew Center for Civic Journalism, whose involvement with some newspapers Seigenthaler believes has "discredited" public journalism. About the ASNE effort, Sandra Mims Rowe, Editor of The Portland Oregonian, said that the project would be devoted to "long-range actions that can advance our credibility and increase public trust."

Like Seldes before him, Seigenthaler is uneasy with the optimistic tone of news about the economy. It seems, he said, that "all economic news is good news. It's not reporting on the economy to say that a corporation has had a bad quarter and the stock has dropped," Seigenthaler observed. This is an incomplete picture: "In an economy where there's not much tolerance for the poor, journalists are not looking at the gap between the rich and poor…."

Given that failure of coverage as evidence of shortcoming in professional standards, how do journalists approach the new professionalism?

One way is to practice the old professionalism vigorously.

A careful analysis of public or civic journalism that appeared in the winter issue of Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly suggests that public or civic journalism can best be defended as an innovation when its active citizenship and community-rousing efforts are supported by sound, old-fashioned objective investigation of important topics.

An article by Peter Parisi, an associate professor in the Department of Film and Media Studies of Hunter College of the City University of New York, suggested that by encouraging people to think of themselves as citizens, seriously involved in solving the problems of their communities, public journalism "promise[s] an ambitious explanatory journalism on the largest questions of public policy and a journalism rich in features so frequently bemoaned as missing in journalism—cause, context, compassion, background, perspec-

tive, issues, underlying structure."

But the promise is betrayed by another assumption of civic journalism, one that reveals its devotion to sincere good will and seems satisfied with community involvement as a solution to social problems. "In practice, however," Parisi wrote, "civic journalism retreats from this promise. One might expect that its critique of the cynicism that results when journalistic narratives ignore 'solutions' would be to structure reporting around concern for the well-being of society. In other words, journalists would not simply report public problems in their dramatic, conflictful outlines, but would ask a variety of sources: 'What can be done about this social problem?' 'What are its causes?' 'How have other countries and other historical periods confronted the problem?' 'What are the best ideas of contemporary authorities who have studied it?' 'What obstacles stand in the way of solution?'…This would produce the long-absent reporting of the news within a framework of cause, compassion, and context."

Instead, Parisi writes, civic journalism's proponents seem satisfied to have provoked a community response, even though it may do little to solve the problem.

The phrase "long-absent…" suggests that in their pursuit of new values that might draw attention to poverty and wealth, journalism should try to revive the accomplishments of more successful periods. The importance of personal journalism certainly must be acknowledged, but one noticeable characteristic of any productive period in recent American journalism has been the effective use of the style of reporting that is called "objective." The criticism of objective reporting as a sterile, power-serving form of reporting has become routine. But seen not as unwanted relic but as one among several indispensable means of observation, it remains a bedrock of investigative and explanatory journalism. The public appreciates its value more than many journalists do, and when it is practiced by a great reporter who respects the hard-won fact, nothing surpasses it. Reporting that is dismissed as being sterile because it is objective often is not objective at all. It is superficial. It's possible to dislike superficial reporting and be uneasy about its value to citizens without using it to enthrone other not-thoroughly-tested forms that, to an astute analyst like Parisi, have their own faults.

It appears, though this is just a glimmering, that newspaper journalism may be approaching a moment of synthesis, in which a number of recent developments begin to make sense in combination. Maxwell King is another prominent editor who has jabbed at public journalism because members of the movement seem to him to push journalists to "drop your posture of independence, of distance from the civic process, they urge, and join the battle on behalf of the public good.… Unfortunately, in so doing, the leaders of this new movement have rejected—in fact, have scorned and derided—one of the ethical cornerstones of modern American journalism: the neutrality, the independence, of the newsroom." He suggested that those devoted to public journalism "forget about organizing meetings; forget about activism; do not destroy the independence and neutrality of the newsroom," and instead join in a new professionalism.

But many editors recognize the value of reaching out to the public in ways that are constructive and not merely ingratiating, and while they may not wish to mobilize public opinion, they see that it is necessary to find ways to build a devoted readership.

Jeannine A. Guttman, Editor and Vice President of The Portland Press Herald and Maine Sunday Telegram, appears to be one of those editors whose paper is joining the outlook of public journalism with the power of objective reporting on important issues. A series in The Sunday Telegram in 1996 suggests as much. It was a thorough piece of objective reporting on the gap between rich and poor in Maine.

Guttman strongly supports public journalism and suggests that when the public is allowed to talk frankly with journalists about news judgment, reporting and editing, stereotypes dissolve and connections are made that increase the confidence of readers and the competence of reporters and editors. The newspaper, she says, must learn to "value all citizens," and organized contact with readers, or prospective readers, seems to lead in that direction: "When you're in a group talking to a mother on welfare, you're talking to a real face, not a stereotype. That's what's been missing in our coverage. Until we value all citizens as much as we do legislators, spin doctors, power brokers and lobbyists, we won't be doing our jobs."

Of King's criticism she says, "That's ridiculous. It does not speak well of the individual journalist to assume that if we get near the public we will lose ethical judgment and besmirch the great institution of journalism." In the forums that her newspaper has organized, on alcoholism, for example, the paper has reserved the right to withdraw if it finds that its neutrality is jeopardized by public involvement. Members of the public understand this stance.

Through the leadership of then-editor Lou Ureneck the Maine newspapers have been involved in public journalism since 1994, Guttman said. The philosophy of public involvement has, she said, "taken root over time." The series on the gap between rich and poor seems to be one in which a combination of public involvement and thorough objective reporting has accomplished an important piece of explanatory reporting—not a bad model for other papers.

To complete the series, reporters Eric Blom and Andrew Garber did 200 interviews over five months and used computers extensively. For example, they created a master occupational data base that revealed changes in Maine's occupational profile. Another data base contained tax statistics that allowed reporters to see the sources of income for various groups.

The paper found that the gap between rich and poor is growing in Maine, with the top 20 percent of Maine households earning 10 times as much as the bottom 20 percent in 1994, up from 8 times as much in 1979. They also found, and reported in individual cases, that

corporate profitability is being increased through layoffs that "are eroding Maine's middle class" and that a "glut" of lower-skilled workers is driving down wages, and that "low-wage, semi-skilled workers overseas are taking the jobs of Maine people."

All those who talk about new purposes for journalists ought to keep in mind the fact that they have been discussed before, and in similar terms. Decades-old discussions may yield some answers. To unattached observers journalism must often seem to be comfortably troubled; who but several generations of journalists could spend 60 or 70 years arguing about objectivity, without ever changing the terms of the argument or expecting to settle the question? The staying power of journalistic issues—objectivity or not, pandering to advertisers or not, hiding behind the First Amendment or proclaiming firm principles—is so remarkable that it must appear to the uninitiated that journalists cultivate their complaints as a way of pretending that they're trying to solve them.

It also may appear that journalists have a hard time phrasing their problems in ways that allow solutions because the profession itself rests not on bedrock but on a shifting ambivalence about nearly everything it touches, including the public, which in journalism's tory periods is seen as a mob of six-pack slingers, and in periods when Jeffersonian idealism is revived as a font of wisdom.

Ambivalence produces an ethical opportunism that infuriates those who expect journalism to follow a steady vision of social justice and sound public interest. Ethical opportunism allows journalists to grab off important stories without worrying too much about fixed ethical standards, and it also gets them into trouble when journalism oversteps.

Can journalism, so easily distracted, articulate standards that it truly intends to follow? Perhaps most easily when the identity of the ideal individual journalist is under discussion. Here, some of the most inspiring characterizations come from other periods, and even though they may include a touch of bravado, they are worth considering if they suggest how the elements of outstanding professionalism are combined in the pursuit of poverty, injustice and other important issues. In these characterizations the suspect word "conscience" appears frequently, as perhaps it should. Only through the insistence of a hard-working democratic conscience will any journalist ever do a good job exposing the roots of injustice; only the professional conscience will allow the journalist to try to do what has become very nearly impossible: recognize the indispensable importance of seeing in the midst of fragmentation, selfishness and indifference, a whole public interest.

More than 50 years ago Robert Lasch, an editorial writer for The Chicago Sun, wrote in the Atlantic Monthly of the professional conscience that journalists today seem to want to recover and, except for the use of the word "newspaperman" to describe newspaper journalists, expressed himself in language that might have stirred excitement in the ASNE think tank or at the last forum of the Committee of Concerned Journalists:

"The newspaperman's problem is to reconcile heart and head: to discipline the impulses with an intellectual regard for truth, and at the same time to inflame curiosity with a social purpose. This marriage takes place when he sincerely represents, in judgment, in selection, in emphasis, in the responses of his news sense, the whole people and not any one section or class; and when he devotes the whole of his technical competence to the pursuit of the truth as best he can perceive it.

"Given such a union, differences of approach can be tolerated." Disagreements among journalists become significant "only when professional judgment gives way to emotional prejudice or to unseemly attachment to a set of preconceived ideas, or to an overweening desire to make good with the front office. One does not ask that the control of news content be divorced from human nature; only that it be free and pledged, in the broadest sense, to the public welfare."

How to Make Poverty Disappear

Poverty is clearly something of our own doing, but the non-poor are no longer moved to take concerted action to alleviate it. This is not because they think the solution is too difficult or expensive, but because they have lost confidence that any large-scale plan will work. They may, of course, lend assistance on a personal level, doing good in minute particulars. But the notion that this can be part of a program with more cosmic meaning, a program that promises to eradicate poverty for once and for all, founders on the apprehension that humans exercise very little control over the course of development of the social reality they themselves have created.

Not everyone, of course, is willing to live with this uncomfortable and paralyzing combination of ideas. Religious faithful who seek to tailor themselves to a God-given reality persist, as do social reformers who seek to tailor reality to a utopian vision. But if the growing indifference to poverty is any guide, it points to the conclusion that these groups no longer represent majority opinion or sway public policy. Those among the non-poor who are unmotivated to grapple with a problem for which they can discern no solution find it more bearable simply not to think about it. This choice includes ordering where they live, where their children go to school, what they read and what they expose themselves to in such a way that poor people intrude minimally upon their lives and consciousness.

Actually, this strategy does entail a solution of sorts to the problem of poverty, and a remarkably clean and cheap solution at that: to make poverty disappear by the simple expedient of not acknowledging it.—*F. Allan Hanson, Professor of Anthropology, University of Kansas, in The Cato Journal, Volume 17, Number 2, fall 1997 © Cato Institute.*

Lasch said that a free press requires a free owner, and proposed, in 1946, that the publisher should recognize "that he is selling circulation and prestige, not an economic point of view or service to special interests; and who, above all, recognizes that selling something is not his first obligation at all, but is subordinate to his responsibility to represent the unrepresented. A man who can divorce himself from the associations and outlook that normally go with wealth; a man who can sacrifice even his own short-range interest as a business entrepreneur in favor of his long-run interest as the champion of a greater cause; a man whose passion for the general welfare overcomes his desire to impose his own ideas upon the community; a man of wisdom and humility, character and devotion, courage and modesty—here is the kind of newspaper owner who can make the press free."

We will scoff and say that not a word of this creed is in the job description of any publisher or broadcast station owner. But if we scoff it's because we have learned to think that ideals are impractical and unprofitable, because we don't believe that the public will respect professional integrity or pay for it. But it does suggest that when the next "new journalism" arrives, as it does every 30 years or so, it might have to include publishers.

Even if it didn't, is there a program of reform implied in Lasch's description of the ideal journalist? Or in The Chicago Tribune Editor Jack Fuller's workaday but no less inspiring definition in his speech to the Committee of Concerned Journalists: "To me, the central purpose of journalism is to tell the truth so that people will have the information that they need to be sovereign." Lasch's description of the ideal reporter or editor could be achieved often enough to change the business, whether or not she or he practiced civic or public or old-fashioned objective journalism at a serious level of inquiry.

A profession, friendlier with the public but still not identified with the public, itself publicly devoted to the study of important social issues such as the disparity between rich and poor, and most of all devoted to the truth, not afraid of its own inherited ideals—isn't this a program for credibility?

The real challenge of reporting on poverty is it requires that society be seen whole, as a great body of citizens with common public responsibilities, as, in Lasch's words, "the whole people."

We come at last to the question of professional conscience, or simply, of conscience. This is a question best left for last because journalists have a hard time admitting its existence in work devoted to factuality, even though it permeates a profession that likes to think of itself as hardheaded.

But some observers believe that on a question such as the existence of poverty, conscience is precisely the door that needs to be opened. In the absence of political leadership or crusades, journalists may find that the voices raised against social injustice, including persistent poverty, are those of religious or moral authorities who, whatever the temperature of political discussion on the issue, find the persistence of poverty in the United States to be simply wrong.

Charles Haynes, senior scholar for religious freedom at the First Amendment Center in Arlington, Virginia, suggests that the discussion of moral topics in the United States has taken a plunge into division, discord and neglect and that journalists are only among the many who cannot find their bearings on the moral disorder that must beset a society that cannot recognize in a consistent way the wrongness of suffering caused by poverty. "I find a tone deafness among journalists when it comes to religion or morality or conscience," Haynes said in an interview.

"It's impossible for most reporters to follow anything if it has to do with conscience," Haynes said. "We are in sad shape when it comes to moral discourse and understanding the claims of conscience. We can't seem to get beyond stereotypes." Reporters and editors, he said, "are not prepared to deal with this kind of discourse when it touches on public policy."

In the United States, he said, "we are struggling to recover a sense of moral consensus on race, poverty, foreign policy and other issues." But when religious leaders speak out on poverty, he said, "there's not a ripple" of press attention, though he hastens to add that religious leaders themselves, who see the world "through a secular lens," have lost their ability to speak prophetically in a language that "touches the conscience of the people."

After columnist Murray Kempton died in 1997, Calvin Trillin wrote a tribute in which he said of Kempton: "He had the true reporter's eye for facts that had to be faced."

A simple statement, but a simple dedication to the facts that are not immediately apparent, or fashionable or unbearably exciting to the over-excited millions may be the journalistic expression of conscience that the press is looking for as it tries to improve its public standing and do its job. ■

Will Campbell
Radical Right 'Bust' Feared From Poverty

I'm deeply troubled in America that the chasm between those who have wealth and those who don't is getting wider and wider. There are more people who are the have-nots than the haves. As some kind of a kooky radical Christian it troubles me. As someone who lives in what we like to call a democracy it bothers me, too. Because I fear down the road, not in my lifetime, maybe not in my children's lifetime, but in my grandchildren's lifetime...that can't last, you know. That's gonna bust. And I fear that the bust will come from what is now called the radical right.—*Will Campbell, writer, preacher, social activist, farmer, at a Nieman Fellows seminar, May 5, 1998.*

SLAPPing Down the Debate Over Cuba

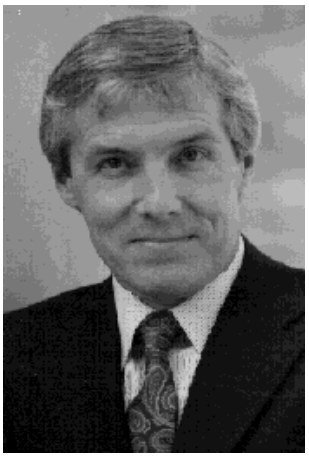
Right-Wing Exile Foundation in Florida Uses Defamation Suits To Chill Criticism of Its Policies

By John S. Nichols
And Robert D. Richards

A panel of judges in Florida's Third District Court of Appeals is now considering the case of an outspoken retired diplomat who is seeking not only personal justice but also is fighting for a fundamental principle of democracy against an organization that seems bent on destroying free speech in the United States under the guise of establishing it in Cuba. While Smith vs. Cuban American National Foundation appears to be a routine defamation case in which Wayne S. Smith, former head of the U.S. diplomatic mission in Havana, is appealing a Miami jury's verdict against him, it actually is a complex web involving bare-knuckle Washington politics, an article in a national opinion magazine, and ultimately the First Amendment.

The combatants in the case are longstanding political adversaries in the contentious debate over U.S. foreign policy toward Cuba. In one corner is the Cuban American National Foundation, a tax-exempt foundation that represents the interests of the right wing of the Cuban exile community and is a strident opponent of the government of Fidel Castro. The late Jorge Mas Canosa, CANF's founder and chairman until his death from cancer earlier this year, was a veteran Castro hater who aspired to be the next president of Cuba. With the substantial financial backing from other wealthy exiled businessmen and a willingness to brand opponents as Communist sympathizers, Mas Canosa and his organization became feared and effective players in the corridors of power in Washington. The controversial Mas Canosa and other foundation leaders frequently appeared in the media or testified before congressional committees advocating tough measures against the Castro regime and have been extraordinarily successful in pushing both Republican and Democratic administrations to strengthen the U.S economic embargo on Cuba. Their goal, they contend, is to bring freedom and democracy to their homeland.

Equally vocal is Wayne Smith, for-



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Robert D. Richards is an Associate Professor of Journalism and Law and founding director of the Pennsylvania Center for the First Amendment at Penn State University. He is a nationally known expert on First Amendment issues. His writings include "Uninhibited, Robust, and Wide-Open: Mr. Justice Brennan's Legacy to the First Amendment" (Parkway Publishers, 1994) and his latest book, "Freedom's Voice: The Perilous Present and Uncertain Future of the First Amendment" (Brassey's, Inc., 1998).

merly head of the Cuban desk at the State Department and of the U.S. Interests Section in Cuba until he retired from the foreign service in 1982, disgruntled with the Reagan Administration's confrontational approach to dealing with the Castro government. Smith, who now teaches at The Johns Hopkins University and is a fellow in a Washington think tank, the Center for International Policy, has since become a leading critic of U.S. policy toward Cuba and especially CANF's influence on that policy. He often writes for major newspapers and appears on television skewering Washington policymakers, Mas Canosa and others who he believes are blocking a rational dialogue over the Cuban problem.

That outspokenness is what got him in trouble, at least with Mas Canosa. In1992 Smith was interviewed by filmmakers from the University of West Florida for a documentary titled "Campaign for Cuba," which aired on PBS that year. Smith's statements on that program formed the basis of CANF's lawsuit against him. In a 20-second soundbite, he summarized an article by John Spicer Nichols that appeared in The Nation in 1988. The article, titled "Cuba: The Congress; The Power of the Anti-Fidel Lobby," reported that the National Endowment for Democracy, a quasi-governmental institute that funnels U.S. tax dollars to projects intended to support democracy abroad, signed contracts with CANF from 1983-1988 awarding the foundation grants totalling $390,000 for the purpose of supporting a European organization also seeking to marshal opposition to the Castro government.

During that same period, the political action committee associated through interlocking directorships with CANF gave a nearly identical sum of contributions to political candidates. Among the candidates to receive a portion of this PAC money was then Congressman Dante Fascell, who introduced the legislation creating NED and later became a member of the NED board. As a board member, Fascell, whose congressional district in South Florida encompassed the headquarters for CANF and the homes of many of its leaders, voted for grants to CANF on at least three occasions.

Nichols, a Penn State communications professor and a long-time professional colleague of Smith, argued in the article that when CANF received a windfall of NED grants to carry out activities it would have otherwise supported with internal funds, its associated PAC (which is funded by essentially the same pool of donors) has a greater percentage of existing funds to contribute to political campaigns. However, as long as CANF and its PAC were separate legal entities and none of the actual NED money went directly to the PAC, federal law was technically not broken, but the spirit of the law was nonetheless compromised.

Nichols, Penn State, The Nation and PBS were not sued. CANF targeted only its perennial critic Wayne Smith. CANF asserted during the 1996 trial that Smith had falsely alleged in his broadcast remark that the foundation transferred the same money received from NED to its PAC, which would be a violation of law and therefore defamatory. Here's exactly what Smith said: "It is interesting that the National Endowment for Democracy has contributed to the Cuban American National Foundation and it, in turn, through its own organization, through its PAC, has contributed to the campaign funds of many congressmen, including some who were involved with the National Endowment for Democracy—from whence they got the money in the first place—such as Dante Fascell."

Smith testified that his statement was an essentially accurate summary of the article and did not allege criminal activity by the foundation. But the Miami jury sided with CANF and awarded it $40,000 in damages.

Notwithstanding the jury's interpretation of the accuracy of Smith's words, the trial court verdict against him was totally at odds with established constitutional law and is likely to be reversed on appeal. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in its 1964 landmark decision New York Times Co. vs. Sullivan that to ensure a vigorous and open debate about public issues that is essential to the proper functioning of a democracy, the press and individual citizens must be able to scrutinize and criticize public officials without fear of having to later justify the accuracy of their statements in court. That standard was extended a few years later to cases involving other public persons. Otherwise, the press and other participants in the public debate would tend to censor themselves to avoid subsequent retaliation, and a free flow of information necessary to democratic self-governance would be undermined.

To this end, the Supreme Court established a tough standard for proving defamation against a public figure. The plaintiff must not only prove that the statement is false and damaging to one's reputation but also must demonstrate "actual malice"—that the defendant made the statement with knowledge of its falsity or with reckless disregard for the truth. CANF failed by far to meet this standard. At the trial, Nichols testified that his article was accurate, and the PBS documentary maker, Churchill Roberts, testified that he was satisfied as to the accuracy of his program, including Smith's statement. CANF's lawyers offered no evidence to contradict their conclusions. Nichols further testified that he told Smith before the documentary aired that CANF's objections to the soundbite were themselves inaccurate and that Smith had expressed confidence that he had spoken the truth. In short, actual malice was not proved with clear and convincing evidence, as required.

Although the appellate court will likely overturn the judgment on these grounds, prevailing in court probably was not CANF's primary goal. Its lawsuit against Smith is an example of a burgeoning category of litigation in which citizens exercising their First Amendment rights are intimidated or retaliated against. The Political Litigation Project at the University of Denver has coined the term SLAPP—Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation—to describe this legal phenomenon. The Project defined the term as follows: "A civil suit filed against nongovernmental individuals or organizations because of their communications to government

bodies, government officials or the electorate on a substantive issue of some public interest or concern."

This case fits the typical SLAPP scenario. Smith was certainly within his rights to communicate this information to the PBS audience (the electorate), yet he was sued for speaking out. The most common ground for a SLAPP is defamation, followed by a range of business torts, including interference with a business relationship. The basis for the lawsuit is less important than the motivation. SLAPP filers have a two-fold mission of punishing opponents who have spoken out and warning others that they will suffer similar consequences should they dare to participate in public discussions.

Speaking immediately after the trial, CANF chairman Mas Canosa described the verdict as "a defeat for [the liberal press], which over many years has given legitimacy to the regime of Fidel Castro." Mas Canosa added his hope that the jury's decision would result in a change in coverage of Cuban exiles and threatened further lawsuits against media and others friendly with the Castro government who are a part of a "conspiracy" to defame his organization. In an effort to stifle the opposition, CANF removed the debate over U.S. policy toward Cuba from the political stage to the courtroom, thereby gaining a competitive advantage given the financial and emotional costs associated with defending a lawsuit.

CANF targeted the one individual it wanted to punish when other parties could have been included in the lawsuit. Even without winning the lawsuit, CANF will accomplish its goal if Smith is dragged through the litigation process long enough to deter him from publicly opposing the organization in the future or discouraging others from doing the same.

The chilling effect of SLAPPs on future speech has been documented. Researchers at the University of Denver found some damaging consequences for democratic self-governance. Sociologist Penelope Canan found that people targeted by such actions are less likely to participate in future public issues or discussions. Further, she learned that even the threat of SLAPP keeps citizens from participating. Even people who merely know about SLAPP are less likely to participate than those who are not aware of this phenomenon.

On balance, the constitutional rights of citizens to participate actively in public discourse, as guaranteed by the First Amendment's speech, press, and petition clauses, far outweigh the SLAPP filer's retaliatory motivation. Indeed, SLAPPs are ultimately about First Amendment rights. Essentially, targets are being punished through burdensome litigation for exercising a guaranteed right. Nothing could be more antithetical to a democratic form of government.

Recognizing the policy implications of such a misuse of litigation, 12 states have passed anti-SLAPP laws to ensure that the citizens' right to participate in the political process is not subverted through protracted litigation. In those laws, three points are critical. First, the SLAPP filer must be stopped early before mounting legal costs crush the target into quiet submission. Accordingly, a procedural device designed to strike the lawsuit within a decidedly short period of time is essential. Second, these states recognize that protecting a person's right to speak out on issues of public concern is a pivotal part of a functioning democracy, and thus a qualified immunity for comments made in furtherance of this right is also needed. Third, acknowledging the enormous financial burden associated with defending a SLAPP, most states have included a provision for recovery of attorneys fees and costs.

Anti-SLAPP statutes now exist in California, Delaware, Georgia, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nebraska, Nevada, New York, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Tennessee, and Washington. Unfortunately for Wayne Smith, Florida has yet to pass an anti-SLAPP law. Florida's Attorney General, Robert A. Butterworth, has generally supported the need for anti-SLAPP legislation. Yet, passage of these laws has been slow in every state considering them. Entrenched interests that find SLAPPs to be a useful tactic come out in force against these measures and are typically successful in blocking such bills the first time around.

Without the benefit of an anti-SLAPP statute in Florida, Smith and his pro bono attorneys, Richard Ovelmen and Alfredo Duran, are continuing to fight the arduous battle for the right to criticize public figures and policies, a right that ironically is supposed to distinguish U.S. democracy from the Cuban system. ■

Brent Staples

TV and the End Of Reflection

The idea that knowledge can come to you only through a sort of pictorial electronic representation itself is corrosive. What we're steadily doing in this culture is eating up the moment of reflection and deliberation. The whole idea of taking in a word, taking in a sentence in a paragraph, in an image, is that some set of data goes into your mind and you reflect on it, you think about that. In your head you begin to absorb it, see it through different angles, and reckon whether or not it is true. Move forward to the O.J. Simpson trial, that year in our lives as Americans' reflection eroded…. I looked at the polls from the day of the murder and from the day after [the verdict] and people were equally divided. The same people thought the same thing....Those people had almost absorbed nothing from one year of watching these images on trial…. The Gulf War was another one of those episodes. You had lots of flash and glory and photographs that told you absolutely nothing....What you saw, basically in the sky, was just lights. You need that moment of reflection. You gather information, you put it together, you test it, you exact hypotheses on it and you reflect about it. We're wiping out that entire step in this culture. Wiping it right out. And I'm talking about world culture. ■*—Brent Staples, Editorial writer, The New York Times, at a Nieman Fellows seminar February 13, 1998.*

SLAPP and Black Hole of Internet

By James C. Goodale

In a year when journalism is running wild on the Internet and the transgressions of the press have made headlines, e.g. CNN's nerve gas broadcast, the fabricated stories in The New Republic and The Boston Globe, and the voice mail break-in by a Cincinnati Enquirer reporter, it may be the better part of valor for the press to rest on the protection it has rather than seek to expand it through new legislation such as Anti-SLAPP laws.

These laws were initially passed to protect critics of real estate developers who were silenced with expensive defamation suits—not the press. A lone environmentalist, for example, would show up at a zoning meeting complaining about a development and the developer would sue the environmentalist—not the press—for the remarks made. A David and Goliath contest would follow. The developer's deeper pockets, however, usually prevailed and the environmentalist was left with an unaffordable legal bill and no desire to take on the developer again.

Whether the press should get behind bills restricting such suits and push them through state legislatures is another question. If this last year is any test, and it may very well not be, a larger threat to libel protection of the press than frivolous libel suits may be its own transgressions and the deep black newshole of the Internet.

There is no need to report in detail here the transgressions by Stephen Glass in The New Republic and Patricia Smith and Mike Barnicle in The Boston Globe, the nerve gas disaster of CNN, and the $10 million voice mail hullabaloo of The Cincinnati Enquirer. The press has few defenders for its actions in these cases.

But what about the Net? It's not been a great year there, either.

The Wall Street Journal reported on its World Wide Web page that Secret Service personnel had seen President Clinton and Monica Lewinsky in a compromising position and then retracted it four days later. The Dallas Morning News Web site and the paper itself reported the same thing and then both the paper and the Web site retracted, too. Is on-line journalism off-the-wall?

One would think so if the case of Matt Drudge, the America Online columnist, is any example. Drudge reported a "source" told him that White House staffer Sidney Blumenthal "beat his wife."

Blumenthal sued AOL and Drudge for libel. The court dismissed AOL from the case because of an exemption in the Internet Decency statute that immunizes on-line service providers from libel suits in most cases. The case continues against Drudge. He maintains he is a "reporter," entitled to the usual protections reporters have in libel suits under the Sullivan case.

If Drudge is correct, and it is hard to see why he is not, what does that say about the deep dark newshole of the Internet? For journalists traditionally boxed in by time and space, the Net is nirvana—an infinite newshole.

But if everyone acts like Drudge, what does that say about the legal protection given to reporters, editors and publishers in the famous New York Times-Sullivan case? If Drudge is correct and he is covered by Sullivan, so is everyone else on the Net who acts like—and reports like—Drudge.

It is estimated that more than 10,000 Web sites go on line daily. It is true many, if not most, of these Web sites are either commercial or personal sites. Hundreds if not thousands of these sites, however, report information that is news-like, and there are scores of pure news sites like Drudge's.

Every communication on the Net is subject to libel laws, but only on-line service providers like America OnLine have any immunity from libel suits. It does not take much imagination, therefore, to foresee a whole line of Drudges claiming protection under Sullivan.

Since "malice" in Sullivan does not mean malice at all but rather not entertaining doubt about the accuracy of the story, the way to prove a doubt-free mind is to prove reliance on sources. Simply put, if a reporter or editor has no reason to doubt a source, there's no liability for libel even if the source says something wildly libelous such as Blumenthal "has a spousal abuse past that has been effectively covered up."

The temptation, therefore, for the on-line press, and as far as that goes, the main-line press, too, is to print anything a source says and then disclaim responsibility for the truth of the statement. This is a complete change from pre-Sullivan, when the press was required, generally, to stand behind the truth of its statements, not merely how well they were sourced.

There is a suspicion, therefore, totally unprovable, that the freedom enjoyed by Sullivan has led to a climate which makes possible the recent transgressions of the press. Manufactured

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sources (Boston Globe, New Republic), inappropriate sources (CNN), any source (Drudge) certainly make one wonder whether these transgressions could have taken place pre-Sullivan.

The big question is: when the courts are presented with more Net cases like Drudge—or even Drudge's case itself—will they apply Sullivan in rote fashion? If the courts do not, which is certainly possible, will they then embrace one set of rules for the Net and another for newspapers and magazines (print)?

Since the Supreme Court ruled two years ago that the Net is entitled to the greatest protection afforded by the First Amendment, it seems unlikely courts would adopt a two-track approach for libel on the Net versus in print. The risk is that courts may apply lower standards for libel protection on the Net, which then might drag libel protection for print down to that level.

There have been major changes in the news business since the 1964 Sullivan decision, when the three networks plus The Times, The Washington Post, Time and Newsweek were arguably a news oligopoly. While technically irrelevant for a court's decision, the realpolitik of the news business today is that if one of the major news entities is hit with a huge libel verdict, it will not go down the tubes, unlike 1964, when The Times would have gone bankrupt had Sullivan and his peers succeeded in the series of libel suits they brought for coverage of the civil rights movement.

Accordingly, courts may not be as sympathetic to the press because of the different environment in which news presently exists compared to the time of the civil rights movement, particularly if the present environment is the deep newshole of the Net.

Thus Internet problems pose a greater threat to the press than defamation suits filed against individuals active in public affairs. Typically Anti-SLAPP laws apply only to those who "petition" government, that is, appear at zoning meetings and the like.

In New York, for example, an Anti-SLAPP law has been on the books for five years and has never been used by a media defendant, since the coverage of the law is very narrow. It applies to suits involving public "petition and participation," e.g. a developer applying for a building permit bringing a suit against someone who seeks to "comment on" such application.

In California, however, at least in the lower courts, the press has had some success in using the state anti-SLAPP law, which is far broader than New York's. In addition to protecting those who "petition" government, it also applies to those exercising their First Amendment rights "in connection with a public issue."

California publishers have been quick to pick up on the language that protects free speech rights and have persuaded several lower California courts to apply the anti-SLAPP law to them. The San Francisco Chronicle, for example, has successfully used the Anti-SLAPP laws several times to ward off what it believed to be frivolous lawsuits.

In one case, it had written a long investigative piece on More University, an alternate life-style college in California offering courses on "sensuality," "mutual pleasurable stimulation…," and "niceness/meanness."

More University sued for libel and the paper was able to defeat the lawsuit by using the California Anti-SLAPP law.

The California Supreme Court has yet to rule on the issue of whether the Anti-SLAPP statute deprives libel plaintiffs of their First Amendment rights. Believe it or not, there is a First Amendment right to sue.

Generally speaking, however, states can hem in the rights of libel plaintiffs to sue, since the right to sue for libel is a state-given right (there is no federal law). States, however, cannot dilute this right below a certain irreducible minimum. Whether a law like the California anti-SLAPP one as applied to the press goes below this irreducible minimum, only the California or U.S. Supreme Court knows, and no Anti-SLAPP case has reached that level yet.

Anti-SLAPP laws are suited best for frivolous lawsuits. They are of no use in serious libel lawsuits when the plaintiff can make a good case at the outset.

Anti-SLAPP law presents the libel plaintiff with a high hurdle to jump before he can even get his suit off the ground. He must show the court he has a "probability" of prevailing on the claim before he has started. Even under the Sullivan case, which gave the press vast protections, he faces no such burden.

Under Sullivan, he does not have to prove to the court a probability he will succeed. All he is required to do is show the court that he has a reasonable likelihood of success. If he does, he then is entitled to go to the next stage in the suit and examine reporters and editors in what is technically known as an "examination before trial." It is this stage, before the case even reaches trial, which is very expensive for libel defendants and that Anti-SLAPP laws are designed to eliminate for the frivolous case.

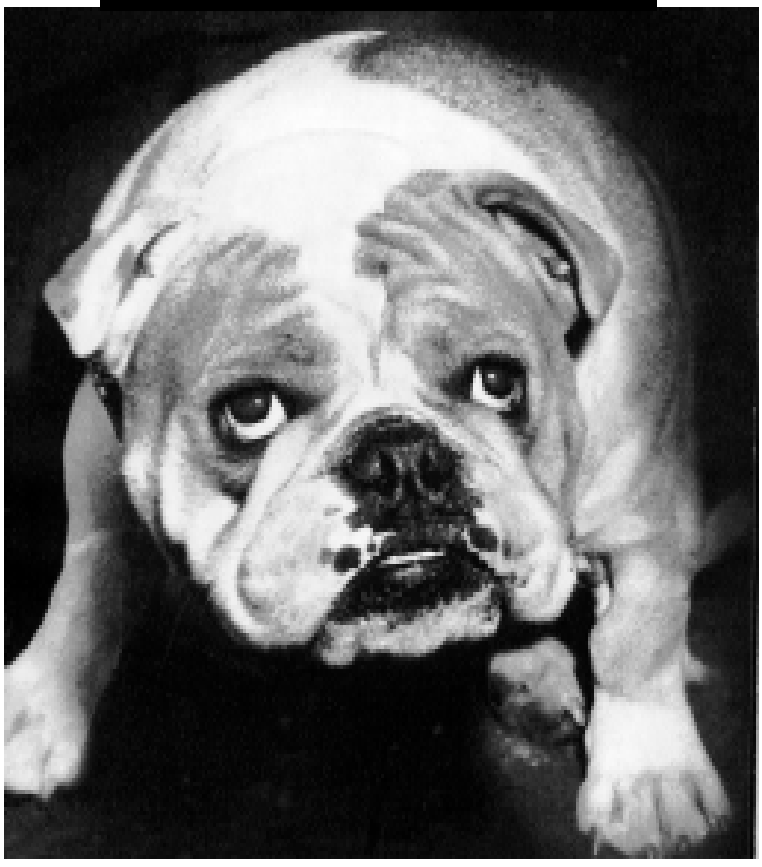
During the pre-trial stage in a libel case, the defendant's search is for "absence of malice." Editors and reporters know that "malice" as used in Sullivan does not mean ill-will at all. Justice William J. Brennan, who coined the phrase in Sullivan, later said he wished he never used it because of the confusion the phrase created. What it means generally is that a reporter or editor "entertained no serious doubt" as to the accuracy of what was published.

It becomes very expensive to prove this innocence, and libel plaintiffs can take years to probe the editorial conscience to ascertain whether there is any doubt, meanwhile running up huge legal expenses. Many publishers and insurance companies would prefer to settle and save these expenses.

It is quite true that if all Anti-SLAPP laws had the reach of the California law and could be applied to libel suits against the press, some of these suits could "go away," saving everyone time and expense. There are many libel plaintiffs who may not be able to prove at the *outset* they had a probability of winning. Since many libel suits are brought only to protect "amour propre," and so waste the valuable time of editors and reporters, this would be a good thing.

All this being said, it is hard to be very enthusiastic about a concerted effort to extend the protection of anti-SLAPP laws to the press. It may be a better strategy to limit such suits to the precise meaning of the acronym SLAPP, "Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participants," as originally intended. ■

Watchdog Journalism



In the following pages Nieman Reports continues its call for more watchdog reporting with an article by Murrey Marder cautioning that aggressive watchdog reporting does not require arrogance, an essay by Will Englund on the rewards of avoiding confrontation and a report from Jenny Lo on British journalists' more combative style. These are followed by excerpts from the first Nieman Foundation Conference on Watchdog Journalism, May 2, 1998, at Harvard. At the conference participants suggested ideas that editors, reporters and news producers might consider as they fulfilled their responsibilities in four areas: national security, state and local government, economics and the nonprofit sector.

Arrogance Wins? American Journalism's Identity Crisis

By Murrey Marder

Unlike other trades, crafts, or professions, the American press is constantly in your face in one form or another: in your eyes, your ears—and an increasing number of critics these days would add: "yes, goddamit, and also in your nose—they stink!"

In the dog days of August, the so-called "media," as well as the public, received a jarring sample of what is in store for both of them if the present course of angry collisions continue into the next millennium. For if the media continue to play roulette with First Amendment rights and obligations by exploiting unbridled sensationalism and arrogance, we are bound to end up a markedly different nation.

The coverage of the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal in the name of "watchdog" journalism has forced to the surface of American consciousness a cumulative buildup of outrage against press arrogance that for years has been gathering explosive steam.

Not since the end of the Vietnam War has the American press incurred such wrath from the consumers of print and broadcast news. Charges of bias were hurled from all directions as the press allowed itself to be manipulated, first by one side, then another, under cover of totally unidentifiable sources.

To surrender journalistic authority so readily indicates that little or no press experience has been handed down from the Indochina wars.

The print press, instead of filling the great void in the American press lineup with comprehensive reporting and in-depth analyses about the legitimate story of President Clinton's possible misuse of power, displayed no forward thinking about covering the sex scandal as it hit the fan day after day.

For the print press to try to compete with television in sensationalism is a race in futility. While the Clinton-Lewinsky proceedings were underway there were dozens of unfulfilled opportunities to explain the law and the maneuvering around it by both sides. This is where there should have been serious watchdog journalism, as contrasted to stenographic journalism—writing down what you are told.

Even before the nationally televised O.J. Simpson murder trial in Los Angeles, but especially after the death of Britain's Princess Diana as she was pursued by paparazzi, public sensitivity to actual, or perceived, press arrogance has made the "media" a despised institution for many Americans.

Yet not one American in 10,000—if that—could accurately define the extraordinarily diverse components of the "media." But that ignorance is the media's fault, not the public's, because responsible journalists, including media owners, have not found a way to differentiate themselves in word and deed from the irresponsible. In fact, it is becoming more difficult to draw a distinction when so many leading publications are adopting the same habits and tactics of the tabloid trash.

Evidently driven by the conviction that there are no longer any limits on the language that should appear in newspapers or on television screens seen at the breakfast table, or in the nation's classrooms, the mainstream print and broadcast media followed the tabloids through the no-holds-barred doors that lead to illusory circulation nirvana:

Oral sex in all its permutations. Penises flaccid and erect. DNA tests on Monica's prized possession—the alleged semen-stained dress. Detailed exploration by lawyers on whether the President's denial of "sex" with Monica could allow him to wriggle free from a perjury charge on grounds that not everyone counts that as sex; could it be categorized, instead, as foreplay?

Today's "media" mantle is already so stretched that it encompasses everything from The New York Times to the screaming McLaughlin Group to Playboy Magazine's nudes to the Matt Drudge Report on the Internet to television's Hard Copy. Yet the public at large operates under the illusion that "media" is an entity that somehow can be held collectively responsible for the misdeeds of any single transgressor.

Never before have Americans been exposed day after day, throughout the spring and summer, to what was happening inside and outside a United States court house in the center of the

Murrey Marder, Nieman Fellow 1950, is the retired Chief Diplomatic Correspondent of The Washington Post. He launched The Post's foreign service in 1957.

nation's capital, in a partly staged, partly impromptu production starring the nation's 42d president and a paranymph less than half his age. No torrid soap opera could match those daily scenes, because none could duplicate the national characters in the real-life plot.

The leader of the free world, no less, was being stripped bare of his public persona, to be revealed gambling recklessly on continuing in that exalted position and on history's balance sheet, as well as on the honor and dignity of his wife, daughter, other family and friends, and everything else in his personal and public life.

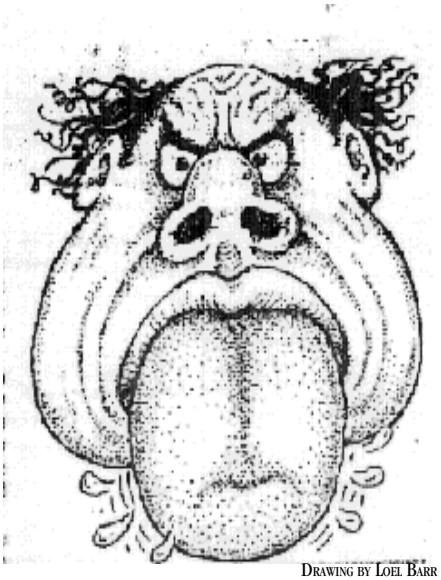
Not surprisingly, every segment of that picture—not just the substantive elements—was magnetically irresistible to virtually all the "media" on the planet. The odds against ever repeating it anywhere on the globe are astronomical. So hundreds of press people from around the world poured into Washington to join American photographers and reporters shoving each other like pigs at a trough, to get at witnesses entering and leaving the U.S. courthouse—where the President's fate hung in the balance.

To average Americans this was raucous "feeding time" in the media industry—and TV anchormen told them so, with sniffs of disapproval, even though they were speaking of their own networks' camera crews in many instances.

No crystal ball is needed to discern that in the 2lst Century, what is loosely categorized as "the media," will increasingly, and literally, look and smell like a diarrhea of uncontrollable diversity in the communications business—all in the name of "watchdog" journalism.

To those of us who have spent our lives committed—however naively—to serious watchdog journalism, what was happening in that bizarre scene in Washington's Judiciary Square was a mockery of what cannot even be expressed in English, but can be in French, our *raison d'etre*—our reason for being.

For we media naïfs—although it is too embarrassing to say so out loud in



DRAWING BY LOEL BARR

mixed media company—the words of the First Amendment have a broader objective than enabling the media to behave boorishly outside that courthouse in order to jolt the world with pictures of that woman. Some of us trying to catch public attention from the rear of the over-sexed, over-loud, and short-on-manners media supermarket, are motivated, instead, by the First Amendment's underlying purpose: To reinforce democracy in its loftiest aspirations, by giving the public the information it must have to prevent the abuse of power. That is what "watchdog" really means.

To employ inside-the-beltway language, do we in the chattering class of the media, therefore, want someone to shut up, and close down, any other part of the media because we dislike their behavior or product?

Absolutely not. As much as we may disapprove of their actions, or their ideas, their right to express them is untouchable. That is the genius of the First Amendment.

There is one elementary—but critical—requirement for journalism today that too many reporters and editors apparently never learned: how to be persistent and courteous at the same time.

Civility and courtesy evidently are seen by many reporters—especially younger ones—as leftover frills from their parents' generation, to be used only on rare occasions, if necessary, as puffery, or foppishness.

No such advice could be more wrong, for several very tangible reasons:

It sounds so elementary, so obvious to say so, but courtesy is the all-purpose lubricant for communications around the globe. It can be especially valuable for the press, because journalism comes with a built-in proclivity for arrogance.

Because the essence of news is what is novel, unusual, out of the ordinary, the average person's meeting with a reporter is more likely to deal with bad news rather than good news. The messenger who bears bad news and an arrogant manner, therefore, has two strikes against him before he even asks a question.

Journalism in the United States began, before that term existed, with what is visible in retrospect as two styles of reporting: Ben Franklin's wise old owl approach, which took him from a true ink-stained wretch of a printer to one of the drafters of the Constitution, a literary icon at the most popular level, the nation's first ambassador to France, inveterate ladies' man into his '70's, and truly a man for all seasons.

Tom Paine, by contrast, disdained anything resembling ruffles and satins and silver-buckled shoes. While Franklin's approach to independence for the Colonies was calm persuasiveness, Paine's approach was open defiance and outrage at British rule.

The titles of Paine's hand-pressed pamphlets generated their own heat and light: "Common Sense," "The Crisis," "The Rights of Man," "Agrarian Justice" and other sizzlers.

Was Paine the progenitor of our era's "shock jocks"? That would be an insult to the 18th Century "shocker." His product was liberty; theirs the exploitation of liberty.

Try to image how these two 18th Century ink-stained-wretches—who could justifiably be described as the country's pioneers in "watchdog" reporting on abuse of power—would have reacted to President Clinton's bizarre four-minute report to the nation on August 17 on what he was doing during

the previous seven months that almost obliterated from public attention everything else that was happening in the world.

Was there a whiff of politics in the Clinton plea for survival, which was far more of an arrogant counterattack on his accusers than an act of contrition, which the nation, and even many of his own associates, anticipated?

House Speaker Newt Gingrich, always quick at exploitive politics, got one of the first whiffs. Gingrich on August 20 was joyfully outlining Republican strategy for the impending election campaign, just three days after President Clinton committed the equivalent of political hara-kiri in admitting that he lied to the nation in denying he had an affair with Lewinsky. Gingrich did not even mention President Clinton as he addressed fellow Georgians in Marietta; he treated the President as though he was non-existent. Gingrich's main target of opportunity on August 20 was the American press.

The shrewd speaker was not overtly nasty; he referred to the press as if it is a slow-witted, errant child who should be led out of the mud-slinging and gossip in which it has been wallowing.

"I challenge the media to face real problems," instead of its obsession with "curiosity and gossip" Gingrich repeatedly said. He ticked off urgent world problems that have disappeared from priority public attention for months.

To ask "the media" to control itself might appear to be the logical alternative; in fact, that also appears to be utterly impossible in the age of the Internet and satellite communications.

Maybe the threat could be to withhold the media's tools, striking at its ability to communicate—to be stripped of pens, pencils, laptop computers, satellite dishes, digital cameras, audio equipment, billboards, skywriting aircraft and pilots, desktop publishing, underwater cameras, balloons, carrier pigeons. As is obvious, any attempt to "control" the media stage in the information revolution is akin to trying to control space.

Then there is no solution? Our Founding Fathers were convinced they had one: the First Amendment.

To the British government, Paine was "a traitor" of a revolutionary with a price on his head. Was he also rude? Probably. But arrogance can be, and should be, accompanied by civility.

In my time as a reporter, the accolade for supreme arrogance in the American press corps surely would have gone to columnist Joseph Alsop.

Joe could be as insufferable a person as you ever met, but he also could be one of the most elegant denizens of Washington, regularly entertaining President-elect John Kennedy and other notables at his fashionable Georgetown home.

In an historical examination of Congress and the Washington Correspondents, entitled "Press Gallery," by Donald Ritchie, Associate Historian of the Senate, Ritchie recalls that one day in the 1930's he was in the Senate Press Gallery when Alsop "burst through the swinging doors into the gallery overlooking the chamber and peered down upon a solitary senator reading a speech."

"Who is that?" Alsop said in a voice loud enough to turn heads. When told the senator's name he replied in astonishment, "I've never heard of him!"

Joe Alsop became one of the most powerful voices in Washington, pushing Presidents Kennedy and Johnson into the morass of Vietnam at a time when journalists never disclosed their own roles behind the scenes in shaping policy.

One of the most consequential factors in government-press relations in the last half century was the fact that many of the most influential reporters and columnists at the outset of the Cold War had been in military uniform with simulated rank during World War II.

A large number of these journalists carried into the Cold War their same supportive role toward U.S. officials and their policies. Some others of us, who had been in uniform in other categories—in my case, as a Marine Corps combat correspondent—reverted at war's end to what we regarded as the requisite role of questioning those who held power, as a counterweight against the abuse of power.

This split in journalistic approach became glaringly evident during the war in Vietnam, and in some respects it is still visible in American journalism—and is almost never discussed in public.

Now, for the first time in over half a century, the time is ripe for doing so. Never in such a time frame have we seen so many roaring disputes coincide about the American press.Toweringly topped by President Clinton's downfall, these controversies extend from the Clinton-Lewinsky affair to multiple disclosures of fabricating the news to the humbling retraction by CNN and Time magazine of their story on use of sarin nerve gas in Vietnam.

The larger novelty, however, is not that the press is under sharp criticism; that is hardly rare. What is different is that not only are the criticisms deeper and broader than usual, but also that the press is criticizing itself to a greater extent than ever before. Now that's news!

If our press product was wine, we would not have to wait until the end of 1998 to concede that it was "not a great year." Let's admit it, fellow media monsters, it is, to borrow Tom Paine's memorable phrase, a time "to try men's souls."

And if Steve Brill's Content, or any other publication or person on the globe offers up any criticism of what we do, let's try to remember that the First Amendment, on which we survive, gives not only us—but everyone else—the right to take a poke at our nose as we take a poke at theirs. ■

Civility as a Reporting Tool

By Will Englund

Years ago I confronted the president of the Baltimore City Council, by then already besieged by subpoenas and investigators, and demanded his reaction to allegations that we planned to publish the next day. He responded by inviting me to leave before he punched me in the mouth.

Ruffled and self-righteous, I walked out with the feeling that I had given him his fair chance and, well, to hell with him. But over the next few days it began to dawn on me that I really had no idea how he perceived the extortion accusations that were swirling around him—and that this was especially unfortunate, because there was hardly anyone in Baltimore more garrulous and entertaining than this particular politician.

In the years that followed, that moment of regret slowly crystallized into a more general observation: as a rule, the bad guys are more interesting than the good guys. It pays to talk to them and to listen to them. It makes the story better.

From 1991 to 1995 I worked in The Sun's Moscow Bureau, along with my wife, Kathy Lally. Being a foreign correspondent, particularly in a country as idiosyncratic as Russia, is great training in the art of listening. Reporters tend to be rude and abrupt when they think they already know what's going on—but in Russia you almost never know what's going on. You have to cast assumptions aside and listen to what good guys, bad guys and all those in between—are really saying, because they never say what you expect.

In 1996, back in Baltimore, I was paired up with reporter Gary Cohn to find out what happens when old ships, especially old warships, are sold for scrap. I had already done enough reporting to realize that it is a dirty, dangerous and virtually unregulated industry, but I doubt if I've ever been asked to pursue a more arcane topic. I'm not sure I realized it at the time, but since then I've come to understand how lucky we were that we knew so little. Ignorance was a blessing.

It meant we had to learn all sorts of things. It meant we were unburdened by assumptions. It meant we had to appeal to all kinds of people for help in understanding the industry—workers, ex-workers, regulators, Navy people, shipbuilders, speculators, contractors, lawyers, managers, owners.

One buyer and seller of old ships learned what we were up to and sent us a letter threatening legal action if we wrote about him. We sent him a letter right back thanking him for his interest and confirming that we were indeed trying to comprehend the world of shipbreaking—and that we would be grateful if he could share his insights with us. Within a week we were having lunch.

We talked to others, as well, who might traditionally have been considered "targets" of the newspaper's investigation. Gradually it became evident that we could write a hard-hitting but superficial story with cardboard villains, or we could write one that would be just as hard-hitting but have far greater depth and nuance to it. The people who were responsible for the industry—and for everything that was wrong with it—were also the people who knew the most about it. We were only doing ourselves a favor by taking them seriously.

One scrapyard owner with whom we met several times had a tendency to begin every conversation by venting his anger at the world in general and at newspaper reporters in particular. It would have been easy to provoke him into saying something nasty, quotable, self-destructive and possibly even self-revealing. But Gary and I had agreed we wanted to try to see the world through this man's eyes. And the really useful information had a way of coming out about an hour or two into the interview. What we got from him was not inflammatory, but it was honest. And by showing him that we actually cared about what he had to say, we kept the lines open and knew we could always get back to him as further questions arose.

The third and final article in our series (published in The Sun in December 1997) was about the shipbreaking industry at a place called Alang, in India, where more vessels are cut up for scrap than anywhere else in the world, and where 35,000 migrant laborers, living in hovels on the beach with no running water or even latrines, toil day in and day out on the disposal of the industrial world's discarded merchant and naval ships.

Workers at Alang are killed in explosions, in falls, by fire, by drowning, by

Will Englund, 44, has been with The Baltimore Sun since 1977. As a local reporter he covered City Hall and education. In 1988 he worked for The Glasgow Herald in Scotland as a Fulbright Fellow. From 1991 to 1995 he and his wife, Kathy Lally, were assigned to Moscow as correspondents for The Sun. In 1997 he teamed up with Gary Cohn to write a series on the scrapping of old ships. It won a Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting. In late 1997 he and his wife returned to Moscow to begin another tour there. A native of Pleasantville, N.Y., he graduated from Harvard and earned a master's degree from Columbia University.

disease. A conservative estimate puts the death toll at about one a day, but nobody really knows because nobody keeps track.

We had heard that after a particularly deadly accident an Australian television crew had shown up at Alang, but had been denied access and essentially chased away by the local police. If it was a question of a Western confrontational style running up against Asian sensibilities, it is not difficult to imagine what happened, and why.

So, before we went to Alang, Gary flew to London, where he spent a week getting to know the brokers who sell ships to India. We hired a former journalist in New Delhi, Sharmila Chandra. She preceded us to Alang, speaking with owners, port officials, the lone struggling lawyer who battles on behalf of the workers. The contacts that Gary and Sharmila made proved invaluable. In the end, no one refused to see us in Alang. In the tight-knit world of the yard owners (there are 135 independent shipbreaking outfits there), where everyone knew where we had been and with whom we had talked, not a single door was closed to us.

We engaged in the most round-about conversations. We drank gallons of tea. We were careful to show respect to our hosts. They responded by telling us what we wanted to know and giving us unfettered access to their yards. Sun photographer Perry Thorsvik brought back astonishing pictures of half-demolished ships sitting in the oily muck, of workers in rags straining in agony as they lifted heavy plates, or tossing asbestos insulation into the sea, or dodging showers of sparks and choking fumes, protected only by filthy scarves.

It took time, of course. Patience was what made our series possible. Altogether, two of us spent 18 months putting three articles together. But I believe those articles present a truer and deeper understanding of an industry that has gone badly awry—and better lay the groundwork for reform of that industry—than any attempt we could have made to go out and "get" someone. Listening, empathy and a certain persistence took us much further than confrontation, provocation or bullying ever could have. ■

PHOTO BY PERRY THORSVIK, THE BALTIMORE SUN.

In India, a worker, carrying a load of ship insulation on his head, walks to the water's edge where he will dump it. The insulation came from the old U.S. Navy warship U.S.S. Bennington.

PHOTO BY PERRY THORSVIK, THE BALTIMORE SUN.

In India, workers look like ants next to the giant ships being dismantled.

In Britain, Rottweilers Attack

By Jenny Lo

The timing could not have been better. Several days after I was asked, as a Nieman Fellow, to write an article on the apparent lack of civility by British journalists, the Local Government Minister, Hilary Armstrong, reacted furiously while being quizzed by a BBC correspondent at a press conference. Describing a question about conflict of interest in the Labor Government's relationship to a lobbyist who was a former aide to Home Minister Jack Straw as "an outrage," she stormed out, saying, "It is a slur, it is not true."

This was mild compared to the blistering letter the Prime Minister's Press Secretary, Alastair Campbell, wrote to The Times in response to a recent article ("Ministers shun BBC inquisitors for chats on sofas.") The letter asserted that Government Ministers were not declining the opportunity to face difficult interviews while accepting invitations instead to be questioned by non-hard news variety hosts such as Des O'Connor (ITV prime time, woolly sweaters on a couch with set-piece pre-planned punch lines) or Richard and Judy, (daytime chat show hosts).

Campbell, former Political Editor of Robert Maxwell's Daily Mirror tabloid, which supported the Labor Party, commented: "These programs are watched by millions of people, many of whom do not follow politics closely." He continued, "Very few people—in politics or the media—take 'The World at One' [BBC Network Radio lunchtime in-depth news program] seriously, so such regular appearances are less likely. 'Newsnight' [BBC Network TV program, which airs weekdays nightly from 10:30-11:15 and is watched on an average night by about a million people,] has a dwindling audience.

"As one minister said to me recently when I tried to get him to appear on the program, 'What is the point of traipsing out to W12 [BBC TV studios in West London] late at night so that Jeremy [Jeremy Paxman, the anchor] can try to persuade the public that I'm actually some kind of criminal?"

In swift response later that day in The Evening Standard, Paxman riposted with an article headlined, "Why the PM's spokesman is talking crap—that's C.R.A.P." (using Campbell's own words in briefings). In it he said, "It is the journalist's job to find things that powerful people don't want to tell us, and the interrogator's job to test their arguments." In the United States, the closest approximation would be White House Press Secretary Mike McCurry writing a column in The Washington Post and Ted Koppel answering back in The Chicago Sun-Times. (The Standard is a tabloid but not down-market).

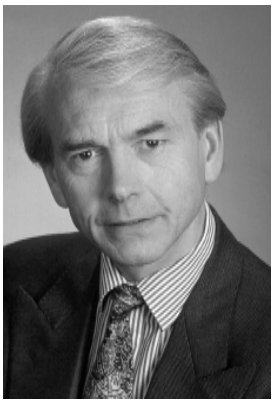
Paxo, as he is referred to occasionally in the press, is one of U.K. journalism's most tenacious and robust interviewers, frequently mentioned as "a heavyweight rottweiler." The closest American approximation would be Koppel, but perhaps Paxman's style of questioning is more persistent and direct. Koppel is certainly more tactful. A notable instance was Paxman's asking the previous Tory Home Office Minister, Michael Howard, whose portfolio included crime and punishment, the same question over and over again—whether he should have resigned over the escape of prisoners inside Parkhurst, a top level security prison. He repeated the question 14 times while Howard evaded answering.

I ventured into the Lion's Den—well, the BBC's new digital multimedia news center in the wasteland of W12, where Jeremy's demeanor, when he is not facing politicians, often resembles that of a pussycat or golden retriever. Well, a very polite English gentleman of the Public School Oxbridge model.

Paxman denies that he is always on the attack and gently reminded me that he recently got Health Minister Frank Dobson to agree with him without resorting to inquisitorial methods. However, he is adamant that it is entirely legitimate to press for answers because "politicians are like monkeys—they inflict their most unattractive parts on the public."

It isn't only BBC's "Newsnight" that has a tradition of non-polite interviewing—BBC Radio 4's flagship breakfast program "Today," which sets the agenda for public discussion, fields a sharp trio of two men and a woman (Jim Naughtie, Sue McGregor and the other noted rottweiler, John Humphreys, who in

Jenny Ai-Ling Lo, recently a media consultant, is starting a new job as Commissioning Editor/Executive for the BBC/Open University—where her portfolio includes political science. Lo wrote this article in a personal capacity (she is a 1996 Nieman Fellow) and not as a representative of BBC. She was educated in Malaysia, New Zealand and Britain. Lo was a BBC News and Current Affairs Producer and has covered British and U.S. elections. From January 1992 to June 1995 she was Executive Producer for BBC MPM and had responsibility for joint BBC and Russian broadcasting teams that produced business and political programs throughout the Russian Federation.



John Humphries

Jeremy Paxman

ALL PHOTOS BRIDGET KENDALL © BBC NEWS

Jim Naughtie

another classic interview, when a harried cabinet minister accused him of 32 interruptions in 10 minutes, rushed to correct him. It was only five minutes, not 10, he said.)

Even in the less hard news environment of the studios of BBC Radio's "Woman's Hour," Harriet Harman, until recently Social Security Minister, walked out when Jenny Murray, the presenter, speculated that she might be sacked in the reshuffle—although Harman later asserted she was late for a Cabinet meeting.

I ventured to ask whether these broadcast news shows were perhaps part of an elaborate game or just good theater. Paxman countered that "this current Government is excessively obsessed with PR and being 'on message'—if there is a message. I want to be off it." He is also increasingly aware of the art of the spin—"the government apparatus has increased its size now to 1,300 people. Information is now tightly controlled." He strongly feels that "every senior politician now has access to media training. Our job is to prick the bulb. The interviewer must find ways around it." He also believes that there is now an emerging pattern that because of Labor's landslide majority, senior politicians are increasingly not available for public scrutiny.

"The justification for our existence as journalists," Paxman said, "is that we are not afraid to say boo to these people."

How typical is this attitude throughout the United Kingdom media? What about print? I did not hesitate to raise this issue with Michael White, Political Editor of The Guardian, the liberal national broadsheet owned by a British trust, one of the few papers not owned by a foreign global conglomerate. A former Washington correspondent, White is a favored broadcast pundit on British government issues of the day and is the master of the bon mots.

At the cafeteria favored by the policemen in the House of Commons, Michael dispensed coffee, comment and advice. He agreed there was a clear difference between print and broadcast. Aggressive reporting was less frequent during the interviews for the print press as well as in the finished article itself. In print, there is less pressure in extracting the information within a few minutes. The interview is a process of exchanging information that leads to an article that appears later. For broadcast, especially live programming, "the interview itself is the outcome and the product. Watching it, the questioning is both interview and content." Occasionally, the exchange itself becomes news—and when the interviewing is interesting, watching it even becomes a form of entertainment.

White believes that how well you know the person dictates your tone and style of interviewing. He gets a lot of his information directly from interviews, government briefings and from what American journalists call their "sources." He is also adamant that you do not always need to be aggressive to pry the information out. A combination of humor and knowledge also pays dividends.

Britain also has the Lobby system, whereby Alastair Campbell gives off-the-record briefings to a select group of correspondents. It has been controversial and compared to an old boys club. Many journalists (those outside the gilded circle, admittedly) have been critical of its existence. Michael did not think its coziness a problem. He thought that it was "crap that everything has to be on the record—you get less quality of information from stage-managed statements."

Victor Smart, former Political Editor of The European and Political Correspondent for The Sunday Observer, was in the Lobby for a decade until six months ago, so he can't be accused of sour grapes. Perhaps he had a more dispassionate view? Our interview (conducted over E-mail) drew this comment—"It has the typical dynamics of a group—leader, followers, new boys etc. I think you would be surprised how matey they are. Campbell has made them more so with his laddish language. It's a competitive environment but equally cozy for the insiders. In the back of their mind, Lobby journalists are always trying to prove to themselves they haven't been co-opted by the system. The reality is that they have—that's why it's fun…you are (or feel you are) a player…but it is the government which ultimately has the power and the stories."

However, Smart does make the point that while the Lobby briefings are highly entertaining, "it does descend very occasionally into low blows when real blood is drawn." To some extent he admits that "the confrontation tends to get somewhat ritual. Toughness and rudeness is allied to the pack instinct in reporters. Certainly in Westminster and I'm sure inside the Beltway, an issue of the day almost always emerges and then there is a tussle. Few reporters hunt alone." Smart adds, "It makes civility difficult—it's easier to trade blows as a group. It's not so personal and stinging remarks don't hurt so much if rival reporters too are dealing or are being dealt blows, too, on the same subject."

U.S. reporters have been described as descending into "feeding frenzies." In London, Smart says, "it's wolf packs. Perhaps the analogy is apt. Weaker than their prey sometimes, wolves use com-

plex social structures to topple more powerful beasts without getting hurt individually."

It now seemed the right moment to ask an American in London what he thought. Who better than the Chief of The New York Times Bureau, situated around the corner from Buckingham Palace? Warren Hoge has been an enthusiastic supporter of the British bulldog interviewing tradition and even wrote about it in January 1997. It described the BBC News breakfast radio program "Today" as one in which "the major figures in public life clamor for the chance to appear on the program, even if it means a bracing encounter with aggressive interrogators…. Americans might see their methods as verging on hectoring."

"The British public would feel betrayed if we didn't ask tough questions," Jim Naughtie, one of the anchors, said in the same article.

Hoge, fresh back from Belfast and Liverpool, had this to say about interviewing styles and techniques—"We in the United States are burdened by fake politeness. In D.C., especially, the national media figures to some extent have been corrupted by proximity and closeness." He thinks there is too much deference bestowed to politicians, and the recipients also expect it.

"Even when there is disagreement on the agenda as in 'The McLaughlin Show,' or 'Crossfire,' there is no real engagement or debate. It's professional wrestling. Both sides speak their set piece and are allocated a forum, but it's a game show and a setup. The statements are not challenged by tough questioning."

He recalled Prime Minister Tony Blair's being interrupted brusquely at least five times in a short interview. "The British go for the jugular. They are combative on both sides. Politicians like John Prescott [the Deputy Prime Minister] themselves do not shy away and relish it. U.S. senators would be insulted by the treatment."

But while Hoge definitely prefers "the tough contrarian approach instead of the United States tendency to fawn," he is less impressed with the quality and content of the political reporting in U.K. print media. Other than it being "boring" and "clichéd" and "lazy," he thinks that despite the diversity and range of the media, they are all predictable and follow a party line of sorts.

His assessment of why print is less challenging is that it is due to "the rush for huge profits and intensive competition amongst them all. They all oversell the stories and this is the reason for a bad product." I raised the point that there were different circumstances, both institutional and cultural, that would make it difficult to tap sources within the British government. A professional cadre of civil servants/officials still exists rather than short-term political appointees who would tend to leak. Those not in the Lobby, the inner circle, do have to rely on the Press Association, which is accredited for Parliament, so that ultimately the government has the power and the stories. This situation, nevertheless, does not seem to have impeded broadcasting.

More significantly, British journalism is hampered by what Michael White says are key disadvantages—"restrictive libel laws and official secrecy. U.S. colleagues are assisted by legal and constitutional protection."

This advantage has its problems. Jeremy Paxman thinks the reason why U.S. journalism is less robust is that "they have a constitutional role and are a part of the process. We don't suffer from the canker of self-importance. The media should be outside casting a quizzical and critical eye. Journalism is still a disreputable trade here. I reach for my revolver when I hear about it as a profession. We are not the same as lawyers, doctors and accountants. We should not be regulated."

A number of things struck me while writing this article. There was agreement by American and British journalists about the provocative style of British broadcast journalists versus the bland and deferential U.S. version. Regarding print, British journalists admired the accuracy and detail of American quality print media, which is better researched and factually reported.

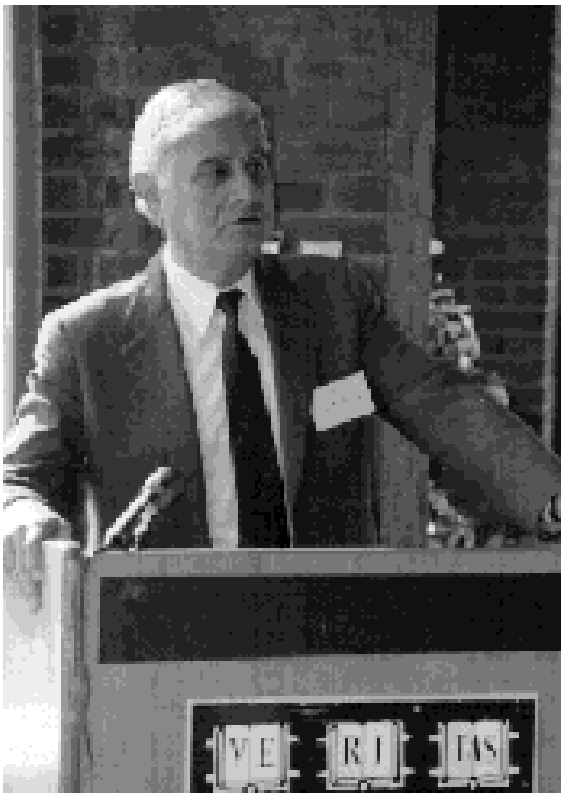
White is also not convinced about the virtues of fact checking, having been used as a source to confirm facts. "They are wonderful diggers of 'the truth,' but the United States has narrow parameters and there is an overall liberal consensus. Their facts become universal truths. Facts are absolute and presumed to range from A-B or A-Z. In real life they are usually L—O." (I told you he was the master of the bon mot.)

One other reason why this is so can be attributed to commercial considerations rather than political history or institutions. It is interesting that Warren Hoge sees print as the less challenging medium in the U.K. because of the need to compete and sell more copies. White reminded me that the U.K., with a population of 57 million and a size roughly equal to Idaho, has 11 national papers, which sell many more copies than the U.S. nationals in a country five times as populous. They are all competing aggressively to win readers from each other. While the BBC's Political Editor Robin Oakley (ex-Times) is civility incarnate, can it be any coincidence that his colleagues, Paxman and Humphries, the tenacious rottweilers, emanate from public broadcasting?

I would also suggest that the British political culture does reinforce the apparently more combative style. Unlike Capitol Hill, Westminster is adversarial and politicians are trained to thrive on a debating tradition. Until recently, different ideologies also permeated the system. The European view is that in the United States the two major parties are similar, that both are co-opted by special interest groups, thus the emphasis on issues, campaigns and implementation of promises. The British educational system also instills and encourages students to gather facts but thereafter to criticize, analyze, inquire and judge. Or perhaps there is a more prosaic interpretation: We are divided by a common language.

I had never considered myself particularly aggressive but it was enlightening to discover that I was so a year after my Nieman Fellowship at a Thanksgiving dinner in Washington, when I bumped into a non-journalist I had met at another Harvard institution. He didn't remember my name but remarked, "Oh, you're the woman who always asked difficult and challenging questions." ■

Ideas for Watchdog Reporting



Bill Kovach JAE ROOSEVELT PHOTO

On the eve of the 21st Century, a new challenge faces journalism, which concerns itself with democratic interests of the country and requires the development of new concepts and new tools for the new circumstances. The combined impacts of the dominance of the free market—of free market capitalism, digital and satellite technology, the potential for global commerce and journalism on the World Wide Web—have all led to massive and dislocating social, political and economic changes. Among the changes that are of interest to our work here today are the devolution of authority to state and local levels of government, deregulation of economic power, privatization of public services to private institutions and nonprofit institutions, the reordering of the economic organization of news companies in part responsible for the disappearance of foreign news and much of America's news reports, and a reordering of news agendas.

The four panels [at this conference] are designed to touch on those issues—international affairs, state and local government, economics and nonprofit organizations.—*Bill Kovach, Nieman Foundation Curator, speaking at the first Watchdog Conference, May 2, 1998.*

National Security

The National Security panel was chaired by Daniel Schorr, who began the discussion.

This whole question of the journalistic watchdog role strikes me as being more relevant to what happens domestically than what happens internationally, but there are also international implications.

I think we're all in agreement that you cannot simply rely on what you're given spontaneously by government. You have to go and find the underlying things that are happening, the pressures, the incentives, inducements that are there.

We had to deal with the question of what technology does to our position as a journalistic watchdog in international affairs. That very quickly brought us to what happened toward the end of the Gulf War. The military had tried, on a whole, I think very successfully, to exercise a great deal of censorship.

On the other hand, something began to happen, which we think is a forerunner of what will be happening on an increasing scale, as we see our technology develop. We saw a CBS camera crew and correspondent arrive in Kuwait I think moments before the first elements of troops. So the first thing you saw live on television in America was CBS liberating Kuwait.

It was very easy to exercise censorship in World War I, World War II; it was a matter of submitting your dispatches. "We'll go through them, we'll give them back to you, and we control the communications, so we know that you will only send what we want you to send."

It's all over now. It's all over. Communications have been unleashed from that kind of control.

We're all conscious of the fact that it would not be helpful to the American cause in a war, if, as in the Gulf War, it

Daniel Schorr PHOTO © JOANNE CICCARELLO 1998

was possible for Saddam Hussein to sit there in Baghdad and see the worldwide reach of CNN as it brought pictures from the battlefield, which might provide information to Saddam Hussein, which we generally would agree that it was not in the interests of the United States that he should have.

What do you do about that? Well, let's see if we can reach some kind of new modus vivendi with the military, which basically collapsed because of the Vietnam War.

I suggested that it might be necessary to negotiate something. Some of my colleagues didn't agree, didn't think it could be done, didn't think it necessarily should be done, that the proper role was, in fact, going to have to be an adversary one.

We touched a little bit on personnel, what kind of reporters we have. Clearly, we old fuddie duddies all believe that what we simply need is more reporters like us. I think there is a little bit of, well, gee whiz, nobody would pull the wool over our eyes. We all went through this thing and we were there. We served the American people and so on. It's getting very difficult to claim, however, that you served the American people, when the American people don't believe that you serve the American people. That, I believe, is probably the main reason we are here today—the press in every field has lost a great deal of credibility.

MANNING—Are most Americans not going to be interested in foreign affairs? These are subjects in many cases that not only bore the public, they bore publishers. They bore news directors and network news presidents. They're not sexy. They're complicated. There are other things that are easier to read and more titillating.

Discussion Who's Who

Berkes, Howard —Correspondent based in Salt Lake City for National Public Radio.

Frankel, Max —Former Executive Editor, New York Times, now columnist for Times Sunday Magazine.

Hall, David—Editor, Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Kovach, Bill—Nieman Foundation Curator.

Lewis, Anthony —Columnist, New York Times.

Manning, Robert —Former Editor in Chief, Atlantic Monthly.

Marder, Murrey —Retired Dilomatic Correspondent, Washington Post.

Meek, Jim —Editorial Writer and Columnist, Chronicle-Herald, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Robbins, Carla Anne —Diplomatic Correspondent, Wall Street Journal.

Schorr, Daniel—Senior News Analyst, National Public Radio.

Stets, Dan—Business Reporter, Philadelphia Inquirer.

Taubman, Philip —Assistant Editorial Page Editor, New York Times.

We didn't come up with a suggestion of how we do that. We said: Perhaps, foreign affairs, international affairs, is basically a subject for a relatively small elite in America. It may be a lot of journalism should assume that that élite—5 million or 6 million people is the estimate—should be the target of major newspapers and, to a certain extent, the other news deliverers.

TAUBMAN—Can I just jump in with one observation? I think the way to deal with the problems is not to work out some kind of new, more diplomatic relationship between the press and the American government. My experience as a journalist, which came at a slightly later point, and so was formed more by Vietnam than World War II, is that the government is deceptive, and that that is a core component of American foreign policy. They do not want to provide accurate and truthful information to the press. If we try to develop some kind of more cordial understanding with the Defense Department or the State Department or the Central Intelligence Agency or the National Security Council, it's going to be a one-way street, in which we will somehow be less aggressive in return for a continuing stream of disinformation.

From my vantage point, the way to deal with this is to continue to be as aggressive as you can. This may not be a popular opinion, but I'm not particularly concerned that the American people find the press too aggressive or find the press conferences during the Gulf War to be intrusive in some kind of fashion. If we get intimidated by that, we cease to do our job.

ROBBINS—I am with Phil. I was one of the people who helped organize the pools in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf War and feel like I should have my head shaved for that experience.

We have to be really vigilant about that.

Working in Washington is incredibly seductive. People ask me for advice on foreign policy. It's very tempting. I'm an American. I care. I'm a foreign policy junkie. I care about what they do. I don't want people to die. I want the U.S., which I think is a good place, to help promote democracy abroad. But I can't cover it adequately, if I'm helping craft the policy.

It's really, really subtle. They don't invite you in for one-on-ones all that often. But all the time, there's this sort of implicit co-opting. I see it in small briefings in the National Security Advisor's Office in which reporters start saying: "Well, what are we going to do?" If we start thinking of "us" as "we," it's lost. I think we have to be alienated. I'm not really sure we should be going to dinner parties with them, or dating them, or sleeping with them, or giving us our deep insights into things. If they want to know what I think, they can read it in the newspaper.

That's one of the things in Washington that really, really frightens me.

I went to a small town in Missouri that had 25 missile silos being destroyed under an arms-control agreement. I talked to people—kids in high school and guys at the Elks lodge and all of that. I found people remarkably aware. I loved the woman who said that the silo was such a part of her life that, when boys came to pick her up for dates in high school, she'd say: "Well, you'll go to the silo and turn left." I mean, these were people who had really lived with the Cold War.

But once it was over with, they didn't turn off from the world. It was easier when we could say who was winning and who was losing—who lost Angola, who won Angola, when it was almost like a football game.

If you write human stories about human experiences that aren't foreign, necessarily, I think people can begin to understand foreign policy and the impact that we have on the world and the world has on us. So I'm not despairing at all.

SCHORR—Phil, can you talk for a moment about the difficulty of getting the CIA to be honest when they're trying to keep everything secret?

TAUBMAN—I was never successful. The only way I ever found to report accurately on the CIA was to report around it. Some journalists have been successful in developing sources inside the agency. In the years I was covering it for The Times, I had a few officials who would take my phone calls. But I never believed for a minute that any of them were telling me the whole truth and nothing but the truth. The way I worked the CIA, and I think it's probably still done today is, I worked Congress, Congressional aides, members of the Senate and House Intelligence Committees. They know an awful lot about what's going on at the CIA. They're circumspect as well, but you can learn something from them.

I did something, I guess, which is colloquially referred to as whipsaw reporting, in which I would take information that I learned from a Congressional source and I would run it by somebody on the National Security Council. And they might elaborate a little bit more. The more I knew as a reporter, the more information I was able to get from sources, because they began to talk to me as somebody who they believed was informed about the subject and not just fishing for information.

Then, of course, there were people in the private sector who were trying to do what I was doing for The New York Times, they were trying to do for public interest groups or whatever cause that they were trying to further.

Eventually, you could put together a picture of what was going on.

LEWIS—I think all of us feel inadequacies in the performance of the press. But some things are better than they used to be. I go back to Guatemala, where a correspondent for The New York Times, the late Sidney Gruson, found out what was about to happen, the overthrow of the elected President of Guatemala by the CIA and its allies. The CIA persuaded the publisher of The New York Times, at that time, to remove Sidney from the scene. That's unthinkable today, I think. The whole system in newspapers has become much more resistant to government pressure and the sense that we know best what's for you.

FRANKEL—I'm glad Phil added the

description of how he worked. Even though he called it adversarial, some of those phone calls that were answered and some of that working that he did required something less than total hostility with the people whom he was talking to. That's the dilemma throughout. Information, after all, is a commodity and it is power. And it is the government's intention to use it, to withhold it, to abuse it. It is our job to ferret it out. In the process, we are often sloppy and irresponsible. So the government needs to educate us. And we need the government to inform us. Out of that comes a very tense and, I think, never-ending contest. Overdone in any one direction. If we get too close and are the mere handmaidens of government, we fail in our function. If we stay so aloof and so hostile that we remain uninformed and dumb, I don't think over the long run we can write intelligently about what is going on.

That tension, I think, is going to dog us. The pendulum may swing a bit to one side or the other, but it will never be resolved.

The same thing by extension goes to the use of secrets in the international realm. The press cannot be properly informed unless it shares in some of the secrets in which government trades. Therefore, the sources have to be confidential, etcetera, and you have to deal with the adversary relationships in government.

To find out what's going on in the CIA, you have to find out who in government is opposed to what they're doing and have them tell you what's going on with the CIA and vice versa. You triangulate on the information.

Similarly, the government cannot fully and properly inform the public as to what it is doing and why without trading in secrets. The information may be secret one day, but the next day, they have to go to Congress and get an appropriation and suddenly they blow the secrets.

My view in the end is that our reputation and our standing with the American people needs to be understood as being very different where different media are involved.

The real problem today as I see it is that too few journalistic organizations are, in fact, committed to journalism and to quality journalism. Commerce drives so much of the information business today that we are not going to get anywhere in serving our democracy by beating each other over the head about the irresponsibility of practicing journalists. What we need to do is to take on the media, examine why it is not performing the information functions that most mature people find lacking.

BERKES—On this issue of what Americans think about journalists, it seems clear to me that we're not viewed as watchdogs any more. We're either lap dogs, going to cocktail parties in Washington, or attack dogs in news conferences on CNN live. I believe that we need to care about what Americans think about what we do, because what good is our information if it's not trusted or believed in or even listened to?

TAUBMAN—What concerns me is the sense that somehow the American press should provide its readers and viewers with what they want to read and see, and that we should collect surveys on these subjects, we should run focus group sessions on these kinds of subjects, and then refashion or create our journalism to be responsive to what we learned from those groups. It isn't always the case that what people want to read and see is mutually exclusive with what journalists would like to provide. I think, actually, in most cases, there's probably a fair amount of commonality there.

But I think the danger—and it ties directly into the issues of increasingly large corporate control over journalistic institutions—is that you end up with the people who run these institutions trying to design journalism solely for profit and for stockholders and for Wall Street analysts. And forget the principles that brought them into the profession or brought the people who work with them into the profession.

If we stop making people uncomfortable, I think we may stop practicing good journalism.

BERKES—Isn't it more about how we behave and not what we report?

TAUBMAN—The behavior of the scrum that greets Betty Currie when she comes out of the courthouse, the encampment of reporters outside the home of whoever is in the news these days—those are troubling to me and I think they should be to the business. They've gotten worse over time, because everybody has a camera now. Every local television station is able to send a mobile unit out. It's no longer just a handful of network crews staking out people or crowding around them.

BERKES—Let's not forget it's also print. It's The Wall Street Journal, The Dallas Morning News, The Atlanta Constitution, all going with stories, weekly source stories on Internet sites before that information has been checked out. This is not just a broadcast phenomenon. That shark mentality to me also appears among editors and reporters of all media.

ROBBINS—We have to discipline ourselves. We're doing it with everybody else. We've got to tell the truth about ourselves. The Wall Street Journal screwed up in a royal way, as if the Internet were different. I don't think the Internet is different. There are wire services, instantaneous news all the time.

We all sit around asking questions about the time pressures and, does it really matter if you're first if you end up running the chance of being wrong?

We have got to raise these questions in the press so that we have a legitimate discussion among ourselves and so that the public knows that we're thinking about it.

STETS—I work for one of those organizations that does reader surveys. Our surveys, even in recent years in Philadelphia, show that the interest in foreign news is as high as the interest in sports news. And I think Philadelphia is no less a sports town than Boston. It's an astounding figure.

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From left: Max Frankel, Anthony Lewis and Robert Manning

HALL—I don't know if this is a characteristic of older cities or what, but interest in foreign news [in Cleveland] is very high. When the NAFTA debate was going on in Congress, based on what we heard, what we read in letters, what we got in phone calls, the most intense interest in that was in the blue collar suburbs to the south, the auto plant and the steel mills. The good men and women of Shaker Heights [had] sort of an élite interest in this theoretically, but these people [in the blue-collar area] it affected their jobs. We played the story quite heavily, played it more heavily as time went on. We got tremendous reaction. The same has been true with what is going on in Central Europe, with calls of the nature of the populous.

MEEK—Phil, I wanted to ask you if you could provide a case in point where there was information you decided not to publish for national security reasons that later came out.

TAUBMAN—Late in the Carter administration, I learned that the CIA and the National Security Agency had negotiated an arrangement to open a listening post in Western China that would look out essentially over the Soviet missile test launch sites. As the Soviet missiles would make their flight across Siberia and the Asian part of the Soviet Union, this listening post would monitor the telemetry coming from those missiles and we would learn about their capabilities.

This was done in great secrecy. It was done at a time when the American/Chinese relationship was improving. But it was far from clear to anyone in the public, and I think in journalism, that it had reached the point of such intimate cooperation on such a sensitive matter that was also of such extreme sensitivity to the Russians as well as the Chinese and the Americans. The next thing we knew, Svig Brezhinski was on the phone asking for me. At [a] meeting, he made the case that publication of the story could be explosive, because, number one, it would humiliate the Russians to have it disclosed that we were doing this. Secondly, it would be terribly embarrassing for the Chinese to have it become public that they were in such a close relationship with the United States. It would probably force the Chinese to shut down the station. It might even provoke a crisis between the Soviet Union and China. Finally, that the United States would lose vitally important intelligence information about Soviet missile capabilities. I guess we postponed publication at that point, at Brezhinski's urging.

Then Reagan was elected. And I, in a kind of mischievous way, said: "Okay. We've got a new administration. Let's roll this up the flag pole again and see if we can put it in the paper now." At that point Bill Casey, the new Director of Central Intelligence, came by the bureau. I think, at some point along the way, Reagan or Casey may have called Punch Sulzberger to ask that we withhold publication. A deal was made, which I opposed, which was that we would not publish until it appeared elsewhere. In return for our forbearance, Casey promised to tell us when he knew that another news organization was about to publish this information.

One day, I get a phone message to call the bureau. Yes, Casey's kept his end of the bargain. He's informed us that that very night, NBC News (Marvin Kalb) was about to go on the air with that story. We ran the story that night, having lost our exclusive, and by my lights, probably having held the story longer than we should have.

MARDER—I have a footnote. I encountered a similar kind of problem because at The Washington Post, being a much less hierarchial organization, I did not have to go through the kind of channels that you did. I was usually able to make those kind of decisions myself. I came across the same story from someone up on the Hill, and in short order, ran it through the State Department, was told that this would be the greatest disaster to national security imaginable if it were printed, which was something I'd been hearing for many years about every story. I found out that a member of Congress on a delegation had mentioned it and it actually had appeared in print in some obscure publication. The National Editor was distracted by something. I convinced the Sunday section that they should use it. Marvin Kalb called me up. He said: "How come this was buried in a Sunday feature ?" And I said: "Because the National Editor was distracted and didn't pay attention to it." He said: "Was there anything wrong with it?" I said: "Absolutely not." And that is what you then heard on the air.

KOVACH—Let me add one more footnote. One of the major arguments they used was that, if this were published in The New York Times, the Chinese government would be forced to close the station. Subsequent to this whole hooray, I was at lunch with some people from the Chinese embassy, including a general. While we were eating lunch, he finally looked across the table and said: "Tell me. Why did The New York Times not run the story about the missiles?" I said: "Well, among other things, we were told it would force you to shut it down." He said: "No, no, no. We wanted the story out to let the Soviet Union know what our relationship was with the United States at this time." ■

State and Local Government

Joyce Purnick, the panel chair, led the discussion:

We all agreed that to do the kind of reporting we're talking about, we needed not necessarily seasoned, but talented and experienced reporters.

When you're covering City Hall and he's the power figure (there have been no hers) that means something. That's the center of power where you sit. It takes a bit of time and a bit of seasoning to be able to say, in effect, you're lying.

We talked about ways to bring younger reporters up so that you don't have to wait years and years until you have very experienced reporters.

We talked about teaming up young and relatively inexperienced reporters with the more experienced reporters, particularly in investigative teams. They learn a great deal very quickly through example.

We all agreed you need experienced editors.

We talked about the increasing need at newspapers for specialists. If you're going to understand health care in the United States, less and less can newspapers rely, in our collective view, on generalists, sort of the meat and potatoes of newspapers. You need people who understand science. You need people who understand health care. You need people who understand economics.

The generalist can do very well and can sometimes get up to snuff on these subjects. But if you have, as we have on staff, doctors, who decide they want to write, lawyers, who decide they'd rather write about the law, the likelihood is that you're going to get more sophisticated and more aggressive coverage.

We talked about a reward system—the idea that newspapers, for the most part, do not reward people with money.

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Panel from left: Anthony Marro, Benjamin Bradlee Jr., Joyce Purnick, Melanie Sill and David Burnham.

We're not a high paid profession. But at many papers we have monthly awards. It's not the money, which in the Times case is $500. But you telegraph what we value. If you value investigative reporting, if you value aggressive reporting, and month after month after month, that's the kind of story that wins an award, you're sending a message to the staff in a much more effective way than if you go over to someone and give them a memo. Everybody sees it. The picture is posted. That's how people learn the value system, the culture of what the newspaper cares about.

We talked about the need for better understanding of computer assisted reporting, and broadening the use of computer assisted reporting.

Now, on what we disagreed.

My argument in my Nieman Reports piece [Spring 1998] was basically that, the more resources you have, the more aggressive/watchdog reporting you can

Discussion Who's Who

Bauer, Charlotte—Assistant to Editor, Sunday Times, Johannesburg.
Berkes, Howard—Correspondent based in Salt Lake City, National Public Radio.
Berliner, Uri—Staff Writer, San Diego Union Tribune.
Bradlee, Benjamin Jr.—Assistant Managing Editor for Projects and Local News, Boston Globe.
Burnham, David—Co-director of the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC), a data-gathering organization.
Delaney, Paul—Former Assistant National Editor, New York Times, now involved in planning for "Our World," a newspaper with a black perspective.
Marro, Anthony—Editor and Executive Vice President, Newsday.
Purnick, Joyce—Metropolitan Editor, New York Times.
Robbins, Carla Anne—Diplomatic Correspondent, Wall Street Journal.
Shiffrin, Andre—Publisher, The New Press.
Sill, Melanie—Managing Editor, News & Observer in Raleigh.

do. We're not a magazine. We cover the news. Every piece we write should be watchdog aggressive journalism—cannot always be, but should be. If it's not, we ought to find a way to remedy that quickly. But covering your bases, covering the news of the daily newspaper, spend a lot more time at news conferences having to respond to stories broken by reporters on a beat.

BRADLEE—I think where the rubber meets the road in this debate is in choices that editors have to make on a daily basis. Joyce looks at this question more from a paper-of-record lens, which The Times certainly is, and so faces more pressures to perhaps cover all of the news.

Smaller papers, medium-sized papers, like The [Boston] Globe, need to make harder choices and decide which incremental stories to simply let go. A classic example being a legislative hearing which might tell the story of where [a bill] is at a given time, but isn't the dynamo of that story; it's merely a stage.

If that story is going to end up in the obit page anyway, the thing to do is free up the reporter's time to do a story that ultimately will have more weight, more importance, be it a project or a shorter range Sunday piece that can go really in depth.

A key factor in all of this is people's time, the change in lifestyles. People don't seem to have the time to read the newspapers the way they used to. Newspapers aren't as important a part of people's lives as they used to be.

We've traditionally had five reporters at the State House. Politics and government has been a staple, a bread and butter of The Globe for a long, long time. But there's been sort of an ongoing debate. There's a mantra of let's de-institutionalize. Too much of our stories are dry. Too much of them are about the machinations of state and local government, which, in the final analysis, people don't care as much about, supposedly. So let's take a reporter out of what used to be our bread and butter and put him in the general assignment pool and write about softer stories, lifestyle stories which some readership surveys show, people are more interested [in] than the doings of state and local government.

Personalize the news. This is sort of the cry that we hear.

That's a very delicate act. I would tilt toward less spot news and more enterprise news. Because, ultimately that's what's going to make our franchise unique.

SILL—Elections are probably getting the most attention of government coverage at many newspapers already.

What we don't do as well is cover governing, cover what governments are doing so that people understand why it matters who is sitting in those offices and who are on the county commissions and city councils and legislatures.

The series we did [on hogwaste pollution], I was very proud of but I don't think that it would have had the impact it had if we hadn't kept with the subject through a lot of very tedious study commission meetings, legislative committee meetings. Even around our paper, people were saying: this is about hog waste, how much do people really want to read.

A lot of papers, I think, go away after their investigation. After they get that initial response, it feels good. Task force set up. Problem solved. On we go.

That relates somewhat to what Joyce mentioned about beat reporters. If it's a beat reporter, then the issue is still there after the investigation is done.When you have kind of paratrooper style investigative reporting, where investigative reporters say: "Well, I'm done and I don't do follos."

Too many editors discourage people from going to meetings. "If you have to go to that meeting, can't you just set it up, write about the issue and then we don't have to write about the meeting." Well, maybe you don't have to write about the meeting. But I think, if you're not in the meeting, you're not really going to, a lot of times, understand the issue very well.

BURNHAM—It seems to me that the normal stance of an awful lot of coverage of local and state government is stenographic coverage of staged events. Some of the staged events, some of the stenography is necessary.

But it seems to me that every news organization, whatever its size, should have a full time commitment to covering the performance of the public and private institutions that affect the lives of, in a big city, millions of readers.

My personal rule of coverage, what I try to do, is [find out] what prevents these institutions from achieving their stated goals: Why aren't the schools teaching? What is it? Is it bad unions? Are they lazy? Are they badly trained? Is it stupid management? Why don't the cops do better in dealing with the crime problem? Are they corrupt? Are they sleeping? Are there inadequate numbers of them? It seems to me that should be an integral definition of news. I don't think we're paying enough attention to it across the board, across the country. But it requires experienced people who know the subject. It requires a real commitment on management.

There are some technical things that we've never been able to do. We can write about what government doesn't do, which often is more important than what they do do. How about the FBI? Last year, 6,000 convictions for drugs, bank robbery and small-time fraud against banks with credit cards. How many for anti-trust? Three convictions for antitrust from the FBI. Two for brutal police. A grand total of 126 convictions for medical fraud. And 6,000 for drugs? All of those things could be handled by local cops—or 90 percent of it.

MARRO—The question is, how do we make it happen? Most newspapers, even small papers, in this country are in a monopoly market. They have substantial pre-tax profits. Most papers could afford to do whatever kind of journalism they decide that they want to do. Sometimes reporters have to be much better than the institutions we're working for.

The question is, how does Nieman Reports, American Journalism Review, Columbia Journalism Review, all of the rest of us, find ways to identify this

work, to encourage it, applaud it, and have more of it done?

Even working at a situation where newspapers don't have this as part of their culture, it can get done. If a reporter gets a very good story, one of the things I've learned is, it's almost impossible to keep a good story out of the paper or off the air. Sometimes editors don't encourage or underwrite or fund or give the time to go out and start it. But if it's brought to them, it's very hard to kill a good story.

BAUER—Somebody at one of our [Nieman] seminars mentioned that Washington reporters were the most interesting when they were at a dinner party and they were actually relaying in private what happened that day as opposed to when they're reporting it, because then the color and the texture and the atmosphere and the humanness of whatever issue they were reporting on, they allowed to come across.

BRADLEE—Ultimately, what we offer readers is a smorgasbord. We can't expect that all readers are going to read every story in the newspaper every day. The important stuff, albeit boring, like campaign finance, still has to be done, because in that case, you're writing for perhaps a narrower audience, the élite, but you still want to effect change.

MARRO—Eyes may glaze over at things like campaign financing, but the great, great bulk of the essential work of government at the state and local level is things that affect people's lives. So that's inherently interesting. It involves the education of their children. It involves health care for their parents. It involves things like how long the municipal swimming pools are going to be open and what kind of lifeguards are going to be there. Are they qualified people or just a nephew or a niece of somebody in government?

I just don't buy the idea that people will not read long stories. If you have a parent who has a child in a special education class, and you're doing a project about proposals to change the way they are structured and funded, those parents will read all the way through, no matter how many words it is or how many pages they have to jump, because that's an important part of their life, and that's what most of government does.

PURNICK—There are some subjects that—and I can think of many—that it's very difficult to use color, irony, anecdotal leads, sense of place. If you are tracking, for example, how a contract (as we did recently) was awarded. The reporter found out that the contractor wasn't the lowest bid, but he got it anyway. Then the reporter finds out that the contractor arranged through friends and relatives to make substantial donations to the governor, and the governor appoints the board that awards the contract. I don't care if you get a fine novelist to write that particular story. That particular story is not going to be a compelling read in terms of color, drama and irony. You've got to dot every I and cross every T in that kind of story.

BERLINER—Sometimes, I think the worst enemy of local reporting [is] the telephone. Stories get done by telephone that really deserve visits to neighborhoods and face-to-face meetings with people and observations. There's a trade-off, because the telephone is faster, and we can often get a story over the phone that might be in the next day's paper.The problem gets even more exacerbated with database searches, Lexis-Nexis, stuff that we never have to leave our desk to do.

BERKES—I'm bewildered by what I'm hearing. I don't think any story is boring. I think there's a lack of imagination on the part of reporters and editors. Campaign finance is a great story. People aren't interested in what we report about it, because all we report are numbers. We don't tell people what the significance is of those numbers. To me the issue is that, if you cannot demonstrate to your readers why that's important to them, then it's not a story in the first place.The truth is that those kinds of stories are going to be interesting to people, if they're told to people in a way that's compelling. What print people have to learn from television and radio is that we have to figure out how to make it compelling, because we have that more difficult task of not being able to write something down, show it to our listeners and viewers, and give them the opportunity to look at it again, if it's not clear to them. Our medium is gone like that. It's all the time we have. It's over once we've said it. So we have to be very clear. We have to be compelling in what we do. I don't know many print reporters, in my experience, who've learned that lesson and applied it to print. That's the challenge for you all in thinking about these stories.

SILL—We ran a story last week about a private nonprofit drug rehab center for affluent people up in the mountains of North Carolina near Lake Lure, which is where "Dirty Dancing" was filmed, to give you a reference point.The reporter found out that this center had gotten $5 million in underwriting for its construction, another million dollars in state money to fund operations.This is at a time when all the mental health centers and treatment centers are really struggling to find funding for substance abuse. So that by itself would have made a good story, and we made the front page. [The reporter] took the time. She went up to see it. She found out what it was all about. How it came to get that funding was pretty fascinating. The State Senate president had heard about this program, got interested. He just called up and decided that it was a novel experimental program that should be funded. Coincidentally, a few days after the funding was approved, he got a campaign contribution from one of the founders. The lead was about how the addicts who had come to this center to recover, are recovering not only [from] substance abuse, but also [from] the fashionable addictions of the '90s, the Internet, shopping addictions, and so forth. The writing was pretty important in engaging people not just in the outrage of the funding, but how it came about.

BRADLEE—The better investigative reporting now is on to good writing and how it connects to people's lives. [An] example: the Spotlight Team at The Globe: private profiteering off publicly subsidized research. Now, I don't care how you slice the apple, that last one can be tough sledding. We personalized it by finding somebody who had to pay thousands of dollars [for] medication that he or she really needed to survive. Theoretically, if the system worked better, that drug should be more readily available.

BERKES—That story was the topic of not only the Nieman group the day it ran, but other people I just ran into in town. People read that story. It was well written. It doesn't have to affect my life. It has to affect somebody's life for me to be interested in it.

ROBBINS—I just want to know how much pressure you're under from the Chamber of Commerce and from the big businesses in your towns to write happier news or more upbeat news. Because if there's bad news in the newspaper, can we get corporations to move here and factories to move here?

PURNICK—There's never any pressure at The New York Times.

MARRO—If somebody goes back for the last 25, 30 years and takes a look at Newsday, which is a paper that does a substantial amount of public service journalism, you'll probably find that there's not a single large organized group on Long Island that we haven't made very, very angry—real estate agents, car dealers, as a group, school teachers, builders, law enforcement officials, volunteer fire fighters, ambulance drivers, politicians of every stripe.

We have the highest household penetration of any big paper in the country. It's a paper that works because we do that. We alienate people in the short run all the time. In the long run, that's what our readers want. We have very, very low pressure. We get angry calls. We get a lot of mail. We just don't pay attention to it.

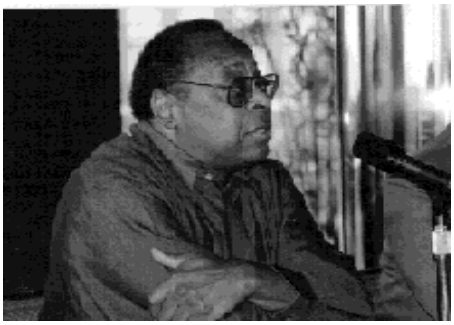


PHOTO BY JAE ROOSEVELT

Paul Delaney

SILL—I'd say it's pretty much the same situation. We don't have that problem at all.

MARRO—What we tell people is, our franchise is our credibility. It's not the presses. It's not the trucks. It's the credibility. If we're telling people that real estate is booming and wonderful, when everybody knows it's in a down spin, that just destroys our credibility. I mean, that's the essence of what we do. We report on our community. We're not going to tell lies about it. It destroys our franchise.

SHIFFRIN—A word that hasn't come up is race, and the degree to which that forms decision making. I'm not asking this in an accusatory fashion at all. But, for instance, we just published a book on illegal Chinese workers in the U.S. It was interesting to see. We had enormous amount of coverage in the Chinese language press. There are now [more] Chinese language daily newspapers in New York than there were English language papers when I was a kid. But there's been very little coverage on that whole issue in the regular Anglo press, even though the garment workers a few blocks away from our office in New York are earning less than they would make in Hong Kong doing similar work. It has to deal with the trade unions and the federal government and the local enforcement people, all sorts of regulatory agencies. That's just one example of a thousand stories that one is less likely to see. I just wondered to what degree that race is a factor in what is covered, what is not covered.

PURNICK—In terms of covering sweatshops, we had a reporter in under cover about two years ago and we recently had a front page story on it. We've had it episodically. Whether we should have more of it, probably, yes. Whether race enters into it, I'm having trouble even understanding how it could. I'm kind of baffled by the question.

SHIFFRIN—The question was whether there are certain communities within the country as a whole, whether it's the Chicano population in the southwest or whatever, that gets less coverage, or the Chinese immigrants or any of a number of other areas one could cover, simply because the focus of the paper is traditionally on its normal readers.

SILL—It's clear the answer is yes. Obviously, institutions, historically are predominantly white.

DELANEY—I think that the fact that we are discussing it is an example of our intractable problem. And it continues and extends to the newsroom as well. We, smart people in the media, have not found any answers. Racial problems continue to plague us. And I guess they will at least through our lifetime.

BRADLEE—The horse race coverage has become a cliché. I think the better newspapers have always done issues reporting. The question is whether anybody's reading it. Voter turnout levels would suggest they're not. They're tuned out. I don't think it should take trendy innovations, like civic journalism, to get newspapers to cover issues. ■

Economics

Richard Parker, the panel chair, began the discussion:

It was only at the tail end of the 19th Century and the dawn of the 20th Century that you see these vast debates within journalism about objectivity and this pursuit of objectivity, the idea that there were objective ways to gather the news, not just objective facts to be gathered, so that it was about what we gathered, but also the routines through which we gathered, filtered and presented the news were all part of this whole turn of the century shift.

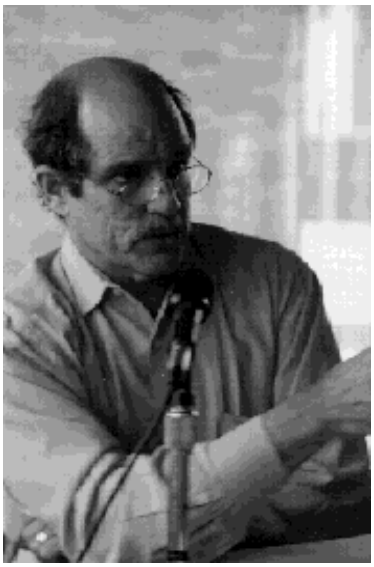
What the shift then leads into is a journalism that we define as muckraking that sets out to do two things. It sets out to expose corruption in the private sector, but it also inspires an extraordinary journalism of public sector corruption.

The investigations into municipal and state governments, into federal agencies, the like, were as much a part of investigative reporting of the period, the watchdog reporting of the period, as were the exposés of corruption in the giant corporations.

This optimism about government gives the journalistic narrative the opportunity to give Americans a belief that there's a way out of what is seen as the inevitable corruption that goes along with capitalism at the dawn of the 20th Century, and it builds into journalism a kind of distrust of power that remains throughout a good part of the 20th Century very deeply focused on corporate-based abuse.

It also launches and sustains an earlier tradition of exposure of government corruption, but it gives rise to this new and systematic investigation of the economy, as such, and institutions and arrangements of power in the economy that deeply interconnect the idea of politics and economics in journalism.

Now, what's changed about the current period? Well, if we look at the research data, the polling that's gone over the last 30 years, it is clear that it's about the decline in confidence in the ability or viability of government to act as incorruptible, to act in the public interest, and increasingly to believe that it can act in lieu of what are seen as market failures.



Paul Solman PHOTO BY JAE ROOSEVELT

What's lacking in the current period [is] not the fact that there's an inadequate amount of watchdog economic reporting going on.

There can always be more, but it's not that we're starving for it, nor that it can't be found or that it can be found only randomly or by accident in a few papers, but rather that it's increasingly difficult for audiences to connect with journalism or to connect with any conception of how we would get out of the box that journalism presents to us as being the dilemmas of the late 20th Century economic situation.

What I want to suggest is that we're at the end of a period where we all survived on a journalism that thrived in the period of communism and anti-communism with a certain set of parameters that subordinated economics watchdog reporting, and I think in the post-communist period that we're going to see elevated continuously, questions of how to do economic reporting. What I tried to suggest is that in order to do good, and by that, I mean, not just good reporting that meets all the internal professional standards, but that doesn't remain the tree that falls in the proverbial forest, that reaches audiences and mobilizes audiences. We need to think outside what it is that is plaguing journalism today.

SHANAHAN—We didn't really discuss what was good watchdog journalism at any great length. I think we were operating from a pretty common set of assumptions and said so and went on.

There are a lot of institutional barriers, and one of the first ones is what somebody put, I thought, correctly, as the reward and punishment system and philosophy—what makes the boss think well of you and give you even better

Discussion Who's Who

Burnham, David—Co-director of the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC), a data-gathering organization.

Kovach, Bill—Nieman Foundation Curator.

Mintz, Morton—former reporter, Washington Post.

Parker, Richard —Senior Fellow, Shorenstein Center on Press, Politics and Public Policy, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

Shanahan, Eileen—Retired reporter, New York Times.

Solman, Paul—Business Correspondent,"The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer."

Warsh, David—Economics Columnist, Boston Globe.

assignments or maybe even better money or what makes him say: "Oh, that person is a pain in the butt. I wish he/she would go away." If the message out there in the newsroom is go away, people will go away. People will be discouraged from fighting for what they want unless it is recognized that this is wanted, and so one of the questions becomes, How do you keep the reward and punishment balance within the newsroom working to create an appetite for, "Boy, Charlie, yeah, go ahead, yeah, sure, that smart kid can fill in City Hall for six months. I hope it only takes three, but go do it."

Before you get to that point, though, you need reporters who know enough and care enough to push and push against the reward and punishment system if the need be. I have a bias here. I have been a beat reporter all my life. I have a sense [of] general assignment reporters who can go into a story they never saw before today and come back and get it 96 percent right. I've known a great many who can do that; I stand in awe of such people.

But I know what the good beat reporter can do, and I think it's often the beat reporter who picks up because [he/she knows] all those folks who work for the head of the government agency or in the corporation [and] who will perceive what it is that needs watchdog attention. It doesn't have to be wrongdoing. I think it often is. It can, however, be just something that isn't working well.

What most editors are saying, and not just yielding to, but pushing, is soft news. That's what people want to read. I want that feature on how to handle your divorce or what to cook for dinner tonight or where to go on vacation or I love the really great human interest stories which The Washington Post is increasingly putting on Page 1, and when they are illuminating a life and a society that lies behind that life, they can be truly wonderful. I'm not knocking those, but I'm knocking soft news, I think that is what's killing newspapers.

We aren't giving them the hard news and the strong features that are related to the real societal problems that I believe people want to read and some successful papers are doing it, but not very many.

MINTZ—Let's just spend a moment on what should be our guiding light. The founding fathers of this country believed that power had to be checked, balanced and balanced, and in the First Amendment they were saying monitored, audited. That's our mission.

Well, after the Constitution was written, the industrial revolution hit the United States, and we had this vast expansion of corporate power which Richard Parker talked about.

Big corporations govern directly. When they decide to withhold a safety feature on an automobile, they are deciding whether you will live or die, with some allowance for the odds, and they govern indirectly when they buy the governors, and yet, somehow, their conduct does not get the attention it deserves.

Now, what are the obstacles to doing this kind of reporting? Well, there are a lot of them that are self-imposed. I'll give you some examples. The New York Times and The Washington Post and the Washington bureaus have some kind of nebulous objection to printing "reports." They're not talking about government reports. They're talking about reports by groups, so-called public interest groups, like Public Citizen or Ralph Nader's outfit, and my question about that attitude is, what the hell has that got to do with it?

The question is, is there information here that the public ought to have? It's not whether Ralph Nader did it or somebody like that.

Another self-imposed obstacle that I just heard about the other day, I happened to come across a story that I would not do because it's not the kind of thing I usually do. I tried to pass it on to a person at The Washington Post who I thought would be interested, and the response was, 'Well, Mort, honestly, you might want to think about going elsewhere with it.'

'Well, why is that?'

'Well, because there is a resistance here to stories based on individual lawsuits.'

'Where does this objection come from, from the lawyers or the editors?'

'The editors.'

Again, what the hell has that got to do with it, whether it's an individual lawsuit or a class action or whatever? The question is, what's there that ought to be out there?

There's also the question of social contacts. I had a little exposure to this in 1975. I'd been writing about the antitrust lawsuit brought against IBM. One day, I was surprised to get an invitation to an off-the-record lunch upstairs with IBM. I came in a little late. [Mrs. Graham] said: "Oh, here's Mort. He's the thorn in all of our sides," but the significant thing about it was that, off the record, Nicholas deB. Katzenbach, former Attorney General of the United States, gave us his side of why the government had brought a lousy, rotten suit against IBM. Well, it happens that Mr. Katzenbach was at the same time a director of The Washington Post Company. I thought there was a little conflict of interest operating there, but what perception of ownership attitudes would one think the editors who were there and others would get from this?

We also have to face the fact that there are a lot of owners out there who are not going to be influenced by anything we do unless we can embarrass them, to put their faces in it in some way and try and make them shape up. I think that's got to be a focus.

WARSH—I have three related points that I wanted to make. As I listened to the panels, I thought that there was something about economic and financial watchdog journalism that was slightly different from the kind of high-wire reporting that we were talking about this morning, and it occurred to me that it was this: that because of the industrial revolution and the political history, there are at least three aspects of the geography of reporting in economics and finance that are different from anything else.

One is the Securities Act of 1934, which requires that public companies disclose all news that's materially important to their financial position as it

becomes known and, also, that they publish audited statements at quarterly intervals.

Two is the Full Employment Act of 1946, which sort of enshrines a lot of what the Keynsian revolution was about in the way of tasking government with economic management and provides for some sort of reporting channels there in which they have to testify to Congress.

The third is the existence of the economics profession, this huge, in many ways, parallel organization to the financial press that exists based in universities, that concerns itself with a lot of the same things. That means an awful lot of information gets pushed out onto the record in timely fashion that doesn't get pushed out in politics or international relations or damn near any other sphere of reporting that I can think of, except sports where they have to tell you who won in the end.

The point that you've heard variously from Eileen and Mort—but I think it's crucial to my understanding of why watchdog reporting is scarce—is that it's hard. It's humanly hard. It makes the people who practice it shorter and shorter tempered over time. It gets in the way of their good relations with their editors.

In the cases I'm talking about, the economists and the corporate governance community looking over your shoulder, those people are critical of reporting as well, and their raised eyebrows and otherwise communicated disdain can be very hard on people who seek to service novel and important insights.Nevertheless, people do. It goes on all the time.

I have nothing against thinking of us as a pack of dogs of various persuasions, we journalists, but I thought if you thought of news as analogous to music, as perhaps the print press is analogous to a symphony, it was easier to talk about what I meant. [There are] a lot of different voices in a symphony, a lot of different instruments do a lot of different things.

We would not say of watchdog journalism that that's what our business is about any more than we'd say horn music is what our business is about. It's one element in a fairly complicated mix of voices that we package together and sell to advertisers and the public.

What I think is special about watchdog journalism is that it's analogous to improvisation in many ways. The best watchdog journalism is like a riff that begins with a solitary reporter or team of reporters someplace off, on left field or on 43rd Street or someplace where it's unique, and it's news, and it's novel.

And if it's well done, it gets picked up, and before very long, you've got three or four voices playing it, and if you've really done your job well, before very long, you've got the whole symphony improvising on a set of themes that were initially introduced by one hard-working reporter someplace.

If it's not successful, as it's often not, it dies out. The people who make decisions about whether it will be successful aren't just one editor conducting this organization, but a lot of people, critics of all sorts, but the fact is that good watchdog reporting is an act of improvisation that seeks to become more widely available, more dominant as a theme that the news reading public hears.

(*When the panel ran out of time, Solman offered this summation.*

SOLMAN—"Is there a need for more aggressive or watchdog reporting?"—our panel's answer, regarding economics, was a resounding "yes." (There seemed to be little agreement with the premise of Richard Parker's motivating essay, as best the rest of us understood it, that there's a sufficient quantity of such reporting these days; simply insufficient enthusiasm for it.)

What are the factors that frustrate aggressive economic reporting (AER)? Not surprisingly, we came up with a host of them:

1. The structure and ownership of the media (as emphasized by Mintz).

2. The failure (disinclination?) of editors and publishers to reward and punish reporters in ways conducive to AER.

3. For the printed press in particular: editors and publishers misunderstanding why their publications are in trouble and turning to quick fixes antithetical to AER (Shanahan stressed this point).

4. Young reporters inadequately prepared—in terms of knowledge, skill and perhaps temperament—for AER.

5. Libel law and the financial threat it poses.

6. Co-optation: the closer you get to your subjects, the more sympathy you may develop for their point of view, the less aggressive you may become. Or, as I put it, referring to my own career: "there may be such a thing as spending too much time at the Harvard Business School."

7. The difficulty and expense of doing good aggressive reporting of any variety.

What about Parker's thesis? How much of a factor are narrative frames and the dramatic change he says they've undergone from the golden days of the "muckraking era," when AER allegedly had an impact it can't match today? Here I offer my own guess: not much.

They may be a factor to the extent that today's audience is more receptive to the rough-and-tumble, self-interested nature of markets and private enterprise than it was at the turn of century. If the audience believes more in private enterprise, it would quite naturally be less stirred by AER of the Ida Tarbell variety, deriving as it did so much of its oomph from chronicling the profit-maximizing machinations of Rockefeller and his cronies.

But as David Warsh pointed out in our panel discussions, government now plays a far bigger role in the economy than it did a century ago. So maybe companies simply can't get away with as much as they could back when, and AER doesn't provoke as much outrage because it doesn't turn up as much outrageous behavior.

There are other reasons to doubt that changing narrative frames are a major obstacle. Consider, by contrast, another reason: the pervasive skepticism of our era. It is not only, as Daniel Schorr noted early on, that our audience is skeptical of journalists, but that it has, arguably, become as generally skeptical as we ourselves. In that sense, our audience's narrative frame—generalized skepticism—may now be more coincident with ours, not less, as Parker's analysis suggests.

In 1995, Morton Mintz compiled a list for The Washington Monthly of publicly available, but widely neglected, economic exposés: for example, presumably shocking military expenditures by the billions. But shocking to whom? Were today's audience made aware of them, it might well say: "What else is new?" Which may well be why editors ignored the information.

Finally, two last overarching reasons that I think frustrate AER.

The penultimate factor: there's too much else to occupy our attention. In business lingo, it's called a lack of "mental shelf space" or "mind share." Clearly, an infinitude of ideas and information vie for the public's finite amount of consciousness. To the extent that information about economics is often technical, numerical and counter-intuitive—in short, forbidding—why should a consumer of news master economics sufficiently to appreciate long, serious, aggressive stories about it? Might she have too much else to keep an eye on?

By extension, why should a journalist make a major investment in learning enough to pursue AER?

(This explains my own niche: trying to demystify economics so the audience doesn't feel intimidated by it, and with luck, might even become more interested in, and responsive to, AER.)

The last factor, as Eileen Shanahan explained, is that serious journalists face an increasingly competitive market, and a competitive market doesn't automatically produce AER. To put it plainly, people don't necessarily buy what's good for them, whether it's tobacco, cheesecake, or Ricki Lake.

At long last, then, our panel's list of recommendations (or, as David Warsh put it, how we would propose "to raise a next generation of Morton Mintzes and Eileen Shanahans:")

1. "The Kovach/Shanahan Shame Strategy." At the very start of our discussions, Shanahan proposed a "conference of shame," to which top editors and publishers would be invited, and at which they would be:

• Confronted with their lack of AER.

• Persuaded that they've misdiagnosed their business troubles in attributing them to the public's lack of enthusiasm for AER.

• Forced to acknowledge the shameless quality of the local news programming on stations owned by their parent corporations; have Max Frankel speak at such an event; show clips of crime coverage on Katharine Graham's eponymously call-lettered WKAG.

2. "Polls Apart." Poll editors and journalists within newsrooms to find out if perhaps they underestimate each other's zeal for AER.

3. "Give Mort a Merit Raise." Push news organizations (or others) to reward AER.

4. "Cover the Coverage." Maintain a vigil with respect to AER (or the lack of it) in various venues. e.g.:

• Nieman Reports and similar publications;

• Newspapers and TV. (Every journalist at the conference, for instance, might do a story on a scrupulous newspaper owning an unscrupulous TV operation in her or his local market);

• A PBS special or regular program, funded through the Nieman Foundation.

5. "Publishers' Clearinghouse."

• Encourage a variety of ways for news organizations to share information about good AER, maybe even share the AER itself.

• Create a job at, say, AP, devoted to the dissemination of such information.

• Help journalists learn of information already available (on Web sites such as David Burnham's and several Eileen Shanahan mentioned in her Nieman Reports piece prior to the conference).

6. "The Watchdog Coalition." Just as the Christian Coalition does its work, school board by school board, we might mount a grass-roots effort aimed at high school and college newspapers and journalism schools to help teach and encourage AER, perhaps by:

• Creating AER how-to teaching materials in print, video or CD-ROM. The journalistic community could do something as simple as taping how the judges select each year's Pulitzers, interviewing the finalists to hear how they did their work.

• Creating recruiting materials to fire up the most aggressive, able kids out there.

And last but not least,

7. "The Marder Daily Planet, The Nieman Evening News." Create more nonprofits, along the lines of PBS, NPR, The Nation, Mother Jones and Andre Schiffrin's The New Press. ■

William E. Porter
Frogs, Boiling Water and the Media

Did you know that if you drop a frog into boiling water, it will leap out immediately, but if you place it in a bowl of cold water and then heat it up gradually, it will stay there until it is cooked?

The impact of the media on society can only be understood in the context of the slow warmup. It has not been dramatic from day to day, but the difference between now and even 30 or 40 years ago is dramatic.

[During my career as a journalist and media executive], I had never asked myself nor been asked this question: what is the effect for good or ill of our products on the people who read, hear or see them? If our publications happened to have a good social effect somewhere, I was very happy to take the credit; if they had a bad effect, I felt this became the business of politicians, religious leaders and even sociologists to clear up the mess.

We as media professionals had freedom to publish, freedom of information, freedom to make money, but we were not responsible. I decided to change my stance. Although I was not prepared to be accountable to politicians or civil servants, I decided to be accountable to a higher authority, as represented by my own conscience.—*William E. Porter, Chairman, International Communications Forum, at a Nieman Fellow seminar March 11, 1998, while on a tour to explore ways the print and electronic media could play a more constructive role in today's society.*

Nonprofit Organizations

George Rodrigue, the panel chair, began the discussion:

Are we doing an adequate job of monitoring nonprofits? The answer is—Hell, no. The IRS admits that it's doing a poor job. How could it not be? There are about 1.4 million nonprofits. There are 635 revenue agents to watch them. You could go about 100 years without an IRS audit.

State oversight? Well, California has 78,000 nonprofit organizations and, Janet [Wilson] said yesterday, five attorneys to watch them.

Within the news we, generally, have not focused on them partly because we don't understand how important they are becoming, partly because they have friends who are friends with their publishers, partly because we're inhibited about seeming to attack a do-gooder organization, but the result is that, in 1990, there was a move to regulate or to have Congress increase disclosure requirements on nonprofits.

The nonprofits pushed for that very hard, the good ones did, because they thought they were being run out of money by squeezy opportunistic nonprofits. The news media were pretty silent on that debate, and, again, we have to ask ourselves whether we are doing the right thing when we remain in silence.

The upshot, as far as I can tell, is we tend to favor two kinds of stories—Number one, Give to the United Way; Number two, United Way Chairman Spends Charity Dollars on Teenage Mistress.

CREWDSON—After a day of listening to really a very daunting list of things that we ought to be doing better in foreign affairs, urban affairs, economic affairs, I think it's perfectly reasonable to ask whether we really need to add charities to the list of things we ought to pay more attention to. After all, charities are the good guys. Charitable works, by definition, are good works. Why pick on the good guys when there are so many bad guys around to choose from?

George Rodrigue JAE ROOSEVELT PHOTO

Beyond that, charities aren't government agencies. They don't spend tax dollars. Don't we have a higher obligation to monitor the spending of tax dollars that are involuntarily paid than charitable contributions which, of course, are given voluntarily?

Based on my limited, but recent and still vivid experience in looking at a certain kind of charity, I think the answer, unfortunately, has to be, yes, charities are worthy of a place on that list—and a fairly high place on that list.

The best argument may be for looking more closely than we do at what charities do with those dollars. "More closely than we do" is really to say "at all" because I'm not aware of any concerted effort by any news organization to examine closely, say, how United Way really spends all that money.

The best argument I can come up with at this point is this project we did for The Tribune in March. We spent a year looking at child sponsorship organizations like Save the Children, which tell you that for 70 cents a day, you can make a miracle happen in the life of a child somewhere far away. Like most people who see those ads on TV, I'd always wondered if that was really true, hoping that it was true because, if it was true, it would be a good thing. But being skeptical enough [I suggested] to The Tribune that we sponsor a number

Discussion Who's Who

Crewdson, John—Investigative National Correspondent, Chicago Tribune.

Delaney, Paul —Former Assistant National Editor, New York Times, now involved in planning "Our World," a newspaper with a black perspective.

Grimes, Charlotte—Shorenstein Fellow, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

Hall, David—Editor of The Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Parker, Richard—Senior Fellow, Shorenstein Center on Press, Politics and Public Policy, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

Rodrigue, George—Managing Editor, Press-Enterprise, Riverside, Calif.

Welna, David—Mexico Bureau Chief, National Public Radio.

Wilson, Janet—Reporter, The Los Angeles Times.

of children ourselves and then see if we could find them and find out how their lives have been changed by our sponsorship dollars. And that's what we did.

We sponsored a dozen or so children for a couple years. A year ago we set out around the world to try to find them, and we found all of them, which surprised me, and discovered that, in fact, their lives had not been much changed by our sponsorship. It was interesting enough to us to fill 32 pages of the newspaper, and we called it "The Myths of Child Sponsorship."

The bottom line is that the notion that the check you write to Save the Children is actually going to benefit the child whose picture is on your refrigerator door and from whom you get what looks like letters once or twice a year telling you how much your sponsorship means to that child is a myth. That's not the way it works.

It's much more complicated than that. The bottom line is that much or all of the money you send to Save the Children, and organizations like Save the Children, never reaches your sponsored child, and, in fact, a lot of those letters that come back are written by somebody else. In one case a kid had been dead for four years before his sponsor found out that he was not the person who was writing those letters, telling her how nice his life was in Mali now that he was a sponsored child.

Nobody's going to go to jail because of what we found out, but I think this fits the matrix of things that don't necessarily qualify as wrong doing, but things that are just not working well or, certainly, not working the way they're supposed to be. To the extent that people are being deceived about how their money is being used, I think that's a useful service. It's more than useful because there's really no regulation with charities.

Nobody is watching these groups to make sure that they spend money in an efficient or effective way or that they really do what they tell their contributors they're supposed to be doing. I assume, without really knowing, that the same thing is true of other kinds of charities. The fact that nobody else is doing this means that we really have to, at least, consider giving charities, at least, a place on the list of things that we need to pay more attention to.

HALL—We have two large nonprofits in Cleveland, the Cleveland Foundation, which is actually the oldest one in the country, and the Gund Foundation —which is a little bit of the Gund money and a little bit of the Gund money is a lot of money.

They exercise an influence in the city that goes beyond what they do in terms of programs. I don't for a moment necessarily suspect the people that run it of having ulterior motives, but I do not think that we have watched them closely enough. I talked about in the article [in Nieman Reports] that I did where the two executive directors were persuaded by the mayor to chair a local committee about school governments that subsequent reporting has shown was a sham. But they had the name, they had the power and they had the reputation and they got themselves drawn into politics. It took us, I'm sorry to say, late in the game to realize this and catch up with it. We did, but we should have been out there earlier. If we were paying more attention to what those two foundations and others do in terms of influencing politics and public policy, we would have been out there.

It isn't to say that what they're doing is wrong. They're very clever; they're very smart; they have good lawyers; they operate within the law when it comes to how they play the game of politics, but all of us in this room know that there are a lot of ways to play politics, and you can play it at the country club or the union club sometimes more effectively than you can at the precinct.

Increasingly, the men and the women who run these foundations are being called upon to get into something that is even beyond public-private partnerships, which have gotten a lot of publicity the last few years, but they are a nonprofit with an elected official partnership which helps in many ways to isolate or protect the public official. There ought to be a presumption there that we should be watching it and knowing what is going on and why, and we are not doing it.

There is a trend among foundations right now to encourage this, to be, as one national official put it, the safe gathering place for people who want to make public policy. Well, any time you get together to make public policy, I don't think it ought to be safe, and I certainly don't think it ought to be inside the board room of a foundation. They're calling themselves the City Conveners, and I was thinking, is this another variant of that intellectually mutant strain called civic journalism? I think that it probably is.

Foundations have been pillars of communities for a long time, and most certainly, they have done a lot of good, but times are a-changing. More money is going to them. They're being called upon by clever people to do more, and I don't think that we are watching them well enough. I know we aren't, and others around the country aren't either.

You see excellent reporting like The Tribune did on [child sponsorship] but in terms of the pillar of the community types of foundations they have a presumption of doing the Lord's work and the right thing, and they're not always doing that.

WILSON—Coverage of nonprofits—looking at how to do it—reveals in interesting ways kind of a soft underbelly in our ethical system. A lot of us are crusaders, corny as that sounds. We want to save the world, and so do program people with a lot of nonprofits, but that shared mission we have can muddy what is a very vital separation of church and state. This plays out in a lot of ways in news rooms and, I think, prevents more comprehensive or continuous coverage of what is really a burgeoning, increasingly influential sector of our economy.

I reported last year about how a lot of the clothing you donate to the Salvation Army and Good Will is sold in Third World countries for very exorbitant prices. There's a fellow in California who's the world's king of this. He made $78 million off of exclusive contracts with Salvation Army last year. I told one little old lady about this, and she cried. She was very upset, and she

wanted to know why, in essence, I was reporting on this, and it was hard for me to hear that, more even than internal criticism.

Civic journalism—maybe its time has come and gone. It's taking a lot of heat today, but I think this played out again in our relationships with nonprofits and charities, at least, in the last five to ten years.

On one six-figure circulation paper the publisher wanted to help children in the inner city, so a team of reporters was assigned to work with charities and promote, basically, what those charities were doing. Well, within three months, the paper had to do front page stories about one of the biggest charities headed by a local celebrity absconding with funds.

They did the story. They did the right thing, but they also had to explain why they had this unique partnership or relationship with this nonprofit and, again, for me, a very strong argument about separation of church and state between journalism and nonprofits.

Another story that didn't run this year, in a seven-figure circulation paper—two reporters discovered a "boiler room" church in California. The church, the minister, all he did was, he and his buddy who ran a direct mail marketing firm, would call people up and get contributions. There were no Sunday services; there was no congregation; there was nothing at all. But churches are the hardest to track. They don't even have to file 990's. Once you get that church exemption, you're set really.

An editor of this paper decided the story shouldn't run because there was nothing illegal about what this man was doing, and it wasn't nice to write about a church. I think he felt it was dangerous, that you could upset people. Yesterday we were talking about the fact that it can be dangerous to look at churches, that freedom of religion is just as important as freedom of the press in this country, so you don't want to start just attacking or going after what might seem like odd ball, to us, churches.

An example of a story that was buried, but did run—The reporter discovers that [at] a household-name charity, the CEO is earning $200,000 a year, traveling the globe at the charity's expense, getting a new car of his choice every year. The six administrators under him are earning close to a million dollars between them. The books are reviewed, and the charity cannot illustrate how one dime of their profits is actually going to their programming. They're getting some government grants and doing a little bit that way. In terms of the money they're getting from the public, they can't show how any of it is being used for programs. Again, an editor tells the reporter the story is a cheap shot, and it goes inside.

What we can do about this sad state of affairs, this particular area of coverage? One thing we talked about is kind of a concrete small idea—how did United Way end up with this check-off program on all our paychecks on many American newspapers? Not only that, there's very aggressive marketing of this in the newsrooms, and not only that, there are marathons where the paper is a co-sponsor, and reporters are urged to gather contributions from colleagues and neighbors and friends.

There's the argument on the other side, that some of these nonprofits, the grassroots ones, do incredibly good work, incredibly important work that needs to be done. We've got to make sure we do coverage of that, also, in creative ways. Perhaps some of us really do properly feel strongly about giving to charity in some way, and if we can get our corporate employer to match that, all the better, but at least, don't make it just United Way.

Editors support those ideas that rattle the internal, as well as the external, status quo. If they seem like a genuinely good idea, try and make time and space for that reporter or those teams of reporters to look at some of these institutions.

Top editors, give your publisher a heads up if you're going to write something true, but embarrassing about a philanthropy he heads or sits on the board of even. Get him on your side up front. Talk to him or her. There's a good chance that they will be on your side then.

DELANEY—In the coverage of nonprofits, our committee concluded that, in order to foster better coverage, it is important, it is crucial, to include an editor in the process and to have an editor responsible for overseeing the coverage of the nonprofit and philanthropic industry.

This is to give the paper's blessing to strengthen the importance of the paper's mission in covering the nonprofits if, indeed, that is the mission of the paper. Assign an editor to be responsible for coordinating the coverage in this important and crucial area we went into rather deeply.

The committee also debated the efficacy of having a single investigative reporter or an investigative team or desk, as opposed to spreading out the coverage of nonprofits throughout the paper. Some on the committee felt that one person responsible across the board for covering nonprofits, investigative or however, is better than relying on different departments to be responsible for coverage.

We didn't resolve that, but it was a part of the debate.

Finally, we concluded that a good editor can help overcome the traditional belief that no one will read such stories, that they are dull and boring, and because nobody cares. A good strong editor who's in charge of this coverage, we did conclude, would be vital to that coverage.

RODRIGUE—Just to toss out a few additional thoughts that we had:

Keep your distance, and keep your eyes open. Pretty simple. Watch what people do and not what they say. That's basic. Challenge all your basic assumptions. I was stunned to see that some charity hospitals spend less on charity than for-profit hospitals.

An endowment for a city foundation could be seen also as a pork barrel, as a way of rewarding people for political favors or buying influence in a community, and it needs to be thought of that way.

We all agree that we need to be more systematic collecting Form 990's. How many newspapers do that? How many read them? How many, for instance, go

beyond the sort of charity proclamations and actually look at salaries, or advertising? A tip—in the future, the Form 990's will also include mention of times when the IRS has fined a charity. Again, thinking systematically, check out who's on the boards of your local foundations and charities. You will find a lot of interlocking relationships. Often, it's as good a diagram as you'll get to the local power structures.

We did differ on whether one should have a nonprofit reporter or a team of nonprofit reporters. I think we all agree that we need to get more people across the newspaper aware of [material], and trained to report on it. Business people looking at nonprofits, education people looking at universities and we all agree we need more resources. It's just a question of what the local paper can do.

Finally, I think we need to do a better job of sharing ideas. Everyone here who has ever checked into the IRE bulletin board on the World Wide Web knows how useful that can be. I think we need to do a better job of sharing ideas, advertising successful stories and promoting better inquiry.

CUNNINGHAM—Along the spirit of the conference, I'd like to pose the question—who will watch the watchdogs? Very specifically, I've been covering China for about 10 years and I'm very interested in human rights. There's a group in New York City called Human Rights in China which is part of Asian Watch, which is part of Human Rights Watch. Initially, I didn't even know they were both in one office. I thought these were all different organizations, and I felt that these were my kind of people. They were doing something good. When I came back to the States, and I talked to people, I just found some things that were really disturbing about certain dissidents getting book and money tours and other people not getting it, and I thought this is the kind of thing The New York Times would be perfect for. The New York Times is actually tied in very tightly with this organization, so someone like Abe Rosenthal gets a lot of his information from Human Rights in China.

David Welna JAE ROOSEVELT PHOTO

And so Ying Chan, who's a former Nieman investigative journalist, talked to me about this a little bit. She looked at the Form 990, and we know now that what was supposed to be a purely Chinese organization actually is headed by a man named Robert Bernstein, who's a former CEO of Random House.

A group like Human Rights in China is [accepted] without question. They say there's a crackdown on dissidents. It's taken on face value. It seems to me that, upon closer examination, some of the things they say are not very reliable, [are] politically motivated. There's American political motivation, perhaps, to protect American jobs, et cetera, but this is something that's very close to The New York Times, and it's very troubling to me, and I'm not sure what to do with that.

CREWDSON—It seems to me you're talking about sources of information, whether the source is a nonprofit human rights group or somebody else is. I'm not sure how relevant that is. What would be relevant in that instance and every instance would be the veracity of information more than the motives of the people who are giving you that information which are very often impossible or difficult to fathom.

BURNHAM—I have a question about a foundation that I think is great. This is the Center for the Public Integrity, which is funded by the Ford Foundation. Chuck [Lewis] is very good at getting money, and they have done wonderful investigative reporting on a whole bunch of issues which is then given to newspapers. Now, I think that's wonderful, but why aren't the newspapers paying for this?

GRIMES—We're in a peculiar position talking about covering nonprofits, you know, when the phrase "civic journalism" pops up because that is the Pew Charitable Trust and the Pew Center for Civic Journalism, and many news organizations are taking this money.

I'm wondering two things. How many organizations in here have gotten any money from that nonprofit, and what do we think, and how do we cover that as part of what we're doing?

HALL—I can tell you right now that we've never taken a dime of their money.

WILSON—I know Knight-Ridder took funds. I'm not sure how much or in what capacity. I also feel Knight Ridder newspapers, where there have been problems with civic journalism, they've done the right thing.

DELANEY—I think that most newspapers have enough money that if they wanted to fund whatever civic journalism or whatever they wanted to fund, they could do it with their foundations or simply by putting some of the profits back into the business.

WELNA—John, what I found as interesting as The Trib's series on these organizations taking money to sponsor children was the readers' response, which I read on the Internet. I didn't keep a tally. At least half of the letters were extremely angry about this series and chastised The Tribune for dumping on these good organizations. I also know that at least one reporter was threatened with a lawsuit by one organization, and the newspaper, by extension, faced the possibility of lots of legal fees. I wonder to what extent did the reader response and the possibility of future lawsuits chill the drive at The Trib to do future projects like this?

CREWDSON—Good question. The responses on the Internet—fewer than 50—and some of the people who were critical didn't mention in their responses that they're employees of the organizations we wrote about. When they log on to respond, they have to give their name

and their E-mail address, and we were not surprised to discover that a certain amount of that was orchestrated. We've gotten lots more response over the phone and in the mail from people, and that's mostly best characterized as people who had always wondered about this and were interested in finding out what we found out, and a lot of calls and letters from people who'd been sponsoring children with one of these organizations and had had problems with their sponsorship.

So, I'd say apart from the orchestrated response, there is, I'd say, 80 percent positive. As for lawsuits, yes, we were, I guess we were threatened with a lawsuit. We got a lot of intimidating letters from one organization out of four, just one, which was also the one that wouldn't talk to us at all, and no lawsuit has materialized, and I don't think there is going to be a lawsuit, and I'm sure there's been no chilling effect.

I would also say that the one organization that did seem to be threatening to sue us is one we devoted 11 pages to, which was more pages than we gave to any other organization.

MINTZ—Referring to David Burnham's remark, it seems to me that, unless I'm naive and wrong, that our purpose should be to provide the information to solve our needs. If that comes from the Center for Public Integrity or it comes from some public interest group, why should we let our egos or other things stand in the way? If we're not going to do it or have not done it, why should the public be deprived of the information?

BURNHAM—I'm just wondering why the newspapers aren't paying for it themselves. There was a column in The Post criticizing this group. Outsiders are coming in and taking over control of investigations.

MINTZ—Well, I think the answer is, A, you can't do it all and, B, the moment you have control, as with the freelancers, our legal liability, I think, goes way up. If you have no connection, other than you think it's news, I think that you're in a better position.

But if we can go back to [the Salvation Army] story.

WILSON—Basically, when you donate something or it's picked up, it goes to huge sorting rooms at Salvation Army, Good Will, wherever. The best stuff is hung up on the hangers and put in the thrift shops. The [rest of the] stuff—people give really disgusting stuff, stained and holey that they want to get rid of—is sold in bulk to used clothing dealers.

One guy brings in his tractor trailers, picks the stuff up, takes it to his factories. Minimum-wage sorters sort through it, it's loaded in bulk into freighters and shipped around the globe. China gets tons of it. West Africa gets hundreds of millions of pounds of donated clothing. There it's sold. A pair of shoes over there that's donated can cost 10 bucks.

Branches around the country can be doing quite good work, and there's a risk, there's a down side if you write about a national problem. The national office, the administrators often are the ones with fancy cars and the mistresses and whatever. Meanwhile, the grassroots organization gets hurt, so it's tricky. You've just got to check every single time.

The whole industry, if you want to call it, is trying to promote recycling as a big piece of what they do, too. That's a valid argument.

RODRIGUE—I urge you all not to do what I did which is, I went to a city. I looked at this great church-run charity, which had been recommended to me by the Heritage Foundation, as an example of how charities do everything better than government, and it was doing a lot of stuff.

It had a business incubator, it had child care, it had loans for people getting into business and I, like a moron, forgot to ask where they got all their money, or, rather, I asked the wrong guy, and he said it was mostly just donations from the church.

This was stupid because the church only had about 500 people in it, and they're poor people. It's an inner city neighborhood, but I went back and did this story, and then a couple of weeks later, I got the Bradley Foundation list of donations, Bradley being one of the more conservative foundations, and found they'd been just throwing money at this church. They'd set up a Potemkin charity, and I was the fish that swallowed this story, so follow the money.

WILSON—One point I just want to make, maybe because I was so negative before is, I think it's important to remember. There's a lot of very creative, true do-gooders out there who have very good ideas and are working extremely hard, and often, those ideas, hopefully, with our help, will percolate more widely. That's another area that's undercovered in terms of the type of work we do involving nonprofits. An example of that is Goodwill. It does traditional work with the disabled. Again, in some areas, they may do perfectly good work. ■

Robert Kirshner

Fate of the Universe And Two-Liter Brains

We're all poorly equipped for this enterprise [understanding the fate of the universe]. Our brains are rather small—two liters would be an overestimate—and our lives are brief. We live for about 100 years, and the age of the universe is about 10 billion years. That's about the ratio of one second to an undergraduate degree. So, as I tell my students, don't blink. The question about how [our knowledge of the universe] is going to affect how people look at things is not in the hands of the scientists. Somehow we have to communicate what the real facts are so that the picture is more or less right, and then leave the rest to the poets.—*Robert Kirshner, Professor of Astronomy at Harvard University and Chairman of Harvard's Astronomy Department, at a Nieman Fellows seminar March 4, 1998.*

Shangri-La Is No Heaven

A Day with the White House Traveling Press Corps in Beijing

By Philip Cunningham

"See all the Chinese out there?" says the gift shop girl to her co-worker in the Shangri-La Hotel, "the security people have arrived!"

It's been a while since the presence of Chinese in a Western-style hotel would be cause for comment, but then again, Beijing's five-star Shangri-La is serving as the nerve center for the White House traveling press office, temporary home to the hundreds of journalists assigned to cover President Clinton in China. Plainclothes Chinese officers in the lobby lounge outnumber the jet-lagged visitors, most of whom will spend their time in Beijing in the air-conditioned comfort of this hotel. An important part of the job of public security men is to monitor and minimize contact between locals and foreigners, especially journalists.

Ruthless deadlines, commercial ratings and the desire not to be outdone by rivals certainly puts pressure on journalists these days. But it was disheartening to see some of America's best-known journalists spend the entire day in the hotel, going from briefing room to dining room, picking up handouts and going back to their desks and filing their stories on June 27. No time to dig, no access to primary participants, no luxury to question official sources too deeply or look around the fringes for other views. Instead the print and television reporters unwittingly served as scribes and fashion cameramen for scripted summit photo opportunities and press conferences. Being abroad on unfamiliar turf in which the national aspirations and pride of two countries were put on the line had the effect of transforming normally skeptical American reporters into co-conspirators of American officialdom spreading the word as spun by the White House.

To get into the White House traveling press headquarters, one had to pass a Chinese security guard who checked for photo identification and then run the gauntlet past two somewhat more subtle American gatekeepers who greeted familiar faces with a smile and unfamiliar ones with a "may I help you?" Although not part of the officially credentialed press, I got inside the restricted area without the requisite laminated photo ID merely by walking straight in (that bold tactic worked only once).

It was like crossing the Pacific in a single leap, for all of a sudden I found myself back in America, where the press enjoys being spoon-fed.

The press hospitality room featured half a dozen dining tables covered in white tablecloths and a long buffet table offering self-serve hot entrees, desserts, coffee and tea. Even with the air-conditioning on full blast, it was warm there, so the two coolers stocked with mineral water and sweet bottled drinks got the most action.

The newsroom was a cavernous, windowless function room, with rows of chandeliers above and long banks of phones and jacks for laptop computers below. Desk space was tightly rationed, identified by name of publication. Near the entrance, a makeshift office complete with secretarial staff and high-speed copy machines churned out transcripts of speeches and news updates. A USIA information table offered news updates called "Afternoon Wire Stories."

Other tables had information on where to buy "chinoiserie" and sign-ups for trips to the Great Wall and the Forbidden City for journalists not included in the pool but invited to follow the President's sightseeing forays.

Televisions were dispersed throughout the hotel press center. Cramped venues where Clinton spoke, such as Chongwenmen Church and Beijing University Auditorium, necessitated strict pool coverage, which meant that the hotel ballroom was as close as some reporters got to the action.

Orville Schell, a China-watcher and Dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California at Berkeley, was among the anointed members of the press, White House press ID dangling from his neck, who watched the Clinton-Jiang press conference on television. Eyes glued to the screen, he told me Clinton's comments about Tiananmen were an exciting development.

Philip Cunningham, a 1998 Nieman Fellow, studied Asian politics and culture at Cornell University and the University of Michigan and has studied and taught in India, Thailand, China and Japan. From 1983-89 he worked in China as a tour guide and interpreter for film and television crews, with credits including "The Last Emperor," "Empire of the Sun," NBC's "Changing China" and BBC's "Panorama." From 1990-97 he worked in Japan as a producer at NHK and wrote for The Asahi Shimbun and Japan Times. His freelance interviews with Chinese dissidents have appeared widely in print and in documentaries, including "Gate of Heavenly Peace." Currently a Research Associate at Harvard's Institute for East Asian Studies, he is preparing for publication "Reaching for the Sky," a memoir about everyday life in Beijing during the student uprising of 1989.

Given the popularity of Schell's writings on China, his reaction would be watched closely by those new to the China field who were not sure of what they were seeing and hearing. Ditto for television people who often tuned to CNN to see what was "happening." Put a hundred journalists in a room and certain ideas will become reinforced, amplified and adopted as fact simply because an opinion leader has said so.

There was a buzz of excitement as Clinton politely disagreed with Jiang Zemin on the significance of Tiananmen and the Dalai Lama. But nothing could compare to the gleeful boasts of the White House spin team who declared the televised press conference a resounding victory for the U.S.

National Security Advisor Sandy Berger arrived at the press center shortly before four with Press Secretary Mike McCurry to summarize the day's events. How convenient! First watch the press conference on TV, follow it with a "live" meeting with two top Clinton aides. The result? A ready-made story that could be zapped by modem back to the U.S. without even leaving the hotel.

Standing in front of a bank of TV cameras and rows of earnest journalists jotting notes, Berger gushed with childlike enthusiasm, saying the "historic press conference" provided a "powerful discussion beaming across China" that was the "first time for a leader to address Tiananmen so directly."

Better-known correspondents like Sam Donaldson, Ann Compton and Wolf Blitzer got most of the attention during the briefing . Yet even the "big" journalistic personalities on a first-name basis with "Sandy" and "Mike" had little or no access to the President in China.

If the press felt ignored, except at feeding time, they weren't alone. The dissidents who asked to see Clinton, from Ding Zelin to Xu Wenli, didn't get close. China's high-priority guest was ensconced in a gilded cage known as Diaoyutai State Guest House. Guarded under the tightest possible security by legions of wuzhuang jingcha (Chinese People's Armed Police), Clinton's entourage could hardly entertain the idea of meeting dissidents. Originally the China World Hotel was proposed as the

White House Redefines Tiananmen Square

I stood under Mao's portrait as Clinton's limousine pulled onto Tiananmen. I saw the 21-gun salute fired from the heart of Tiananmen. A brisk arrival ceremony was held directly to the west of the cannons on the sea of paving stones that constitute Beijing's famous central square.

President Clinton, known for fine semantic distinctions such as smoking marijuana but not inhaling, adopted a Tiananmen-but-not-Tiananmen spin to play down the controversy of the arrival ceremony at the scene of the crackdown on democracy. The President and his aides used words such as "across from Tiananmen Square," or "in front of the Great Hall of the People adjacent to Tiananmen Square."

CNN Anchor Joie Chen adopted the White House's linguistic terms of engagement in an on-air chat with Andrea Koppel, former CNN Beijing Bureau Chief, who knows the geography of Tiananmen as well as anyone.

"Clinton will not actually arrive in Tiananmen Square," Joie Chen said, introducing the segment, "…but right across from the square. It is right across a very small street from the square itself."

Koppel, speaking from Beijing, responded by talking about the President's "visit to Tiananmen Square," and then "corrected" herself by saying "to the edge of Tiananmen Square."

When Wolf Blitzer spoke from Tiananmen to talk show host Larry King on the day of the official arrival ceremony, he shifted uncomfortably between White House-designated language and what his own eyes told him. "Here, adjacent to, really right next to Tiananmen Square, only 50 yards away or so, this huge square. It was nine years ago at this very spot…"

At a press conference, I pressed White House Press Secretary Mike McCurry for clarification. Why all the hair-splitting about it being "across from" or "adjacent to" the square?

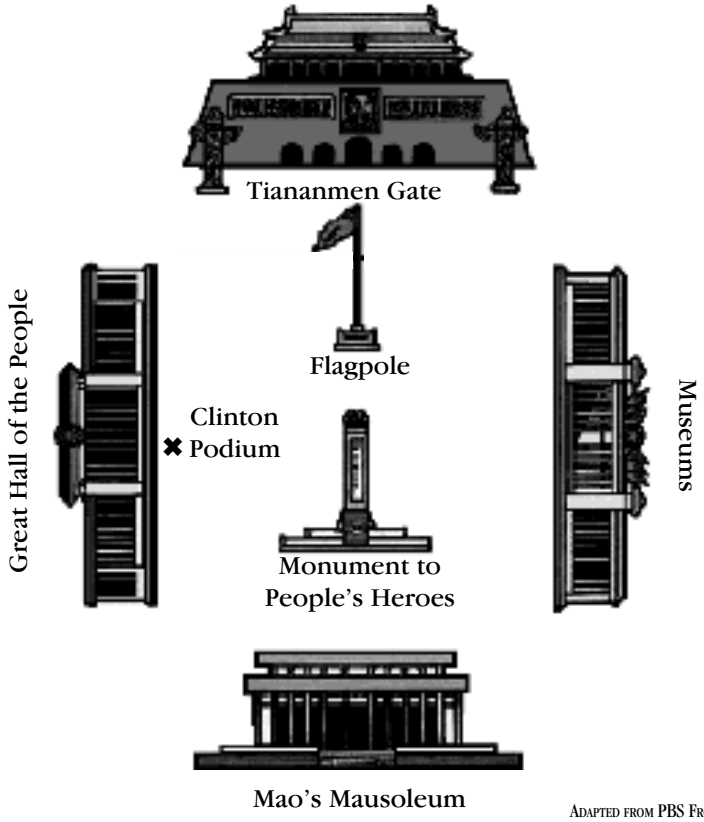
"You were there," he said, "you tell me."

"I'm asking you."

"You could see the geography," he answered, "you can decide for yourself."

—Philip Cunningham

Tiananmen Square



Adapted from PBS Frontline Web Graphic

Presidential residence, but the Chinese side balked, ostensibly because it is not grand enough for an important foreign guest, but in fact because it is a building over which the government has less than total control.

An embassy official told me that the topic of a dissident meeting was discussed before the summit. "The Chinese went ballistic!" he said. "I think it's obvious they preferred letting Clinton talk on live TV."

Clinton's pointed remarks on human rights were beautifully composed, but not matched in action, symbolic or substantive. Furthermore, there was a scripted, rehearsed feel to the whole exercise where Jiang and Clinton gave long rambling answers to a few short questions. Jiang, in particular, seemed to be reading from notes.

"I listened very carefully to what President Clinton said just now, and I noticed he made mention of the political disturbances that happened in Tiananmen in 1989 and he also told the history of Tiananmen..." Jiang said, segueing smoothly into the party line, pronouncing the crackdown as necessary for stability.

Clinton expressed his talking points with more verve and little or no reference to notes, highlighting his gift as a public speaker. Meanwhile Jiang held his own in the gentle exchange of rhetoric, and even bettered Clinton when it came to policy concessions. Clinton reiterated support for the Communist party line on Taiwan and Tibet as integral parts of China. He kept completely silent about alleged Chinese interference in American elections. In return, Jiang permitted him to make some oblique criticisms about a bloody crackdown that took place nine years ago. Never once losing his avuncular smile, Jiang introduced a note of humor, wondering out loud why it was that otherwise civilized and educated Westerners showed such an interest in the theocracy of Lamaism. Good question.

Each leader skillfully played to his own constituency, converting the question and answer session into a public relations exercise.

Jiang anticipated Clinton's "controversial" comments with uncanny accuracy, as if he had been primed in advance. The Chinese leader has shown a limited willingness to face questions before, most notably after his speech at Harvard University on November 1, 1997, even though his handlers insisted, and Harvard complied, that questions be submitted in writing in advance. Jiang's occasional candid comments raise an interesting question: Is he trying to say something not permitted by his government's party line or just rising to the challenge of the American style Q. and A.?

In any case, the little gust of free expression on Chinese TV on June 27 did not go far. The following day the People's Daily, Guangming Daily, and smaller papers such as the Beijing Youth News, parroted Xinhua News Agency's orthodox interpretation of the event, saying that the two leaders "stated their respective views on human rights and Tibet." The story was then dropped.

With so many news-hungry journalists frustrated by lack of access to Clinton, unable to speak the native language and restricted in their movements (taxi drivers were ordered not to take non-official traveling press to Beijing University and the Great Wall, for example), White House press-handlers tossed breadcrumbs of information that were lapped up. At the same time, it was not in the interest of the White House to tell all. If Berger and his colleagues had knowledge that Clinton and Jiang had rehearsed the press conference, they didn't let on.

During the Q. and A. session that followed, I asked Berger if the White House shared President Jiang Zemin's denial of the alleged Chinese campaign contributions to U.S. politicians as "absurd, ridiculous and sheer fabrications."

He answered that President Jiang had conducted a thorough investigation and found no wrong-doing, as if

PHOTO BY PHILIP CUNNINGHAM

CNN's Andrea Koppel reporting from the garden of the Shangri-La Hotel.

Please Take Me To a Dissident

The White House press center made available bilingual crib sheets to help restless reporters daring enough to leave the hotel on their own. Without speaking a word of Chinese, they could communicate with a taxi driver by pointing to the appropriate line:

"Please take me to:
Shangri-La Hotel
Diaoyutai State Guest House
China World Hotel
American Embassy"

Additional entries for the more adventurous at heart:

"Please take me to:
Beijing Zoo
Hard Rock Cafe
Silk Alley"

That's expatriate Beijing in a nutshell. And for those Americans homesick for "real" food:

"Please take me to the nearest
McDonald's
KFC"

Translated instructions were written next to an empty clockface. It was left blank so one could draw the minute and hour hands to express pickup time to one of Beijing's taxi drivers.

Finally the indispensable:

"Please stop where we can go to a restroom." ■

that should be the final word on the matter. When I pressed him on this, he said, as for the U.S. side, "leave it to the courts."

The overblown idea that Clinton's candid comments on live TV constituted an important chapter in China's history was circulated among the press corps and by and large accepted before a single Chinese listener had been consulted. The White House hyperbole shot from "historic" to "600 million Chinese" without any basis in fact. (The press office later admitted this to be a guess based on the number of TV's in China. The gross overestimate of audience size failed to take into account the off-peak hours of the unannounced broadcast.) Whether or not the novel experience of hearing two presidents quip back and forth on live TV left a deep impression on the Chinese nation is difficult to measure.

PHOTO BY PHILIP CUNNINGHAM

Sandy Berger and Mike McCurry briefing traveling press in Beijing.

A Reuters report filed on June 28 reflected the giddy mood at the Shangri-La generated by the imagined significance of Clinton's remarks: "A broadcasting milestone," wrote L. McQuillan. "The news conference was the talk of the nation." The same Reuters report also gave new life to the old canard about the Great Wall being the only man-made structure "visible from outer space." The Great Wall is hard to see from airplanes and far less visible from above than an ordinary highway. A similar misconception that appeared in reports of the traveling press was the alleged name change from Peking to Beijing in 1972 as reported in The Boston Globe and elsewhere. (There was no name change for China's capital city, only a new orthography adopted by The New York Times around the time of the Nixon visit.)

ABC News, trying to assess the impact the Clinton-Jiang press conference had on the people of China, resorted to quoting a Chinese American in New York City who said it "was quite exciting for them."

Even the veteran press corps based in Beijing, eager to test the impact of Clinton's words, could do little better than to quote a taxi driver or acquaintance. As for the White House press, few could even communicate with their taxi drivers.

To be fair to correspondents in the field, some mistakes are added by the home office. Take the words attributed to former New York Times Beijing Bureau Chief Nicholas Kristoff, in The International Herald Tribune of June 29, in which the Chinese President's given name is mixed up with his family name: "When Mr. Zemin met with Mr. Clinton in Washington last fall."

When I got back to Cambridge, I thumbed through back copies of my hometown paper, The Boston Globe, to see how it covered Clinton in Beijing. First the front page headlines:

"Clinton hits mark in China, aides say."

"White House sees goals realized."

"In China, Clinton calls for freedom."

And then the sources:

"An important moment in the transformation of China," says Mike McCurry.

"Profound reverberations," says the State Department's Stanley Roth.

"Surprised by the degree of success," says Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

"A step forward," says David Lampton, White House consultant.

"Boffo summit performance in Beijing, say aides."

"In Washington, analysts said..."

"Billed by aides as the centerpiece..."

"White House officials said."

"Aides and analysts said...the most important victory came in the image of Clinton, beamed to a potential audience of some 600 million viewers."

It wasn't just The Globe. For the next two days, most American reports were full of White House-spun praise for Clinton. There were exceptions, of course, including the more sober accounts of Asia-based correspondents out in the field who dug for stories and interviewed Chinese wherever possible. The Globe's regional correspondent Indira Lakshmanan did a good job of this, shadowing the presidential itinerary without becoming hostage to it.

American journalists have been criticized much in the past year for being judgmental about unproved allegations in the "gotcha" attitude of their work. Ironically, some of those who tried and failed to "get" Bill Clinton to come clean about his personal peccadilloes, such as Sam Donaldson, found themselves engaged in a new game of "gotcha" with the Chinese. "China is still a police state," Donaldson reported just hours after arriving in Xian. And as I observed the press on June 27 in Beijing, there was something close to universal approval in the ballroom of the Shangri-La Hotel, where the American President was viewed as shoving a dose of "free speech" down China's throat in a televised performance.

The White House Travel Office charged media organizations upwards of $15,000 to send each journalist on the trip. For that price journalists won the privilege of speaking in authoritative tones about Clinton's "historic" reception—as seen on TV from a luxury hotel and without a shred of reporting on the streets of Beijing, let alone the provinces. ■

'No Chicanos on TV'

I think that I shall never see
*any Chicanos on TV**

By Cecilia Alvear

Composer/singer Lalo Guerrero wrote his parody of the Joyce Kilmer poem a few years ago, but his lyrics still resonate. Just consider the recent dismal findings of a study, "Network Brownout 1998: The Portrayal of Latinos on Network Television News," released this summer by the National Association of Hispanic Journalists.

Only 112 of the approximately 12,000 news stories produced by ABC, NBC and CBS Network News in 1997 and broadcast on their flagship evening newscasts focused on Latinos or Latino issues. In other words, a measly 1 percent of the total national TV evening news programming was devoted to coverage of 10 percent of the United States population; a dynamic, rapidly growing group estimated by the Census Bureau to number 29 million now, and projected to increase to 40 million or 13 percent of Americans by the year 2010 and as many as 66 million by 2030.

There are Chicanos in real life
doctors, lawyers, husbands, wives
but all they show us on TV
are 'illegal aliens' as they flee…

This last year the only Hispanic name to appear in the news with any regularity was El Niño. As for humans, out of a total of 546 hours of network news aired in 1997, only 4 hours and 40 minutes focused on Hispanics. The bulk (64 percent) of this already limited coverage dealt with crime, immigration and affirmative action. Only 14 stories (12 1/2 percent) were about Latinos' rising influence in politics, business, arts and culture.

Stories originated primarily on the West Coast and Southwest states of the U.S. In addition, some markets with significant Latino populations (New York, Miami, Chicago) were underrepresented. NBC aired the most stories on Hispanics (50 stories). ABC aired 45 stories and CBS trailed with 44 stories.

It seems as if we don't exist,
and we are not ever even missed…

This limited and oftentimes negative portrayal of Latinos is just plain wrong and has serious consequences for society. A recent survey by the child advocacy group, Children Now, revealed that youngsters of all races agree that the news media tend to portray African-American and Latino people more negatively than white and Asian people. The report noted that, when asked about how the news covered Hispanics, a Latino child responded "only when they get arrested."

The lack of visibility of Latino news stories and Latino news subjects is not only a social problem, it also raises questions about the quality of journalism practiced by the networks. If journalism is supposed to hold up a mirror to society and it is not reflecting Hispanics, with all their worth, with all their warts, with all their contributions, then the networks are not practicing good journalism.

Hispanics have made notable achievements in many fields: In science, Raul Cano at California Polytechnic in San Luis Obispo is a pioneer on ancient DNA research. In the law, several Latinos are seen as potential Supreme Court nominees. They include U.S. Appeals Court Judge Jose A. Cabranes of New Haven, Carlos F. Lucero of Denver, U.S. District Judges Ruben Castillo of Chicago, Richard Paez of Los Angeles and Sonia Sotomayor of New York. Plus former California Supreme Court Justice Cruz Reynoso and Los Angeles lawyer Vilma S. Martinez. In business, Carlos Saladrigas, Chairman of the Miami-based employee management firm Vincam Group Inc., has led his company to become the first billion dollar Hispanic business. In literature, there is a Latino boom with writers like Sandra Cisneros, Julia Alvarez, Francisco Goldman, Esmeralda Santiago, Rosario Ferre, Oscar Hijuelos and many others. There are top Latino experts on medicine, the arts, politics, sports, in every field of human endeavor. Yet on network news Hispanics are all but invisible in providing expertise beyond Latino-related issues. The "Brownout Report" shows that in 1997 Hispanics appeared as "experts" in stories related to Latinos five times. Only two

Cecilia Alvear, a 1989 Nieman Fellow, is Vice President-Broadcast of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists and a Producer with NBC News.

* "No Chicanos on TV" lyrics by Lalo Guerrero used by permission of the author.

were interviewed on a mainstream topic: Professor Arturo Alvarez-Buylla on brain cell research and Executive Vice President of the AFL-CIO, Linda Chavez-Thompson, on gender equity.

In real life we are all around
all kinds of TV shows abound
but no Chicanos can be found

The National Association of Hispanic Journalists sponsors this report because as journalists we care about good journalistic practices and as Hispanics we want to make sure that the networks don't persist in rendering us invisible. In the three years we have conducted this research we had hoped to see some improvement but, sadly, Latino coverage in network news is stuck at the 1 percent level as far as frequency is concerned and the limited ways in which we are portrayed persist. Figures are equally low at CNN, although the cable network and Fox News were not included in this study, which started out by looking at the three major network's evening newscasts only. In order to keep the research "clean" we have kept it that way.

We also examined employment of Latinos in network news operations. ABC, CBS, NBC and CNN were surveyed about the number of Latinos employed in a variety of network news categories (from management to technicians). Only CNN supplied the specific information we requested. The information we did receive suggested that Latinos in "gatekeeper" roles (assignment editors, producers, news managers, etc.) were underrepresented in network news employment. The image of Latinos should improve with the hiring of more people of Hispanic heritage in these roles.

Ever since we launched this project we have sent copies of the report to the presidents of the network news divisions, but have received no response. This year we are asking for a meeting so we can explore some solutions. Obviously we want to increase the number of Hispanics before the cameras. Only five Latino correspondents made it into the evening news in 1997 (Jim Avila of NBC, Art Rascon and Vince Gonzalez of CBS, Antonio Mora and John Quinones of ABC). Perhaps more importantly, we want Latinos in key gatekeeper positions, where coverage decisions are made.

Diversity of points of view is essential. We at NAHJ are willing to help. One of our priority projects is the compilation of a Latino Source Book with the names of recognized experts in a variety of fields. When completed we will make it available to news media.

Don't buy the products if
you don't see
No Chicanos on TV

It is going to take time, but demographic shifts will eventually change this situation. The networks are facing a tremendous challenge as they watch their audience share shrink. Hispanics are a dynamic people, gaining in political clout, with an estimated purchasing power of $300 billion a year, and projected to become the largest minority group in the 21st Century. Out of enlightened self-interest one of these days one of the networks is going to figure out that it wants to attract Hispanic viewers, that this is one way to grow their audience. And how will they do it? By ending the "network brownout" that unfairly renders Latinos invisible on the nation's airwaves. ■

Stories Involving Latinos on Three Major TV Networks in 1997

Topics	*Frequency*	*Percentage*
Crime	30	26.8
Affirmative Action	26	23.2
Immigration	16	14.3
Politics	8	7.1
Welfare	5	4.5
Discrimination	5	4.5
Education	4	3.6
Health	3	2.7
Arts & Culture	3	2.7
Business	3	2.7
Mas Canosa Death	3	2.7
Honors	2	1.8
Bilingual Education	1	0.9
Disasters	1	0.9
IRS	1	0.9
Sports	1	0.9
Drugs	0	0.0

"Network Brownout 1998: The Portrayal of Latinos on Network Television News," Rod Carveth, former Chair of the Mass Communication Department at the University of Bridgeport, and Diane Alverio, Baldwin/Alverio Media Marketing, former President of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists. Sponsors are the National Association of Hispanic Journalists and the National Council of La Raza. Copies of the full study may be purchased for $10 from the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, National Press Building, Suite #1193, Washington, D.C. 20045.

Indonesian Media Still Censoring Itself

By Ratih Hardjono

Watching events in Jakarta, I felt the straps of my journalistic straitjacket loosening. The Indonesian government has announced the end of the licensing system. But is press freedom really dawning? I wonder. Fear of writing the truth has become such a part of the media culture that journalists continue to censor themselves. As a result, vital political and economic questions are not being asked. The political situation is in such a state of flux that everyone is waiting to see who emerges in power. What if the old guard return wearing "democratic clothes" but not really meaning it?

The controlling word for journalists remains "responsibility," which means to protect what government ministers or officials think best for the nation or their careers. In the Suharto days editors and reporters were called into military headquarters and warned if they were considered "irresponsible." Today, only the style has changed. The military and President B. J. Habibie's people are more civil. They use social gatherings to give the same message—be more "responsible"—to journalists. With the international media in Jakarta, Habibie's men would not dare risk the old-style confrontation.

But the message is the same and editors remember the old days and know that the international media will drift away from Indonesia. Fear counsels them to avoid upsetting the military or ruling party. The result, so far, has been self-censorship.

For example, not long ago I submitted to my newspaper, Kompas, five articles, based on interviews with nine world experts, on important issues facing Indonesia. They dealt with (1) rewriting the country's constitution, which is overbalanced in executive power at the expense of the legislature and judiciary, (2) whether the economy or political reform should have priority, (3) options for the military, (4) what to do about the economy, and (5) whether Indonesia would become an Islamic state.

None of these articles has been published. My editors are nervous because some of the topics, like the constitution, are still taboo. I also abandoned the indirect writing style of invoking allegories and figures of speech that we used when Suharto was in power. The pieces were too blunt for my editors. Hopefully the editors will use the articles as the basis for assignments.

It is difficult for journalists to shake off the fear that for decades has dictated the way journalists look at contentious issues like human rights, corruption and dictatorship. Journalists would write about these issues hardly mentioning the words human rights, corruption or dictatorship. The art was to raise the issues without alarming the authorities. I developed a debit and credit list in my mind, for example, on East Timor. The credits would be the points in the story that supported the government, for example economic development and rising education standards. The debits would be points criticizing the government, for example the military presence and human rights abuses. I would at the end always try and balance the credit and debit points. (Perhaps, if I was in a mischievous or confident mood, with one point more on the debit side!)

The official reason given for not publishing my five articles is that there is not enough space, but those who have read the articles know it is more than that. It is only fair to note, however, that because of rising prices of newsprint, Kompas has cut its pages from 40 to 12 and is getting ready to go down to eight.

Despite its timidity, the Indonesian media have shown some life, but the anger has been conveniently directed at Suharto and his family. Even these revelations are only surface deep. Absolutely nothing has been written about the wealth of Habibie and his two sons. Last year a doctoral thesis at Australian National University, Canberra, examined high tech industries on the island of Batam near Singapore. It reported that he owned everything. Indonesians have been under the impression that Batam belongs to the Indonesian government.

Also the press has reported nothing on holdings of the military, which has a stranglehold on the oil industry. Their families have lived wealthy lives.

Ratih Hardjono is a foreign correspondent for Kompas, Indonesia's most influential daily newspaper printed in Bahasa Indonesia, the national language. She also writes occasional articles and columns for The Jakarta Post and English-language daily newspapers. She is a 1994 Nieman Fellow. Hardjono has written a book on Australia, "White Tribe of Asia" (1993). She wrote it first for an Indonesian publisher. Later it was published in English in Australia. After graduating from Sydney University, she became a teacher. Based in Melbourne, Hardjono writes about many countries and international issues. During the Persian Gulf War she reported from Washington.

It will be interesting to see whether these issues will ever be raised. After all, most of the élite are the creation of Suharto and exposing them could mean exposing all.

So where does the public get the truth? Unfortunately, the Internet, the hope of so many, has not been reliable. It has been used for political purposes and for propaganda by almost every group. I have chased stories on the Internet only to find them false.

The problem was never that Indonesian journalists wanted to run amok and create a civil war. But the distorted meaning of "responsible" has in turn distorted journalism. During the last 20 years many young journalists have come to think that responsibility does not go hand in hand with freedom of the press. They have been so stifled by "responsibility" that they now have to be persuaded that it is part of freedom.

The former Minister of Information, Harmoko, who is now the speaker of parliament and headed the call for Suharto's resignation, lectured us for more than 10 years on not inciting the "SARA" (Suku, Agama dan Ras, meaning clan, religion and race) issue in our coverage. Most Indonesian journalists have never wanted to incite "SARA" hatred.

But problems arose when we wanted to cover other issues, for example, the projects the President's children kept winning. We were accused of being irresponsible for trying to investigate the tendering process. How did the oldest daughter of the President manage to win all the tenders for the toll road in Jakarta?

Being "responsible" became the starting point of a process of self-censorship for Indonesian journalists. How much of the truth can I really tell? If it was a story about another country but reflected the situation in Indonesia, it was safe to assume that one could get away with 80 percent of the story. If it concerned Indonesia directly then maybe only 10 percent or 20 percent of the truth could be written. The Suharto family was a no go area. I remember being in Perth when Tommy Suharto was in town. Another Indonesian journalist said to me "oh well, impossible to write, let's have a bowl of noodles." Western journalists drown their sorrows at the bar. Asian journalists seek comfort in a bowl of noodles.

The second stage of this process of self-censorship occurred when the editors got their hands on the story. By the time the story got published, everyone's fear of what the authorities might think of it had gutted it.

The source of this fear and of self-censorship was the power the authorities had to close you down. In Indonesia the print media operated under license, which could be removed without any legal process or right of appeal.

It takes enormous courage to try to print information you know the authorities will not like. Not only your own job, but everyone else's, is at stake. Fear of being closed by revoking our licenses (which was only for print media, not radio or television) was real. In 1994 the news weekly magazine Tempo was closed after 23 years of publishing. This was a turning point for Indonesian journalism and also for Indonesian politics. It was a humiliating experience for Indonesian journalism. Tempo had set a high standard of journalism while also trying to be responsible, trying to meet the authorities half way. But it wasn't enough. They still closed Tempo down because it dared to expose a difference of opinion in ex-President Suharto's cabinet, about a project of his protégé Habibie.

Now that the licensing is over, how long will self-censorship remain?

I believe that the Indonesian media will have to go through a period of soul-searching before finding itself. Journalists must confront fears they have been living with, which have seeped into every corner of the media, paralyzing it.

It was fear that split journalists into two camps after the Tempo closure. One group wanted to live quietly and keep their jobs in order to manage their family obligations. The other wanted to start a revolution and saw no more room for compromise. This group felt betrayed that the first group did not join them.

How should the Indonesian media manage the coming transition? First and foremost, it has to be depoliticized, because for more than 20 years the government has been able to silence the media. The media has become dependent on government or sections of the government for its treatment of stories, its way of thinking about issues, its support of various political leaders. So, first the media has to learn how to think for themselves. Then, bureaucrats and government officials must get used to articles that are critical and not respond by trying to silence the media.

The licensing system has been dismantled, but in practice the media is still being very careful because the political situation in Indonesia is still fluid. The economic crisis is a double-edged sword. It can and has galvanized change, forcing Suharto to resign as president. But it can also be an impediment to democratizing Indonesia. The economic crisis will mean many people living below the poverty line, and poverty can make people yield to pressures for strong government and political leadership. Of course we all want a democracy, it will be said, but not too quickly. Perhaps the old guard will return, presenting themselves differently. The licensing system may not return, but under pressure, editors can always be removed, as is happening in Malaysia.

Most of all Indonesian journalists must debrief themselves from the fear that has strangled them for the last two decades. We must begin to think straight and to the point rather than ambiguously, as a way out. It will be a very private and individual process for every journalist. For some it will be a great release, but for others it will be a very painful process to start thinking differently.

I do not advocate Western-style media freedom for Indonesia. Nor do I think that democracy and quality journalism are only for rich and settled countries. They are human rights.

The Indonesian media will have an important role in strengthening civil society, especially because most Indonesians are not highly educated. We must write simply and succinctly about complex issues. Most of all we must be able to write as truthfully as possible. ■

The Triumph Of Text

By Tom Regan

I'm not very good at prognostication, although I have had my moments. I predicted in January of 1992 that Bill Clinton would become president. (I have witnesses, I swear.) I predicted that the Denver Broncos would win last year's Super Bowl. And I predicted that the next big design tool in on-line media sites would be text.

That's right, text. Words. Not snazzy javascript rollovers, not nifty live video and not dazzling Shockwave multi-media presentations, although all of the above certainly do have their place in a good on-line media site. The proof is in the pudding, so to speak. Witness the recent redesigns of three of the Web's biggest on-line newspaper sites: The Boston Globe, The New York Times and The Washington Post. All three have abandoned a "Web" look for a "newspaper" one. While avant-garde designers may bemoan this retro-look, it is happening for a very good reason.

It's what the customer wants. It is elegant, descriptive and easy to download. It shows the "keep it simple, stupid" principle works as well in the virtual world as it does in the real one.

There are some good reasons why text has become the "design" choice du jour, and will probably remain so for a while:

a) Bandwidth problems—For all the talk about better connectivity and faster download speeds, most people still use a 28.8 modem to access the Net. For them, text is a real godsend.

b) Demographics—A survey done by Find/SVP in 1996 showed that the age group that uses news the most, 30-50, is also the group with the least amount of time to spend on line. They want news presented to them in a fast and easy-to-understand format and again, text gives them what they want.

c) As Popeye would say, "I y'am, what I y'am, and that's what I y'am." You might call this the perception factor. The New York Times, The Boston Globe, The Washington Post and The Christian Science Monitor are on-line "newspapers," and that is exactly how on-line readers see us. As newspapers. True, they appreciate all the cool things the Web offers, like access to archives, personalization, and the interactive tools mentioned above, but they still see us as newspapers. And they like the way newspapers look and organize information.

At this point, I want to refer to my own experience with The Christian Science Monitor's electronic edition as further proof of both my "text has triumphed" thesis and the perception factor of on-line newspapers.

Several months ago we decided to drastically change the way we presented the daily on-line edition of the paper. Working with a company in York, England, called Infosis, we developed an on-line version of the "real" paper. Rather than using the menu/contents format that sites like The New York Times or The Post uses, we created a graphical representation of each page of the newspaper in a left-hand frame.

When a reader wants to read a story on page five, for example, he or she simply clicks on that story image and it appears in the right-hand frame, replete with all the wonders of the Web like extra information links, javascript-powered maps, etc.

We were, of course, worried that we would be sacrificed at the altar of the design gods for this blasphemy, and truth be told, some people didn't like the idea when they heard about it and haven't changed their minds now that they've seen it.

But lots of people did like it. In fact, the page views in the "Today's Paper" section of the site went up by 35 percent, because people were reading the on-line edition the same way they read a regular paper. Rather than hunting around to find their favorite columnist or feature, they could find it in the same place in the on-line edition as in the print version. Also, our readers were "thumbing" through the on-line edition, looking at page after page, finding stories they liked.

The Infosis version does rely on simple graphics, but graphics presented in a "text format." And for people who didn't want to browse the paper, we added a contents menu that allows them to see all of the stories in the left-hand frame and read them in the right one.

Personally, I don't believe this is a step backwards. It's a step to acknowledge the realities of the Web and of people's lives. Our main purpose is to inform people. On-line media also allows us to present them with choices that they would never have in newsprint versions. And while it is true that this new medium will allow us to present these choices in ever more interactive and useful ways, we must always be careful not to be seduced by "the dark side of the Web." Futuristic sites such as "Word" were fun to visit once or twice just to see what new wrinkle they had created, but if you wanted to read a story or find information, it was no easy chore—probably the reasons many of these sites are defunct.

One day, these futuristic designs will rule the Web and on-line media. But the reality is that we're living in the here and now, not the future, and the people who read our on-line sites today want their news presented to them in a pretty simple format. Yes, it might be boring and retro. But it gets the job done and keeps the customers happy. And that is really what it is all about. ■

Tom Regan is the Associate Editor of The Christian Science Monitor's electronic edition. You can E-mail him at tom@csmonitor.com

Books

A Bit of Hope on Education Coverage, a Mea Culpa

Imaging Education: the Media and Schools in America
Edited by Gene I. Maeroff
Teachers College Press. 240 Pages. $50 hc, $23.95 pb.

By Evans Clinchy

In the winter 1997 edition of Nieman Reports, I issued the journalistic equivalent of a papal bull excommunicating most members of the print and visual media for all too often misunderstanding, misrepresenting and thereby severely damaging our American system of public education. These mortal sins, I alleged, added up to an unwarranted litany of superficial, endlessly negative, and almost always second-hand reporting about what is going on in our public schools. I was (and in no small measure still am) particularly concerned with what I feel to be two of the greatest weaknesses in the educational reporting that goes on in this country.

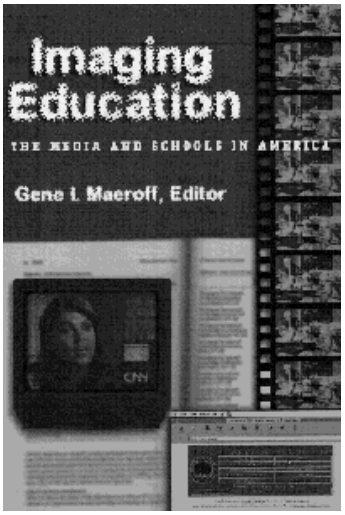
The first is the lack of on-the-spot, first-hand reporting about what is actually happening in the schools, including all of the frustrations and difficulties that both teachers and students are facing these days. The second (and perhaps even more devastating practice) is the sacred annual ritual of reporting the local (and, indeed, the national) school system's standardized tests scores, in particular the habit of ranking and grading schools without taking into consideration the vastly different social, cultural, economic, racial and ethnic problems that different kinds of schools face. These differences are, of course, most pronounced for urban and rural as opposed to suburban schools, but they also appear within school districts, including suburban districts.

Now, as the result of two recent events, I am compelled to reappear before the ecclesiastical court of Nieman Reports in order, Galileo-like, to recant at least some portion of that diatribe.

The first event causing this partial mea culpa is the appearance of a front page report in the education world's journal of record, Education Week, of June 17, 1998, by the journal's senior editor, Lynn Olson, describing several pathbreaking attempts to remedy both of these problems, but most especially the test score problem.

The second event is the appearance of a new book, published by Teachers College Press, edited by Gene I. Maeroff, formerly a national education reporter for The New York Times and now the director of the Fred M. Hechinger Institute on Education and the Media at Teachers College, Columbia University. In this book, called "Imaging Education: the Media and Schools in America," some 19 educators, media people and even some innocent and not so innocent bystanders attempt to deal with the full range of the problems that exist between the media and the schools, very much including the two problems that are of greatest immediate concern to me.

To deal with the Ed/Week report first, Olson describes several pathbreaking attempts on the part of some of the nation's leading newspapers to dramatically upgrade their reporting of test scores. Take The Detroit



Free Press, for example. Every year up to this year the paper would publish a list ranking school districts and schools solely on the basis of the raw, unexamined and unexplained scores of the state-wide tests conducted as part of the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP).

Worrying about this practice, the paper last year conducted an intensive six-month computer-assisted study of the test results, taking into account a variety of social and economic factors. The study found, says Olsen, that "poverty and other factors were so strongly linked to test scores that it made straight-up comparisons 'inevitably flawed' and 'mostly meaningless.' "I think we realized with some embarrassment," Tracy Van Moorlehem, the paper's education reporter, is quoted as saying, "that we

never had any business ranking districts based on MEAP scores. It's just not fair, nor really particularly accurate."

To measure some of the effects of poverty and other non-school factors on achievement, The Free Press now uses such advanced statistical methods as multiple regression analysis to determine to what extent variations in test scores are related to such factors as family income, student mobility and limited English proficiency, all factors (along with many others) that have been demonstrated to be largely responsible for much of the test score differences between suburban middle and upper middle class students and students in our often underfunded, overcrowded and often far too large urban schools. When these factors are taken into consideration, it often turns out that schools with what appear to be low test scores are actually doing a better job of educating their assigned clientele than schools with higher test scores.

Many other newspapers, I am happy to say and thus be proved wrong in my papal bull, such as The Charlotte Observer, The Arkansas Democrat Gazette, The Seattle Times and The Philadelphia Inquirer, are also joining in this spreading refusal to treat test scores at misleading face value. Many of these papers are producing annual special sections devoted to descriptions of what is going on in the schools—good things as well bad things—along with test score results.

But, as several of the authors in the Maeroff book are quick to point out, simply correcting the unfortunate malfeasance of inadequate test score reporting does not solve the larger problem of the media's failure to adequately cover the field of eduction.

Indeed, Maeroff's book is made up largely of chapters by educators complaining about all of the things the media fail to cover. Of the 19 authors, 15 are presently in the education business (now including Maeroff himself), one is neither an educator nor of the media (Deborah Wadsworth of Public Agenda), and only three are actually members of the press or visual media (John Leonard of The Nation, New York Magazine and CBS, Aleta Watson of The San Jose Mercury News and Rochelle Stanford of The National Journal.)

Thus the best that is said in this book in defense of the media—and especially the nation's newspapers—is, first, that the public at large does not appear to demand in-depth coverage of education (except for school sports, of course) or read or look at such coverage when it does appear. And second, because of this lack of interest, the media find it difficult to devote large quantities of newsprint or television time to the subject.

Even if these media views of the public are true, they cannot, as the educators are quick to point out, be used as excuses for the fact that the media coverage that does appear is all too often slipshod, superficial and, worst of all, overly susceptible to promoting the "bad" news and ignoring anything "good."

The test score debacle is only one instance, say the educators, of the fact that few newspapers have staff reporters and editors who are savvy enough about social science research to interpret such data properly, with the result that a distorted picture is given of how well our students are doing or not doing.

This general lack of sophistication about educational data, say the educators, reflects and is perhaps caused, in part, by what David C. Berliner and Bruce J. Biddle talk about in their chapter entitled "The Lamentable Alliance Between the Media and School Critics."

After taking the media to task for reporting that is "biased in favor of the negative side," that is "more critical than complimentary," that is "simplistic and incomplete," that "displays a lack of understanding of the complexity of school life," and which "shows an appalling lack of understanding of statistics and social science research," Berliner and Biddle make their really serious charge: "The press seems either too scared, too controlled, or too uninformed to raise what we consider the most basic issue confronting education in the United States today—achieving a fair distribution of opportunities to succeed," i.e., "an ignorance of the role of poverty as the root cause of many of the difficulties in our schools."

All this may seem harsh, but in general I think the authors in this book are essentially on the right track. I would add only that all too often the media do not seem to be aware of the major trends that are under way in American education and find out about them only when they become inescapable. The best current example of such a trend is the growing opposition in many public school systems to the present authoritarian national education agenda of imposed "world class" academic standards and "high" stakes testing.

This small but rapidly growing movement advocates a dramatic democratization and decentralization of our hierarchical, authoritarian school systems, with the devolution of decision-making power down to the level of new, small, autonomous but strictly public schools that can be voluntarily chosen by both parents and professional staff. This movement is best exemplified by what is going on in Boston and New York as people in these two systems attempt to create such schools against the considerable odds of entrenched educational bureaucracies and local school systems that are hopelessly anachronistic and often antagonistic to change.

As the saying often goes, and as it just as often goes unheeded, this really is a book that everyone in the media and especially the newspaper business should read. ■

Evans Clinchy, a 1959 Nieman Fellow, is a Senior Consultant at the Institute for Responsive Education at Northeastern University in Boston.

Pioneer in Coverage of Racial Injustice

The Baltimore Afro-American, 1892-1950
Howard Farrar
Greenwood Publishing Group 220 Pages. $59.95.

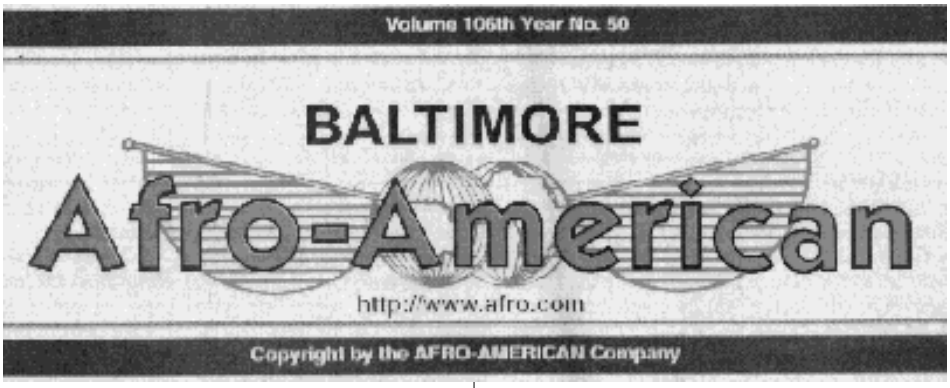
By Phillip W.D. Martin

Relatively little has been written about the struggle and rise to prominence of America's most prodigious black newspapers. Now, with the publication of "The Baltimore Afro-American, 1892-1950," we are provided a much-needed glimpse into an area of the past that has often been swept to the sidelines of journalism history. This is not merely the story of a newspaper that dared to call itself The Afro-American in the 19th Century—a term even W.E.B. Du Bois eschewed—but an account of institutionalized racism in Baltimore and, indeed, throughout much of U.S. society.

The need for black-owned and operated newspapers at the turn of the century was made clear by the editorial positions of even the most progressive white-owned newspapers. For example, author Howard Farrar points out that The Baltimore Sun in 1917 condemned vicious anti-black rioting in Chicago, while simultaneously appealing to blacks to "abandon for all time the foolish idea of social equality."

Farrar's book is divided into nine chapters, each exploring The Afro-American's role in challenging seemingly inalterable institutionalized racism of that period. The Baltimore Afro-American practiced enthusiastically and without apology the purest forms of advocacy journalism.

During the period in question, social justice for black Americans was consistently deferred or denied by white politicians. The Afro-American's editors, shying away from neither controversy nor danger, routinely attacked local, state and national officials who failed to properly respond to the concerns of black Americans. Consequently, it was often at odds with America's commanders and chiefs, who, perhaps with the sole exception of Harry Truman, were solicitous of Southern Democrats. Even FDR, whose New Deal has forever identified him as a progressive, refused to support basic human rights protections for blacks embodied in anti-lynching legislation.



Even during World War II, when the U.S. government urged silence and cooperation in the battle against fascism abroad, The Afro-American continued to agitate against white supremacy at home. Moreover, it and other black newspapers were virtually the only sources of coverage about black men who were dying for their country in Europe, Asia and North Africa.

One of the most heroic acts of World War II, the downing of several Japanese aircraft during the raid on Pearl Harbor by a black messman, was grossly underreported in the mainstream press. The Navy man, Dorie Miller, may have languished in obscurity if not for the persistent coverage and editorializing by The Afro-American and other black newspapers. In 1942, he was reluctantly awarded the Navy Cross.

Locally, The Afro-American agitated for equal pay for Baltimore teachers and for more black administrators. It editorialized against police violence, white mob lynchings, and the discriminatory use of the death penalty. The newspaper curried favor with black readers in Baltimore and other cities where The Afro-American had been established as the paper of choice. Thus, from 1940 to 1945, The Afro-American's circulation grew 124 percent, from 105,000 to 235,000.

Though The Afro-American was influential it was not powerful. It was successful in several key battles against discriminatory policies and practices, but largely ineffective in convincing black voters to accept its political recommendations in local, state and national elections.

Unfortunately, the author repeats this point with surprising redundancy. The writing is also uneven and at times reads like a Ph.D. dissertation. Perhaps it is a reflection of the author's background, an Assistant Professor of History at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

These imbalances, however, can be forgiven in view of the treasure of information packed into these 220 pages.

The book also focuses on personalities. The Baltimore Sun had H.L. Mencken. The Baltimore Afro-American had Ralph Matthews Sr., a tough enterprising reporter, though we really

never learn enough about him to form a complete picture.

Matthews, the writer Langston Hughes and the man who went on to lead the newspaper, Carl Murphy, covered the great stories of their time: The trial of the Scottsboro Boys, Italy's invasion of Ethiopia, the Spanish Civil War.

Still, Farrar laments the sensationalism that characterized much of The Afro-American's style of reporting. There seemed to be no body counts, imprudent behavior or lascivious rumors too wild, or, at times, unsubstantiated, to report. Farrar cites the publication in 1948 of an inaccurate (and extremely damaging) story accusing the author Zora Neal Hurston of sexually molesting three children. In that sense, The Afro-American's journalism was not unlike a great deal of reporting of that era.

Hayward Farrar's manuscript comes out at a time when a much-deserved historical light is being shone on America's black press. In February 1999, PBS will air a documentary by New York filmmaker Stanley Nelson called "Soldiers Without Swords: The Black Press." And several struggling black newspapers today are being resuscitated by a new generation of African-American journalists.

It is ironic that The Baltimore Afro-American's 106-year-old campaign for social and racial justice has probably led to its near obsolescence. It barely survives today with a circulation of several thousand. After the Kerner Commission reported that white segregated newsrooms and accompanying coverage helped inflame racial unrest in the 1960's, white newspapers and broadcast media have drained off significant numbers of talented black journalists. The Baltimore Afro-American, so successful in militating against institutionalized racism, must now take on the difficult task of making itself relevant to a new breed of readers who were nourished on the fruits of progress cultivated by the reporters, publishers and editors of this important American newspaper. ■

Phillip W.D. Martin, a 1998 Nieman Fellow, is a freelance journalist based in Boston.

Do Concessions Protect First Amendment?

Freedom's Voice:
The Perilous Present and Uncertain Future of the First Amendment
Robert D. Richards
Brassey's. 177 Pages. $23.95

BY ROBERT H. PHELPS

The New York Times knew what it was doing when it hired Yale Professor Alexander M. Bickel to argue the Pentagon Papers case before the Supreme Court on June 26, 1971. Bickel, under questioning by Justice Stewart, argued that the injunctions that had stopped The Times (and The Washington Post) from publishing the secret history of the Vietnam War were invalid because Congress had passed no law giving the President the power to seek such injunctions.

Justice William O. Douglas, an absolutist on press freedom, looked down at Bickel and asked:

"Why would the statute make a difference, because the First Amendment provides that Congress shall make no law abridging freedom of the press? Do you read that to mean that Congress could make some laws abridging freedom of the press?"

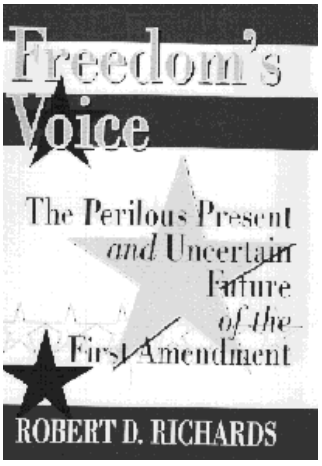
Bickel: "No sir. Only that I have conceded, for purpose of this argument, that some limitations, some impairment of the absoluteness of that prohibition, is possible, and I argue that, whatever that may be, it is surely at its very least when the President acts without statutory authority because that inserts into it, as well—"

Douglas: "That is a very strange argument for The Times to be making. The Congress can make all this illegal by passing laws."

Bickel: "I did not really argue that, Mr. Justice."

Douglas: "That was the strong impression that was left in my mind."

A few hours later, while waiting for the decision at The Times Washington Bureau, an editor, like so many journalists, an ardent absolutist on the First Amendment, asked Bickel why he had made such a concession. His answer



was simple: "You want to win the case, don't you?" He knew he had Douglas's vote and that of the two other absolutists, Justices Black and William J. Brennan. He probably could count on the liberal Justice Thurgood Marshall. Needing one more vote, he aimed for the moderates, Justices Byron White and Potter Stewart. Knowing that they would not go along with an absolutist argument, Bickel made his concession. He got both White's and Stewart's votes in the 6-3 decision.

While the decision was a victory for The Times, the opinions clearly rejected the argument that press freedom is absolute, indicating that Congress can make laws restricting that freedom. No wonder, then, that the press worries about erosion of its rights.

In "Freedom's Voice," an update on the status of the First Amendment, Robert D. Richards, Associate Professor of Journalism and Law of the College of Communications at The Pennsylvania State University and Director of the Pennsylvania Center for the First Amendment, sounds the familiar call to the barricades. He finds erosion wherever he looks—in politics, business,

the arts, the courts. Richards expresses no willingness to grant concessions, as Bickel did in the Pentagon Papers case.

In fact, at least in the case of high school newspapers, Richards places the rights of editors over that of publishers, the school principals. He sees "deterioration" in First Amendment rights in a Supreme Court ruling rejecting a Bethel, Washington, student editor's suit protesting the principal's killing of two articles, one on three unnamed pregnant students and the other on a named girl's accusations against her father. Would Richards go so far as upholding the right of the editor of a metropolitan newspaper—say The New York Times—to publish a story over the objections of the publisher? Who enjoys the right, the writer, the editor or the publisher? All, of course, but in the end the principal figure is the one who owns the printing press.

The point is that while constant vigilance is necessary to protect freedom, the press should be careful in selecting the cases it pushes and the legal bases for defending itself.

All this is not to denigrate Richards's superb job of summarizing attacks on the First Amendment. His sweep is broad, covering television cameras in courts, politically correct speech on campus, arts and entertainment, talk radio, the Internet and an "alarming" trend, multimillion dollar defamation suits by businesses designed to stifle political opposition. (See article, Page 13.)

While constant vigilance is undoubtedly necessary against onslaughts, especially by government and business, Professor Richards comes up short in proposing a solution. He suggests that the general public should be the catalyst for protecting liberty because so many of the attacks on freedom are at the local level. But he never says how to enlist the public's help, especially in view of the low esteem the public holds for the media today. Perhaps Professor Richards can write a battle plan in another book. ■

Robert H. Phelps is the departing Editor of Nieman Reports.

Scorned Tabloid Lover Bares His Bitterness

News Is A Verb
Pete Hamill
Library of Contemporary Thought. 102 Pages. $8.95.

BY YING CHAN

In the flood of literature lamenting the demise of good journalism, this 102-page book is a small gem.

I do not say this because Pete Hamill, author and former Editor of New York's Daily News, had promised to keep a job open for me when I quit the paper in July, 1997. Three months later, Hamill himself was gone, dismissed by the notoriously fickle publisher-cum-developer Mort Zuckerman, who has a reputation for high-profile hires and fires, revolving-door style. Hamill, whom The News featured in its television commercials as the quintessential New Yorker and perfect editor for the paper, lasted only eight months.

Written in the aftermath of his aborted editor's career, "News Is A Verb," is a critique of the news industry as much as an unfinished agenda for what Hamill had set out to do when he took over The News. Like a lover scorned, Hamill wrote with pain and pathos, baring his bitterness at the firing: "…we were going to put out the best god-damned tabloid in history. We were on our way. We didn't get to finish the job."

With the Lewinsky saga generating intense soul-searching among journalists, much of what Hamill said about the media has become familiar, that in its pursuit to be the first instead of being right, rumor, innuendo and unattributed quotes from shadowy sources have taken over airwaves and seeped into even respectable broadsheets. At newspapers and the networks, international coverage is down and trivia is up. And veteran correspondents have joined the fray for sleaze, acting mean, petty and obsessed in a race for the inside scoop on some dirty laundry.

But in his critique, Hamill sets himself apart from most other pundits on two counts: his incorrigible faith in his fellow journalists, coupled with an undisguised disdain for media owners and their insatiable appetite for profits. He also offers ways that newspapers could remake themselves and survive in face of revolutionary technological changes.

Hamill, who began his journalism career as a night reporter at The New York Post, is no impassioned observer. He loves reporters, especially the tabloid man of old: "They didn't pay whores for stories. They didn't sniff around the private lives of politicians like agents from the vice squad. Even in large groups, on major stories, the photographers didn't behave like a writhing, snarling, mindless centipede, all legs and Leicas, falling upon some poor witness like an instrument of punishment. Somehow, they found ways to get the story without behaving like thugs or louts."

Yet these days, journalists not on the sleaze beat are finding it harder and harder to get their stories into the paper or on air, stories on education, the environment, the neighborhoods and so on, mundane bread and butter topics that readers would care and deserve to know. Moreover, newsholes are increasingly being taken over by what Hamill called "necrojournalism," "the journalism of dead, or near-dead, celebrities": Prince Di, Marilyn Monroe, John F. Kennedy, Jacqueline Onassis, Frank Sinatra, Marv Albert ("whose career was dead"), Donald Trump ("brain-dead").

Yes, as reporters, editors and newsroom managers, we should push the limits, but to different degrees we are just pawns. When I returned to The News from my Nieman year in the summer of 1996, my first assignment was

staking out a hotel at Kennedy Airport, where relatives of the TWA 800 crash victims had gathered to grieve. For two weeks, I joined the pack of reporters and hounded grieving relatives, chasing after them in parking lots and asking over and over again, "How do you feel?" I had a job to do and I tried to do it well. But there's something wrong when by the end of the day I felt embarrassed explaining to my teenage son what I did at work.

Hamill suggests that to boost readership, newspapers need not pander to the lowest denominators. Instead, they should increase coverage of issues that attract women and immigrants, whose numbers are soaring in all major cities. In the two chapters on immigrants and women readers, Hamill seems to be writing from his editor's notebook, or from minutes of meetings with Daily News editors. He tries to deliver a vision and road map that are part realism and part romanticism—57 percent of New York City's population are immigrants or children of immigrants, yet what works for New York may not work for other parts of the country. It's a valiant but less convincing effort.

But then journalism is more than marketing and survival. It's also a sacred trust that the public has bestowed on this mythical community called journalists. My friend, Richard Reeves, author and newspaperman, often wonders aloud the fact that the public has never demanded licenses from reporters. Who gives us the right to ask questions of strangers and probe the country's inner workings? What qualifies us journalists, some in our 20's, to embark on tasks that could bring down the President of the United States?

They are the same questions that Harvard professor and author Robert Coles asked of his students—whom he called "the privileged ones"—as he led them in the reading of "Let Us Now Praise Famous Men," by James Agee and Walker Evans. In the introduction to this classic work on the plight of Southern sharecroppers, Agee writes:

"Who are you who will read these words and study these photographs, and through what cause, by what chance, and for what purpose, and by what right do you qualify to, and what will you do about it?"

Who are we who are asking those questions and taking those photographs? And what are we going to do about them?

And it's here that we must return to the whys and hows of our craft, basics of often-forgotten journalism wisdom that Hamill dispenses throughout the little book: that journalism is about "helping people" and keeping the country "functioning as a democracy." It's about telling interesting stories. It's about verbs that give lives to sentences and to our news. It's also about stopping the takeover by nouns and big-name celebrities. ■

Ying Chan is a consultant for Hong Kong University.

Verifying Truth in Data Deluge

It's a dirty job, but somebody has to do it. We should not kid ourselves by thinking that other people and institutions cannot gather and distribute crucial information. They can, they are, and they will. We are being backed into a corner now by forces beyond our control—but forces, like wind, change direction and ultimately die down. To survive and serve, we have to make our corner the one to which men and women of good will can repair, can come to find or verify truth and accuracy in a society under data siege.

I would prefer a Bill Brennan solution. Mr. Brennan, a citizen of the Borough of Queens, for a long time manned a telephone at The New York Daily News. It was the number you called to settle bets, to get the facts. Usually late at night, from a bar. With friends shouting in the background, you could call and ask questions like: What was Cookie Lavagetto's real name? Did Napoleon really say that a hostile newspaper is more to be feared than a thousand bayonets? Did Goethe really say, "What have the Germans gained by their boasted freedom of the press except the liberty to abuse one another"? Bill Brennan, walls of reference books around him, would settle the argument. (Harry Arthur Lavagetto. Yes, Napoleon and Goethe did say those things about us.) People would pay for that—for sure signposts in the information swamp. What is the real, not the mock? Where does nonfiction end and fiction begin? The truth may or may not make us free. But it will keep us working. Could there be a better job than this commission from the people to safeguard their rights from the rich and powerful? I've never seen one. Humility and the determination to get it right are the only appropriate responses to such trust.—*Richard Reeves, "What the People Know: Freedom and the Press," Harvard University Press. 142 Pages. $19.95.*

Montalbano Novel

A novel by William D. Montalbano, a 1970 Nieman Fellow, is being published posthumously by G.P. Putnam's & Sons. The book, "Basilica," is "an ecclesiastical thriller" about "a renegade Pope, his ex-cop friend and the dark past they shared," according to the publishers. Montalbano died in London, England, last March of a heart attack.

The William Montalbano Memorial Fund was established in May. Originally designed as a book fund for Nieman Fellows, it now has been designated as an endowment fund to help support international Fellows during their Nieman year. Checks payable to the Nieman Foundation at Harvard University may be sent to the Montalbano Memorial Fund, Nieman Foundation, One Francis Avenue, Cambridge, MA. 02138.

Responsibility to Be Honest

Life Photographers
What They Saw
John Loengard
Bulfinch Press, Little, Brown and Company.
456 Pages. $35.

BY LOIS FIORE

From November 1936, when Life magazine's first issue appeared, until it stopped publication as a weekly in 1972, 88 of the most innovative and revered photographers found, at one time or another, a home for their oftentimes groundbreaking photography. "Life magazine for me was like the American flag," said one of the photographers, Alfred Eisenstaedt. "We felt a great responsibility…to be honest."

In the early 1990's, former Life photographer and Picture Editor John Loengard interviewed nearly half of those 88 photographers and edited almost 800,000 of their words to form "Life Photographers: What They Saw." The book teems with historically and personally revealing stories of how and why many of our most memorable images were taken. Here are two brief examples.

In 1945, Edward Clark was in Nashville when Life called asking him to go to Warm Springs, Georgia, to photograph events surrounding the death of President Franklin Roosevelt: "Airplanes were out of the question because it was wartime and I didn't have priority. They could throw me off at any stop they made. So I just got in my car and drove all night to Warm Springs. There must have been 135 photographers there from everywhere. The Secret Service lined us all up behind a barrier in front of a small house they called the little White House so we could photograph the caisson as it came by with Roosevelt's casket on it. A lot of people were on the porch of this cottage, and several of them were crying. I heard this accordion start to play behind me, and I turned around, and I saw a Navy chief

petty officer, Graham Jackson, playing with tears streaming down his face. I thought to myself, 'My God, what a picture.' As the caisson was coming, I took three or four pictures just as fast as I could. No one paid any attention to me. My picture was exclusive. I was the only one who saw it."

Martha Holmes was the fourth woman photographer at Life. This photo was taken spontaneously in 1955: "…right after the Brooklyn Dodgers won the World Series—it was just one car with about 50 guys on it, coming down the street right after the game. I saw them, and I went running. I felt like Ginger Rogers—I was running backwards on heels. But it was fun; I was a Dodger fan. Of course, they loved it. They were screaming and waving their arms. And with me there, they did it even more so."

How Civility Can Guide Media in a Democracy

Civility: Manners, Morals, and the Etiquette of Democracy
Stephen L. Carter
Basic Books. 338 Pages. $25.

By Molly Marsh

America is suffering from a lapse in civility, and the trouble is, according to Stephen Carter, we are so enamored of our individual freedoms that we are not interested in restoring it.

Carter, a Professor of Law at Yale University, sees civility as the sum of the many sacrifices we are called to make for the sake of living together; it is a set of manners for democracy. A fitting metaphor he uses throughout the book is of the car: instead of traveling in trains, as we used to, where everyone followed the rules for the sake of their fellow passengers, we now travel in the comfort and obscurity of our own steel cocoons, seeing others not as people but as obstacles to get past. We carry this illusion that we travel alone, he argues, to other parts of our lives. We don't know others, and thus believe we don't owe them anything.

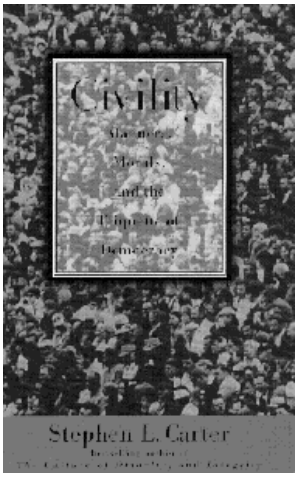
The incivility Carter describes is a result of many complex factors; the disintegration of many of our civic institutions has resulted from, among other elements, the encroachment of market values, which urge us to think first, and often only, of ourselves. Although he does not single out the media for special criticism, seeing them instead as part of the backdrop of incivility that characterizes our public—and often private—interactions with each other, there is much here from which the media can learn.

Carter develops a set of rules for civility and relates how each is important to democracy. Many of them are self-evident, concepts we learned (or should have learned) in elementary school: "Our duty to be civil toward others does not depend on whether we like them or not;" and "Civility allows criticism of others, and sometimes even requires it, but the criticism should always be civil" are two such rules. But Carter urges us to think about them in a deeper way.

Fundamentally, civility is an ethic for relating to the stranger, Carter argues. Much of civility is premised on the notion that the concept of the stranger actually exists. "A big part of our incivility crisis stems from the sad fact that we do not know each other or even want to try; and, not knowing each other, we seem to think that how we treat each other doesn't matter."

He cites as an example the technological advances of cyberspace, in which we are free to create our own individual experiences and, in the process, present ourselves as other than who we are. Although there are many ways the Internet makes us feel more connected, it also disconnects us. In Carter's view, which he backs up with research, spending hours alone in front of the computer reduces the time we spend interacting with others. The less need we have of other people, he argues, the greater risk that we will begin to devalue them. It is also much easier to be rude to those we do not know and cannot see or hear.

Carter also criticizes media outlets that provide us with exactly what we ask for—only what we want to read. Newspapers don't have to exercise any news judgment at all that way, he argues, where previously the news judgment of the editors helped create our common experience. And the more we are able to tailor the world to our liking, he states, the less civil we are likely to be. When we can search until we find



the answers we like, the possibility of real conversation taking place is lessened.

The key to restoring civility, in his view, is "for all of us to learn anew the virtues of acting with love toward our neighbors." And this depends on returning to the concepts of awe and sacrifice. Religion is his source—in his case, Christianity—and he is explicit about his beliefs. But rules for civility are found in other traditions, and, he reminds us, one need not be religious at all to appreciate their wisdom. Many are not going to like—or agree with—his view that religion is the only source for transcending our human tendency to look out for our own needs. But he makes a convincing argument that religion is one of the few institutions that teaches us to put our own needs aside for the sake of the greater good.

Carter's book is thoughtful and thought-provoking. He offers a good reminder that we are all in this together—maybe in separate cars, but headed in the same direction. ■

Molly Marsh is Editorial Assistant of Nieman Reports.

Novelists Outdo Journalists

By Murray Seeger

After years of self-satisfied isolation, Indonesia finds itself exposed on the world's financial pages and, occasionally, on front pages. The last time journalists paid so much attention to this immense, complex and fascinating country was 30 years ago when blood was running in the streets while the military overturned the communist-tinged regime of Sukarno. (Many Indonesians get along just fine with one name.)

The Suharto government that has been running Indonesia for the intervening three decades has, to its credit, permitted foreign journalists to enter the country and cover its economic crisis. It did not allow such access previously. Few foreign journalists are based in Jakarta because of the government's attitude and because of editors' general lack of interest in the region. Local journalists operate under debilitating official restraints and self-censorship, but they are notable for their courage in pushing the limits and for producing good reporting.

For the outsider, however, Indonesia is nearly an insoluble mystery. The country spreads over 17,000 islands in an east-west belt as wide as the continental USA. There are well over 200 million people of dozens of ethnic and linguistic groups. The fact that it has held together as a single state for nearly 50 years is a geopolitical miracle.

There are good histories of the country, including "Indonesian Upheaval," the eyewitness record of the Sukarno downfall by John Hughes (Nieman Fellow 1962) and the more recent "Shared Hopes, Separate Fears" by Paul F. Gardner, a record of 50 years of U.S. relations with the country. Still, for the journalist seeking deep insights into Indonesia and the Javanese who dominate its politics there is nothing better than the "Buru Quartet," a four-volume epic by the country's finest novelist, Pramoedya Ananta Toer.

Pramoedya, ill and aged, lives under official surveillance in Jakarta because the military officers that dominate the government discovered an unforgivable taint of "Marxist-Leninism" in his work. The fact that Sukarno also found him dangerous, locked him away without trial for 14 years and had his library and archives burned, made no difference. There was a brief interim when Pramoedya was allowed to write and publish, but in 1981 his books were banned and he was confined to his house.

The work was so subversive that the author's translator, Max Lane, an Australian diplomat, was expelled from Indonesia. Students who invited the author to speak were expelled from their university and his publisher was put in jail. Still, the entire work has been translated and was recently issued in colorful Penguin paperbacks.

"Denied access to writing materials, [Pramoedya] kept his literary vision alive by recounting his stories to other prisoners," Lane recalled.

The central story focuses on a single character, Minke, who lives an exotic life that concludes with his taking a lead in the battle against the colonial rulers in the Netherlands. Across the pages there is a parade of characters that could be found only in Indonesia—Dutch-educated Javanese, like the hero; mixed blood locals; Javanese nationalists, who still dominate the country; Dutch police and military administrators; Chinese and Japanese merchants and traders.

Correspondents get a whiff of this exoticism during their visits to Indonesia, but these novels bring it to life as no encyclopedia, history or other reference book can. The impact is the same as reading Nadine Gordimer about South Africa, Alexander Solzhenitsyn about the Soviet Union, Gabriel Garcia Marquez about Latin America; Wole Soyinka about Nigeria; Heinrich Boell about Germany, and William Faulkner about the American South.

Clever journalists have long read fiction as a way of improving their use of the language and for getting ideas for that one big novel that might put them on Easy Street, á la Joe Klein. But good novels are also great sources for insight into lands that Americans do not often visit for lack of interest or because of official barriers. Novelists are unusually perceptive and articulate eye witnesses and, therefore, dangerous to autocratic regimes. Gordimer 35 years ago described South Africa as a place where "the gap between the committed and the indifferent is a Sahara whose faint trails, followed by the mind's eye only, fade out in the sand."

In the quietly-published, new "Invisible Allies," Solzhenitsyn put on paper his gratitude to a secret host of men and women who for years helped him to preserve and distribute his manuscripts when the Kremlin saw him as one of its most dangerous enemies. There are names here that old Kremlin watchers will recognize, but many more that even the best informed were never aware of and could not be disclosed until communism was buried. There is a haunting echo of the recent past in this book.

Novelists speak a truth and display a courage that few journalists can match. Such writers challenge the myths created by dictators of all kinds, hence Solzhenitsyn was sent into exile; Gordimer's books were banned by the old regime and Soyinka lives in danger, labeled "traitor" by the generals and colonels who run Nigeria. Any wonder why they won Nobel Prizes? ■

Murray Seeger, a 1962 Nieman Fellow, teaches journalism at George Washington University.

Unholy Alliance

Continued From Page 3

butions of your newspaper to economic development…[the]winning project will have enhanced local jobs and growth, met a preexisting community need, increased community spirit, and raised the standard of living of the community."

Who could fault this award, no matter who is sponsoring it, and what newspaper would turn down the prestige of endowing $1,000 on some worthy organization in its own hometown?

Since 1993 I've waged a lonely campaign against the NNA's ties to Philip Morris. NNA officials have acknowledged that others complain about the organization's ties to tobacco, but, except for one publisher who wrote a letter to the editor of the NNA's monthly publication, "Publishers' Auxiliary," I know of no one else who has kicked up the dust. I always get personal replies from NNA officials to my complaints. In a 1996 letter, then-NNA President and CEO Tonda Rush wrote, "We continue to believe that NNA should not take steps to discriminate among our sponsors or potential sponsors, so long as the products or services they promote are legal. Although some members feel quite comfortable separating tobacco from the list of legal products, others articulate a persuasive argument that drawing these distinctions is a slippery slope for communications media."

Last fall, NNA's new President, Ken Allen, spoke with me on the telephone about the Philip Morris tie after I left messages for him saying I planned to write a column or story on the subject. "Clearly, I would prefer to operate in an environment that NNA would not have to operate with any sponsorship," Allen said. "However, a list of verboten sponsors is the [NNA] board's call…. I sympathize with your point of view, but I want to do what is best for the NNA."

Later, Carol Pierce, who is the NNA's Vice President of Programs and Administration, informed me that the board frequently reviews NNA's policies and that it had decided Philip Morris is an acceptable sponsor. The corollary, she explained, is that tobacco is a legal product and legal to advertise and, therefore, a valid sponsor—the same argument the ACLU uses for accepting tobacco money.

I've had similar conversations with other NNA employees through the years. The standard answer never changes. Perhaps that is because the NNA has a reason for protecting tobacco's "right to advertise." Newspaper advertising revenue could be at stake. The truth is that, while the NNA says it is protecting a legal product's right to advertise, in the end it is protecting one of its own sources of revenue, as well. If NNA argues this point, then I refer the organization to its own "Legislative Briefing" report it mailed to NNA members. Updated on January 10, 1997, the NNA brief on Congress's periodic attempts to eliminate advertising as a deduction specifically mentions tobacco and alcohol (Philip Morris owns Miller Beer). In this brief the NNA said it would "respond swiftly to any attempts to remove [the] important deduction [of advertising expenses of tobacco companies]."

Why? The NNA brief explains that, too: "By limiting or eliminating the deductibility of advertising and marketing expenditures, such legislation would increase the cost of advertising the targeted products, imposing a punitive tax on the advertising of a product that some members of society find objectionable." The brief says that allowing this type of tax penalty against tobacco soon would lead to using the tax code "as a weapon against any form of controversial speech." Is this not the same argument the ACLU uses?

Some people ask me why this issue is so important to me. Why should I care if the NNA funds its conventions and awards with tobacco money? Well, the reason is because of what and who the NNA is. Composed of weekly and daily member newspapers, the NNA touts The New York Times, The Washington Post and Editor and Publisher magazine as three of its largest, most influential members. According to its own promotional literature, the NNA heralds itself as having a "blockbuster, grassroots lobbying network in nearly every one of 435 congressional districts." Also according to its own literature, the influential people that NNA members meet at such events as its annual Government Affairs Conference in Washington include "top government officials, cabinet members, key congressional leaders, agency heads, ambassadors and often the President at formal and informal sessions."

And, the NNA says, it uses its lobbyists to influence these high-ranking officials by "act[ing] quickly and cohesively for the good of the industry," campaigning for such things as filing "comments arguing against the tobacco advertising restrictions as unconstitutional, under the First Amendment."

When you consider that the NNA also says it believes in the axiom, "He who pays the piper calls the tune" and admits that it has used that line at least once (and probably more) to bend legislators' ears, it becomes evident that the NNA is hypocritical in its thinking. How can anyone at The New York Times, The Washington Post or any of the 4,600 member newspapers, in good conscience, criticize a political party or candidate for accepting tobacco money when the journalists, themselves, partake of the same poison?

Whenever I bring up this question, NNA staffers and administrators insist that, with journalists, the concept is different because there's a difference between newspaper people and politicians when it comes to drinking, dining and dancing on tobacco money. The inference here is that politicians are corruptible and easily influenced (and therefore deserving of our criticism when we journalists see them accepting tobacco money) but journalists are objective and immune from corruption. R-i-i-i-ght. My opinion is that, if the NNA wants to maintain its image as the most influential newspaper group in Washington, then it would behoove this organization to quit accepting money from Philip Morris and find sponsors with less to lose in Washington. ■

CINDY BEVINGTON

The writer, a freelance, writes for The Evening Star in Angola, Indiana.

Nieman Notes

Compiled by Lois Fiore

Muckraking in Philippines

By Rigoberto Tiglao

The Philippine press is considered by many the liveliest, the most confrontational and even the wildest in Asia. Get out of it for a year, as I did in 1987 for my Nieman year, and you realize that 365 issues of a Philippine newspaper a year can be a blur that gives little sense of what's really happening. A big story breaks one week; the next week it's forgotten. For a country whose governments one international rating agency put in its top 10 list of the most corrupt bureaucracies in the world, there has been little tradition of rigorous muckraking. But things have been changing. Muckraking has taken hold.

I convinced the Asia Foundation, which funded my Nieman Fellowship, to extend my stay at Harvard to do a two-month research project on this lack of investigative reporting and on how American media's experience could be of help—what with the Pentagon Papers and Watergate demonstrating quite dramatically how the press could change things. Howard Simons, Nieman Curator at that time, was excited over the idea and encouraged me.

I read nearly every book on the topic—there were not too many of them at Widener Library—interviewed directors of investigative journalism and wrote a research study explaining how a center could be set up in the Philippines. About a year after I got back, a group of us sharing the same concerns decided to do something about it. We rewrote my research paper into a project proposal and got the Asia Foundation to fund what we called the Philippine Center For Investigative Journalism.

That was nine years ago. After its first years, when it seemed to be ready to fold up for lack of funding and newspaper publishers' unwillingness to support it, the PCIJ has become a respected journalism institution in the country. It does far more than trade tips on reporting techniques. It publishes reports that have won media awards in the country year after year. Dial its trunk line now, and you'll be asked what section of it you want to reach: women's desk, environment, publishing, training and editorial. It even has its own quarterly magazine, "I" (as in investigative), a combination perhaps of the 1970's Ramparts or Rolling Stone (when that magazine was still a serious one), and Nieman Reports.

It has broken stories that have made an impact on government, such as corruption in the Supreme Court and its most recent one, exposing one top politician's involvement in a major scam. After the success of its first book, which looked in-depth on the coup attempts during former president Corazon Aquino's administration, the PCIJ has published nearly two dozen books on such diverse issues as corruption in government, the Japanese troops' sex-slaves during the war, to one on "computer-assisted research and reporting in the Philippines." It has even gone into broadcast media with its video reports. Journalism schools in the country have been queuing up to get their students accepted as interns into the center.

It has evolved. At the start, it was modestly seen to be just a center administering a fund raised from development agencies: it would fund reporters who'd want to take off from their daily grind and do in-depth pieces, with the PCIJ's board giving advice and editorial help. It still does that, but now it mostly relies on its own stable of investigative reporters, whose articles are published in the major dailies.

The PCIJ has helped change Philippine journalism. Two years after it started coming out with its investigative reports, the major dailies organized their own investigative teams and several newspapers now regularly have their own special, in-depth reports.

It's a success story of an NGO, non-governmental organization, committed to a specific cause and funded by both foreign and local development agencies. The U.S. Congress-financed Asia Foundation, which was its main source of funding in its first few years, viewed it as a legitimate project for its worldwide program to help the development of democratization in developing countries.

For several years, however, PCIJ has not been relying on that institution. Other foreign and local development agencies—and even local philanthropic foundations—have been funding it for specific topics it is interested in. The overhead for these projects help pay for the PCIJ's own projects. It has become a full-fledged publishing house, with the center's books being profitable—surprisingly in the Philippines. The center also conducts training for writers and would-be

journalists for a fee. It has even organized international seminars on journalism topics funded by United Nations agencies and other multilateral institutions.

As in any organization, it's not funding that made it successful, though that has been most crucial. It was the people wanting it to succeed: a group of journalists who were committed to the idea that there was a different way of doing journalism in the country, even if work in that kind of job didn't pay well. Among them: its executive director Sheila Coronel; incoming Nieman Fellow Malou Mangahas; Nieman '87 Marites Vitug; the country's ecology expert, Howie Severino, and its Editor Lorna Kalaw-Tirol. ■

After his year as a Nieman Fellow Bobi Tiglao returned to The Manila Chronicle as Business Editor and Assistant Managing Editor. He joined The Far Eastern Economic Review as correspondent in 1989 and has been its Manila Bureau Chief. His wife, Raquel, who also attended classes and seminars at Harvard, mostly on women's issues, heads the Women's Crisis Center, helping rape victims, prostituted women and battered wives.

—1942—

Robert Lasch died on April 6 of kidney failure at a hospice in Green Valley, Arizona. Lasch, who was 91, lived in Green Valley since his retirement in 1971 from The St. Louis Post-Dispatch, where he was Editor of the Editorial Page. Lasch began his career as a part-time police reporter in Lincoln, Nebraska, while studying philosophy at the University of Nebraska. He spent three years as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University, and on his return worked as a reporter for The Omaha World-Herald. After his Nieman Fellowship he became an editorial writer at The Chicago Sun and joined The Post-Dispatch as an editorial writer in 1950.

He is survived by, among others, his wife, Iris Anderson, and a daughter.

—1949—

Tillman Durdin died on July 7 at the Green Hospital in San Diego. He was 91 and lived in San Diego. Durdin joined the staff of The New York Times in 1937 and was a foreign correspondent in Asia, Africa and Europe until 1961. After that he spent three years as a member of The Times's editorial board. From 1964 to 1967 he was a correspondent in Australia and the southwestern Pacific area. He then became the paper's Hong Kong bureau chief and remained there until his retirement in 1974. Durdin, who was in Nanking in December 1937, the year Japan invaded China, was one of the first to write about the Japanese atrocities in China, including the rape of Nanking. Durdin's Nieman classmate, David Dreiman, remembered him in a column: "…Tillman Durdin was the oldest member, in terms of years, of our class of Nieman Fellows at Harvard. He was also the quietest, the most courtly, and in an obvious way…the wisest: eager to learn ever more and more, as indeed we all were to learn from him. And his wife, **Peggy**, daughter of American missionaries, who grew up in old China—she was the vivacious one, sparkling, outgoing, witty, irrepressible. This was not an odd couple: they were a perfect couple." Tillman and Peggy Durdin were married for 60 years.

—1955—

Henry Tanner died on May 15 of a heart attack at a hospital near his country home in Honfleur, France. Tanner worked for 25 years for The New York Times, heading bureaus in Moscow, Paris, Rome and Cairo and at the United Nations. In 1983 he left The Times to join The International Herald Tribune, where he worked until he retired in 1993. Tanner, who was born in Switzerland, covered the Algerian war of independence from France, the upheaval in the Congo in the 1960's, the Lebanese civil war in the 1970's, and the Arab-Israeli war in 1973.

—1962—

Jack Nelson will take over as chairman of the Pew Center for Civic Journalism's Advisory Committee, succeeding Hodding Carter III, who has become President and CEO of the Knight Foundation. Nelson is chief Washington correspondent of The Los Angeles Times.

Murray Seeger has been named Washington Representative of the Committee to Protect Journalists. He writes, "My Nieman classmate **Gene Roberts** is now chairman of the CPJ board and Ann Cooper is President. I am also continuing work as consultant to The Newspaper Guild/CWA Committee on the Future of Journalism and will again teach at George Washington University this fall."

—1963—

Bruce Galphin died on July 6 at the Brian Center Health & Rehab in Canton, Georgia, while recovering from a stroke he had four weeks earlier. He was 65. Early in his career, Galphin was on the editorial board and a political reporter for The Atlanta Constitution, Managing Editor of Atlanta Magazine, and was a reporter for The Washington Post. In 1970 he began writing about wines, including a regular column for The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. Galphin was Executive Director of the Atlanta Wine Summit, an international wine competition, and was an international wine judge himself. The Atlanta Wine Summit will be continued under his name. In 1964, Galphin received an honor from the French government, the Chevalier of the Ordre du Merite Agricole, for his promotion of French wines. Galphin also wrote an unauthorized biography of former Governor Lester Maddox and was co-author of "Atlanta: The Triumph of a People."

—1972—

John Carroll has been named an Executive Vice President of the Times Mirror Co., the corporate parent of The

Baltimore Sun, where Carroll is Editor and Senior Vice President.

—1973—

William Stockton has joined Cumberland Advisors, Inc., as a Portfolio Manager and Investment Advisor. Stockton had been a writer, editor and foreign correspondent for three decades. He began his career as a correspondent for The Associated Press and spent 17 years at The New York Times in a variety of positions, including editor of "Science Times," the Tuesday science section, Mexico City Bureau Chief, business and financial editor, and a senior editor in the paper's electronic publishing enterprise. Stockton left The New York Times in 1995 to start Tinicum Partners, L.P., a private investment fund, and to form Smithtown Creek Capital Management, Inc. In his new position he will continue as President of Smithtown Creek Capital Management, Inc., and as the general partner of Tinicum Partners, L.P.

—1976—

Eugene Carlson is Associate Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration. He was recruited by SBA Administrator Aida Alvarez to head SBA's national and local public affairs, marketing and outreach efforts. Alvarez is believed to be the first Latina, and the first person of Puerto Rican ethnicity, to sit with the President's Cabinet. Carlson previously spent 13 years as a reporter and columnist for The Wall Street Journal, based in New York and Washington. He was a founding member of the editorial staff of The Asian Wall Street Journal and headed that paper's coverage in The Philippines and Thailand.

Carlson and his wife, the artist **Mimi Thompson**, have two daughters, Allison, an elementary school teacher in Seattle, and Courtney, a political campaign consultant currently serving as Deputy Press Secretary to Betsy McCaughey Ross, candidate for the Democratic nomination for governor of New York. His E-mail address is: genec@kubark.com

—1978—

Bruce Locklin made a career change: "After 30 years, 25 as investigative news editor, I accepted an early retirement offer from The (Bergen, N.J.) Record. And now that I'm 60, I'm developing a new career as a fitness instructor. No lie. I have a 7-year-old son and 8-year-old granddaughter, and I needed to find a way to stay healthy enough to dance at their weddings. So I took some training to get certified as an aerobics instructor, and now I'm teaching a couple of classes a week. (I still do a little sleuthing on the side—contract work for private investigation companies.) My E-mail address is locklin@reporters.net"

—1984—

Derrick Jackson won The Unity Award's first place prize for Commentary in their 46th annual competition. The awards, for news coverage of race relations in America, are given through Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri. Jackson also won second place in the National Association of Black Journalists contest for commentary for work done in 1997.

—1985—

Bernard Edinger brings us up-to-date on a new project:

"Although getting ready to mark my 30th year with Reuters, and now starting my ninth straight year at the Reuters Paris bureau, I took some time off earlier this year to try my hand at documentary filmmaking. (Reuters gave me the time off but had no connection with the project, which was financed by a French production company.)

"The film I helped make was a 58-minute TV documentary about the little known, but crucial role, played by foreign volunteers on Israel's side in the first Arab-Israeli war of 1948-49.

"Since the estimated 4,000 volunteers came from some 30 countries, we filmed in Los Angeles, London, Geneva, Paris, as well as during two visits to Israel. About 800 of the volunteers were Americans, including a sizable minority of non-Jews.

"My role was historical research, contacts with authorities, identifying people and sites to film and, especially, conducting about 40 filmed interviews of which we used excerpts from 22 to make up half the film. The other half is made up of often previously unknown archive and newsreel footage.

"I later helped in the editing phase, especially since we produced both English and French language versions of the film, which is called 'Mahal' (Hebrew acronym for 'Mitnadvei Hutz L'Aretez' or 'Volunteers from Abroad').

"Distribution rights for Europe were sold to the Polygram group. Nothing has been finalized for the United States so if any former Niemans are interested…

"One former volunteer from Denmark, now a leading newspaper editor in that country, turned out to be a friend of my Nieman classmate **Sam Rachlin**.

"Filming was sometimes an adventure: we emerged from interviewing Israel's President Ezer Weizman one evening in Jerusalem wondering how we would reach London for interviews scheduled for the following afternoon since Israel's only international airport was on strike. A former Canadian volunteer who now runs a travel agency in Tel Aviv arranged to have a taxi drive us down to the Dead Sea that night to cross into Jordan (miracles of budding peace!) where we flew from Amman to London the following morning.

"I'm now back to more conventional journalism though I very occasionally go on reporting trips to French-speaking Africa and did spend a month in Bosnia a couple of years back.

"**Suzanne** and daughters Nadia (16) and Julia (12) are well."

—1986—

Geneva Overholser writes: "Having finished my three-year stint as Washington Post ombudsman, I begin in September a column for The Post, to be syndicated (twice weekly) by The Washington Post Writers Group. I plan to write on public policy issues, with a goodly quotient of social and cultural

matters. I welcome all column suggestions!"

—1987—

Michael Davis is TV Guide's new Listings Editor, following four years as Editor at The Baltimore Jewish Times and Executive Editor of The Palm Beach (Fl.) Jewish Times. Based in Radnor, Penn., he's assisting TVG Managing Editor Steve Sonsky, his Northwestern University graduate school classmate from 1976. ("Steve was in the gifted-and-talented classes, so we didn't cross paths much in those days," Davis says.) The Listings Editor oversees a staff of 90 writers and editors based in New York, Los Angeles and Radnor.

Nieman Kids Meagan and Tyler Davis (19 and 17) are taller and more sophisticated versions of their Cambridge selves. Meagan is a sophomore at Towson University, Tyler a high school senior.

Michael has a proposal brewing for a non-fiction book that melds sports and pop culture. In addition, he has spent considerable time in recent months interviewing and photographing mediums throughout the Mid-Atlantic States. "The most remarkable souls I've ever encountered," he says. Davis keeps a snapshot of Howard Simons on his desk, taken at the Nieman 50th reunion.

Susan Dentzer is now an on-air correspondent with The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer on PBS. As part of the NewsHour's newly inaugurated media partnership with the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, she will cover health care, health policy, Social Security, entitlement reform and other social-economic issues. Dentzer was previously chief economics correspondent and economics columnist at U.S. News & World Report, where she had been since 1987.

—1990—

George Rodrigue has been named Managing Editor at The Press-Enterprise in Riverside, California. Rodrigue, who was a Washington correspondent at The Dallas Morning News, won a Pulitzer Prize for national reporting in 1986 and was a member of a Morning News team that won for international reporting in 1994.

—1991—

Raj Chengappa has received the Prem Bhatia Award for Excellence in Political Reporting/Analysis for 1997-98. Chengappa, Deputy Editor of India Today, was to received the award in August at the India International Center in New Delhi.

—1993—

Greg Roberts has a family update: "Our investment in parenthood doubled as of Thursday, April 2, with the arrival of Ezra (5 lbs., 4.5 oz.) and Seth (5 lbs., 5.5 oz.). They join Allegra, 7, and Raina, 3. Babies doing fine—needed no special care and came home with mom [Greg's wife, **Gina**] on Saturday. Mom doing fine, too, though a bit fatigued. Dad gets off easy. It sure looks to me as if these two tykes are identical, though mom is reserving judgment. Time will tell, I guess."

—1994—

Larry Tye's new book, "The Father Of Spin: Edward L. Bernays and the Birth of Public Relations," was published by Crown in August. Here is Tye's reaction to its release:

"It takes so long from the time you finish a book to the time it comes out that you almost forget what you wrote about, a process that is especially frustrating for a daily journalist [Boston Globe] like me. But it was worth waiting for. I've been doing as many as three radio, TV and print interviews a day since it came out, which are tiring

Changing of the Guard at Nieman Reports

Eight years ago Bob Phelps was enjoying a splendid retirement in Lincoln, Massachusetts. A latter-day Thoreau, he studied the land and coaxed from it each summer an amazing variety of fruits and vegetables. In the summer of 1990, after some persuasion, he agreed to come out of his Walden from time to time to travel to Cambridge to edit Nieman Reports. Bob's career at The New York Times, where his last job was as News Editor of the Washington Bureau, and The Boston Globe, where he had been Executive Editor, earned him a reputation as an editor of strength, style and strong ethical standards. What was more impressive is that he retained a reputation as someone who was nice to be around while he built this reputation. He has now decided eight years is enough. This will be his last issue as editor.

I don't have to tell you what those eight years have meant. You've enjoyed the results as he has taken the publication to heights Louis Lyons would celebrate. The magazine has won national awards including the Mellett Award given by Pennsylvania State Journalism School. But more important than awards, he has made the magazine an important tool of outreach for the Nieman Foundation's work of "promoting and elevating" standards of journalism. Bob's Nieman Reports have expanded the reach of the Nieman program far beyond the two dozen or so fellows who come to Harvard each year. Through the pages of Nieman Reports journalists the world over are able to share and debate issues, ideas and points of view about journalism committed to the public interest. The readers of Nieman Reports have richly benefited from Bob's investment of time, energy and spirit at a critical time in the evolution of journalism. He turns over to the new editor, Melissa Ludtke (Nieman Fellow 1992), a publication ready to take on the challenges of the 21st Century.

Fortunately his full-time return to a bucolic life will have to wait. Bob will remain a presence. He has agreed to stay on in a part-time role advising the curator and helping to upgrade the Nieman Reports World Wide Web site.—*Bill Kovach*

but also are a wonderful opportunity to talk about the book. And while I'm always wounded by what I'm sure is justifiable criticism, I'm trying to learn from it even as I celebrate whatever praise has come my way.

"We had a great book party here in Cambridge recently, with nearly 200 guests and 100 books sold. And I'm finding that, with the ongoing White House affair, spin is a hot topic, even in the middle of a very hot summer.

"One last thing: the book, as so much else good in my life, traces back to my year as a Nieman fellow. That's when I met Anne Bernays and Justin Kaplan, who gave me the idea to write about her father, Ed Bernays. It's when I decided I had to try writing a book. And it was a time when, thanks to Bill, Lynne [Kovach] and the rest of my Nieman buddies, I got the confidence to try something like this for which I was eminently unprepared."

Book Awards to Honor Lukas

The Nieman Foundation and the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism will jointly award annual prizes to honor the late author J. Anthony Lukas. The prizes, which will begin next year, include The J. Anthony Lukas Grant, $45,000, to the author of a nonfiction book in progress; The J. Anthony Lukas Prize, $10,000, to the author of a book of narrative nonfiction, and The Mark Lynton History Prize, $10,000, to the author of a book of narrative history.

The 11 members of the prize committee, friends and colleagues of Lukas, include co-chairs Arthur Gelb and Linda Healey, Lukas's widow. The committee will appoint judges to choose the winners and will schedule an annual symposium on nonfiction writing. The Lukas and Lynton awards are sponsored by Lynton's family, his widow Marion Lynton, and his two children, Lili Lynton and Michael Lynton, who is currently chairman and CEO of the Penguin Group.

Lukas, a 1969 Nieman Fellow, won two Pulitzer Prizes. One, in 1968, was for his reporting in The New York Times about this country's generational conflict, which led to his book, "Don't Shoot—We Are Your Children." The second was in 1986 for his book, "Common Ground," about the effects of court-ordered school busing on three Boston families.

Mark Lynton, who was passionate about history, was a World War II major in the British Army. Shortly before his death in 1995 he wrote "Accidental Journey," a memoir of his war experience.

—1996—

Jonathan Ferziger writes, "We're leaving Hong Kong in economic ruins and heading back to the quiet Mideast. I start as Bureau Chief at Bloomberg-Tel Aviv September 1. We've been having a blast over the past year. **Miriam** [Miriam Herschlag, Ferziger's wife] has been editing a webzine about the Hong Kong economy, www.horizoninfo.com. Yishai's dropped his ambitions to be a fireman and now is training to be an astronaut. Merav likes to dance. Hope all is well on Francis Ave."

—1997—

Maria Cristina Caballero is now Director of Investigations for Semana news magazine in Bogota, Colombia. She recently won Colombia's most prestigious award for investigative journalism, the Simon Bolivar National Prize for Journalism, for an exclusive interview with Carlos Castaño, leader of Colombia's paramilitary forces. During a four-hour interview he expressed, for the first time, his desire to initiate a peace process. The jury pointed out that through this interview it was possible to discover key aspects of Castaño's personality, as well as the origins and characteristics of the violence in Colombia. The jury also said that for the first time Castaño tried to explain who he was and why he was involved in such a complex conflict.

Caballero also won a Special Honorary Mention in the Inter American Press Association's annual journalism contest for her work on an investigation of the massacres in Colombian rural zones. For example, a paramilitary incursion July 14-20 of this year by private armed groups that combat guerrilla forces transformed Mapiripan, a municipality in the Colombian Plains Region, into a ghost town. Though it was once a center of subversive influence of the FARC, the Colombian Revolutionary Forces, Colombian's oldest guerrilla group. Caballero found evidence for the first time that there were links between military and paramilitary forces: two airplanes that transported paramilitary men who were responsible for massacres used an airport controlled by government military forces, without any record being made of it.

Also an official from Mapiripan called military forces eight times to tell them that paramilitary forces were killing people, but the military did not respond until after the paramilitary men had left, seeming to show a clear complicity.

In describing her new job, Caballero said: "I am organizing an investigative journalism team. This week I published Semana's cover story, a new interview with Castaño. This time I had to go to the jungle to look for him. It was a real adventure!"

Caballero has received a Mason Fellowship at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard for a master's degree in public administration and management. She plans to accept this fellowship for the fall of 1999.

Marjorie Valbrun has changed jobs: "I left The Philadelphia Inquirer in March, where I worked for almost six years most recently as the welfare reform reporter, and joined The Wall Street Journal in June to cover immigration. I will be traveling the country writing national stories on the social, economic and political impact of immigration on the United States. I am based out of the paper's Washington bureau because I will also be writing about INS policy decisions and tracking immigration legislation in Congress." ■

End Note

Photo by Jae Roosevelt

The sudden, piercing sound of drilling. The pounding of sledgehammers breaking down bathroom fixtures. A large block of cardboard closing off the kitchen entrance. Thick pieces of plastic covering office machines. Dust everywhere. And only one bathroom for a building full of people. Despite these distractions from phase two of the renovations of Lippmann House this summer, the work of the Nieman Foundation and preparations for the arrival of the class of 1999 went smoothly. Like last year's construction, the changes are designed to make Lippmann House handicap accessible and more comfortable for the growing number of people using it. The biggest change is the library/meeting area built between the kitchen and the seminar room, which had been an unused, open-air back porch. With sliding doors between the new room and the old seminar room, we will now be able to expand the seminar space when necessary. On the second floor, small offices have been created out of what had been a private apartment, and the bathrooms have been modernized.

As the photo on this page indicates, one result of last summer's work was a beautiful new look for the front yard. The graceful, serpentine walkway has been used and appreciated not only by handicapped visitors, but also by people delivering heavy supplies and by those of us who enjoy taking a leisurely detour on our way to and from Francis Avenue.

We especially hope that our alumni/ae will come by and see the changes for themselves at Reunion 2000, April 28-30, 2000. Plans continue to go well for this celebration, and we encourage you to send any program or speaker suggestions to reunion coordinator Kate Straus, Events, inc., 45 Avon Road, Wellesley, Mass., 02181. E-mail is KLStraus@tiac.net